



Fostering Lifelong Connections Wiradjuri Workbook Development

Associate Professor Lynette Riley, OA
Chair, Aboriginal Education & Indigenous
Studies

Sydney School of Education & Social Work

Diane Riley-McNaboe

Aboriginal Culture & Language Teacher

Suzanne Pope

Program Manager

Dr Sarah Ciftci

Project Coordinator, Research Associate



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We acknowledge the tradition of custodianship and law of the Country on which the University of Sydney campuses stand. We pay our respects to those who have cared and continue to care for Country.

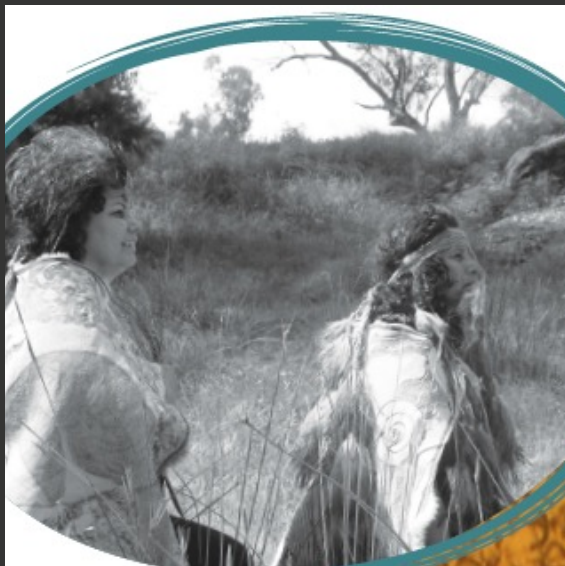
Tree of Knowledge - pokerwork on kangaroo skin, Lynette Riley, 2010

<http://Sydney.edu.au/kinship-module>



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About the Authors



**A/Prof Lynette Riley &
Diane Riley-McNaboe**

Lynette and Diane are Dubbo-born sisters, from both Wiradjuri (Dubbo) and Gamilaroi (Moree) Nations, who have made significant contributions to the continuation, study and celebration of their Wiradjuri culture. Both are teachers and work predominantly within the field of education (Lynette is at The University of Sydney, Diane is based in Dubbo, and works across schools and community).

They are especially keen to assist young people to engage with Aboriginal culture and to offer possibilities for Aboriginal peoples to access educational opportunities.

A stylized, light grey graphic of a tree with many leaves is positioned on the left side of the page. The tree's trunk and branches are simple, and the leaves are represented by various shapes, some of which are slightly overlapping. The overall style is clean and modern.

Wiradjuri language and culture

Wiradjuri is the traditional language spoken from Mudgee to Dubbo, Narromine, Wellington and Gilgandra, the largest Aboriginal group in central NSW.

Diane is teaching the first generation of children who have permission to speak their language. She is leading initiatives to teach Wiradjuri songs and language in schools across the NSW Western region.

The Workbook illustrations are drawn from the artwork on Lynette's Kangaroo cloaks, adding to their cultural significance.

The Workbooks are a continuation of Lynette and Diane's lifelong commitment to Aboriginal Education and preservation of Aboriginal cultural knowledge.



<https://youtu.be/iiitQebiirU>

Lyn & Diane launch the Wiradjuri Workbooks, March 2022





Lynette's daughter, Garigarra Riley-Mundine,
& grand-daughter, Lolowia Hazel, at the
launch of the Wiradjuri Workbooks
20 January, 2023

Wiradjuri Workbooks

The development of the workbooks represents a very special collaboration by two teachers who are also renowned Wiradjuri traditional artists and language specialist.

This unique combination of skills ensured that the workbooks provide interactive and educational resources and games for children and families about Wiradjuri cultural and symbols, to strengthen cultural knowledge and connection.

Developing lifelong connections to family and community support children and young people to develop their cultural identities. This importance is especially true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in out-of-home care who will depend on these connections during their time in care and once they leave care.



1

Wiradjuri Workbook

NGUMBAAY

Sounds, Numbers, People & Family

Developed by Diane Riley-McNaboe & Lynette Riley

2

Wiradjuri Workbook

BULA

Family Terms, Body Parts & Colours

Developed by Diane Riley-McNaboe & Lynette Riley



Download
PDFs for free!

<https://www.sbs.com.au/learn/learn-wiradjuri>

A stylized, light gray graphic of a tree with many leaves is positioned on the left side of the slide. The tree's trunk and branches are simple, and the leaves are represented by various shades of gray and white. The background of the slide is white, and there are two main colored sections: a dark blue header at the top and an orange rounded rectangle containing text below it.

