



# TRAUMA AND TRIGGERS

Many students have been impacted by trauma. Since colonisation the spirit and wellbeing of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people and communities has been impacted through generations. Recent or past trauma can impact your learning experience.

It is important to remember a move towards healing is possible.

The first step may be telling your story, with someone who will listen, and listen deeply. Sharing may help you make sense of it, it may help you connect experiences in your life, and can help you care for yourself and each other.

For information on trauma moving through generations see Healing Foundation – Impacts of Intergenerational Trauma: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y-RaB19D13E>

What about triggers?

Living with trauma, violence, uncertainty and stress are likely to place you in ‘flight, fight, freeze’ mode. This is the body’s automatic alarm system, which protects us in life-threatening situations. If you are currently living with or are confronted with danger, you need this system.

Your body will prepare to either run away from, or fight the threat, or be very still to allow the threat to pass. You may experience panic like feelings - heart pumping faster, thoughts racing, shaking, sweating or a ‘dissociative state’ where you are ‘freezing’ to get through danger.

Sometimes our ‘alarm system’ maybe set off days, months or years later. Students may experience this as overwhelming anxiety around stressful periods throughout their degree, and question themselves or think they have ‘over-reacted’.

The body’s sophisticated central nervous system, language and being able to link and mesh events, emotions, memories, thoughts, either consciously or unconsciously plays a big role in our reactions.

Another way of looking at it is that our spirit or ‘emotional memory’ is vivid and alive and it can make connections quickly, without us even realising it. We can learn to let those moments of despair or panic, pass and connect with what is important. We can also learn to heal, if the time feels right for you.

Hold your history with love and care, and connect with what is important to you.

Reach out for support.

13 YARN: <https://www.13yarn.org.au/>



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Artwork: *Stronger Together* (2021) Artist: Darleen Cooper