Cultural safety and respect

Australian Aboriginal Nations have sustained the longest enduring culture on earth through a sophisticated system of Kinship structures and obligations which are passed down through story, ritual and lore (Riley, Howard-Wagner, & Mooney, 2015).

This project presents an opportunity for intentional and authentic dialogue between out-of-home-care agencies and the holders of Aboriginal Kinship knowledge based on openness and respect for the cultural wisdom of traditional custodians of the land.



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—
Research Centre
for Children and
Families

Fostering Lifelong Connections



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ARC Linkage - Fostering Lifelong Connections for Children in OOHC



The University of Sydney

Partner organisations

NSW DCJ, Barnardos Australia, CareSouth, Catholic Care Hunter Manning, Catholic Care Wollongong, Key Assets, Uniting, Wesley Dalmar

Research team

Chief investigators: Professor Amy Conley Wright, Professor Judith Cashmore AO, Associate Professor Lynette Riley, Dr Susan Collings

Research Centre for Children & Families: Dr Sarah Ciftci, Dr Betty Luu, Suzanne Pope, Megan Mitchell

Partner investigators: Professor Elsbeth Neil (University of East Anglia) & Professor Peter Pecora (University of Washington & Casey Family Programs), Matthew Jones (NSW DCJ) and Dr Robert Urqhart (Barnardos Australia)

Expert Reference Group: Experts-by-Experience Billy Black, Bobby Hendry, Tegan Whittaker, Chantelle Rozzi, Jaqueline Kaelle and Experts-by-Profession

Project aim



Painting by Coomaditchie artists created with the FLC action researchers

The University of Sydney

Develop, test, embed, and disseminate relationship-building practices to encourage sustainable, positive relationships between children's carers and families for children in long-term care (foster care, Kinship care, guardianship or open adoption).

Action research with 33 caseworkers over 2 years in 4 locations: Dubbo, Maitland, Wollongong & Sydney.

Centering the principles of trauma awareness, cultural safety and respect & reflective practice.

Different ways of thinking

Contact

- Contact is *transactional* – being in the same place at the same time to tick off court requirements

Family Time

- Family Time is *relational* – it's about the quality of the interaction to build connection, and involves communication as well as visits

Practice trials

Practice descriptions	Trial
Debriefing - Meet or talk to child, parent and/or carer before and/or after visit about what worked well and what to improve.	Cycle 1, Wollongong & Sydney
Facilitate Family Time at a distance - Assist children and families to use technology-based communication (e.g., video or calls/group chats) or no-tech exchanges of letters, artwork, photos	Cycle 1, Maitland & Dubbo
Carer coaching - Maintain regular contact with carers before/after visits to offer feedback on their efforts and encourage reflection to improve future interactions with the child's parents or other relatives.	Cycle 2, Wollongong
Co-regulation - Assist birth relatives and carers to reflect on and understand their own emotions so they can respond sensitively to children's reactions and manage behaviour that arises before/after visits.	Cycle 2, Sydney & Maitland
Cultural connections – Document practices that support children connecting to their culture through their relationships and time spent with family.	Cycle 2, Dubbo
Hearing children's voices - Work with carers to collect children's immediate feedback after visits and discuss with carers and birth relatives	Cycle 3, Maitland & Dubbo
Supporting sibling connections- Ask children about their siblings and whom they would like to see, implement creative ways to keep children connected	Cycle 3, Sydney & Wollongong



MODULE 1

Supporting Co-regulation



MODULE 2

Carer Coaching



MODULE 3

Hearing Children's Voices about Family Time



MODULE 4

Supporting Parents and Family Members with Family Time



MODULE 5

Facilitating Family Time at a Distance



MODULE 6

Supporting Cultural Connections



MODULE 7

Supporting Sibling Connections

Online Learning Modules

- 7 online modules have been developed based on the practices trialled in the study
- Each module includes a short presentation with key learnings, case studies, reflective questions and practice resources that can be utilised to support the practice



Module 6

Supporting Cultural Connections



The Bridge

Strong connections to family, community, culture and Country are foundational to the lifelong wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Caseworkers need to encourage positive relationships between children's families when they are in out-of-home care and support the development of children's cultural connections.

The Bridge video explores key themes including identity, belonging, cultural safety and respectful curiosity.

The Bridge: <https://youtu.be/lrWOzXuB98c>



The Bridge



Building Bridges



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander caseworkers play a vital role in fostering children's connections to Kin, culture and Country.

They form the link for children in out-of-home care to build relationships with their family and culture, and thus form their identity.

This video explores practice tips including the need to actively listen to the perspectives of children and young people and ask respectful, curious questions to build relationships with families.

Building Bridges: <https://youtu.be/KkZXFL2GoXQ>



Building Bridges



Advice for non-Aboriginal caseworkers

Be respectfully curious. Ask questions.

Listen to the voice of the child. Ask the child who they want to see, who they are missing and yearning to connect with.

Get out into the community and talk with families. They know what is important to them.



Practice resources



Experts by Experience

Drawing on their own experiences of growing up in care, Billy Black authored and illustrated Roar, a children's storybook that tells the story of a lion cub's journey to understand their big feelings, and how a carer gorilla and caseworker bear can help them to regulate these emotions and enjoy Family Time.

My Family Time is Mine, created by Bobby Hendry, is a resource for young people in out-of-home care. It explores their rights to be heard in matters that are important including around Family Time, understanding their emotions and how trauma affects the brain. It is full of practical tips on how they can learn to take charge of reactions including suggested playlists for relaxation.



my family
time is mine.

When someone says we talk
about family time & you just
kicker to hang out, it's all.

ALICE WOODS



ROAR!

Written and Illustrated by
BILLY BLACK

Original Author for Children and Families, The University of Sydney



ROAR!

Written and Illustrated by

BILLY BLACK

Research Centre for Children and Families, The University of Sydney



**my family
time is mine.**

every question you've had
about family time + tips and
tricks to navigate it all.

BOBBY HENDRY

RESEARCH CENTRE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Fostering Lifelong Connections Tip Sheets

Tip sheets and other resources have been developed as part of the Fostering Lifelong Connections including:

Trauma-informed approaches when working with children in care

Resources developed by parents who participated as Experts-by-Experience

Tip sheets for supporting children and families to maintain connections when there is distance between them

Collaboration with Australian Childhood Foundation on trauma-sensitive resources



Understanding and responding to trauma expressions to support Family Time

Understanding trauma expressions

I feel connected
I am safe

- I can experience joy and spontaneity
- I am able to seek comfort and connection
- I am open to being taught and to learning
- I am able to negotiate with others
- I can demonstrate empathy
- I do not show obvious signs of stress

I feel a threat
I am becoming stressed

- I may feel fatigued
- I may have a headache
- I might be nervous
- I may withdraw from activities that are usually a source of joy
- I may feel more afraid of being separated from safe adults
- I may show uncharacteristic emotion or behaviours
- I may lose my creativity
- I may seek more structure and clarity from others

I feel alarmed
I am distressed

- I may feel deep sadness
- I may be very frustrated
- I may have disrupted sleep
- I may have changes in diet and the need for food
- I may find it hard to trust people
- I become more attentive to time and routines and an unable wait
- I prefer more structure and clarity of information

I feel overwhelmed
I am going to explode

- I may display anger, rage, terror
- I may want to collapse
- I may experience a loss of empathy
- I may be reactive and take big risks
- I may hurt myself and others
- I may find it hard to use words
- I find it hard to control my body
- I enter **Fight, Flight, Freeze** or **Fawn** states

For more information contact Research Centre for Children and Families, Sydney School of Education and Social Work
rcf@sydney.edu.au or www.rcf.sydney.edu.au
 Downloaded as part of the ARC Longterm and Flexible Learning Committee for Children in Perinatal Care (LP1801332)

Understanding and responding to trauma expressions to support Family Time

How a safe relationship can support co-regulation

Fight Activities to help make the body safe to inhale!

- Blow a feather across a table and see whose travels the furthest
- Make ribbon circles of different sizes, go quick and then go slow
- Wrap resistance bands around your own and your child's waist to see how close or far they can stretch
- Wrap resistance bands around your own and your child's feet and see how high or wide they can go
- Be a lava lamp and sway or bob up and down
- Take turns falling into a bean bag and catch your child before they land
- Get into the garden and plant, dig, sow seeds, weed
- Make shaving cream statues
- Wash or brush a pet

Flight Activities to help ground in the present

- Use a torch to spotlight objects in the dark
- Place string on the ground and pretend to "walk the tightrope"
- Sit opposite each other and twist to the right and left together
- Count steps as you walk backwards to an agreed spot
- Make a flick smoothie together and drink it through a straw
- Chew strong chewing gum or Minties lollies
- Light candles and blow them out - try all of once, one at a time
- Wrap each other up in toilet paper like a mummy and then burst out

Freeze Activities to help move out of shut down

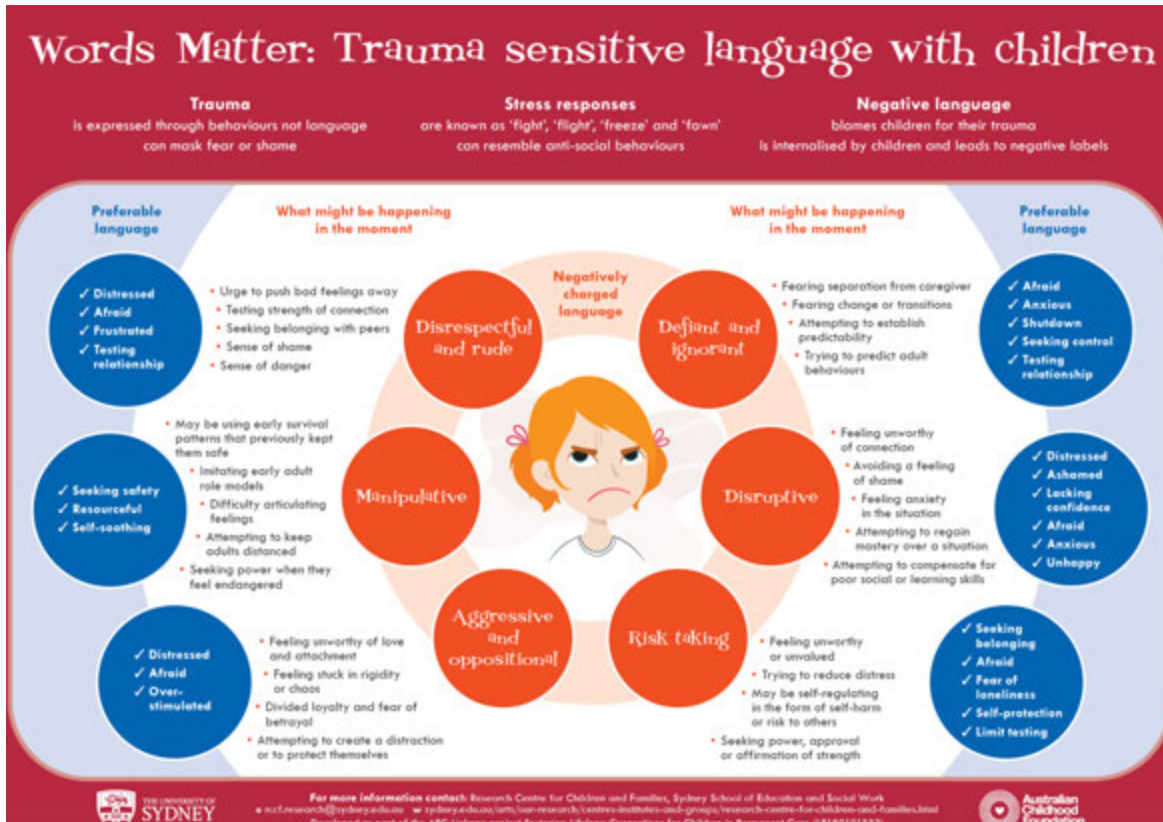
- Wrap child in a blanket and gently jiggles them around the floor
- Lay on lawnswell and make snow angels
- Brush teeth with electric toothbrush
- Spin on an office chair
- Hold a heat/cool pack and talk about places and things that match the temperature
- Sway your child gently in a hammock or hold them on either side by their arms and legs
- Play jigsaw fights
- Make sandcastles
- Take a big breath in then let it out with a big roar

Fawn Activities to build confidence to reduce need to appease

- Look in a mirror at each other and make the same facial expressions
- Plan a menu together for the week
- Award a 'Medal of the Day' to each other and say what you noticed to warrant this
- Ask each other to choose a favourite from two similar things: Coke/Fanta, McDonald's/KFC, beef/steak, etc.
- Move into warrior pose and keep body strong and still
- Why not come up with your own ideas! You could try karaoke, have a sing-along, do the Hokey Pokey, play dress-ups or do line-dancing!

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Collaboration with Australian Childhood Foundation on trauma-sensitive resources



Supporting parents and family members – Developed by mothers

Shining your own light on Family Time

Check in with your feelings as Family Time approaches and after it ends

Ask yourself

- How do you feel about Family Time?
- What do you think you will gain from Family Time?
- What do you think you will lose from Family Time?
- What if I am not feeling okay?

What you can do to make the most of Family Time

- Be present and listen to your child.
- Be open to your child's feelings and needs.
- Be flexible and adaptable.
- Be patient and understanding.
- Be kind to yourself.

Things to remember

- Family Time is a chance to connect with your child.
- It is not a performance.
- It is a chance to be present and listen to your child.
- It is a chance to be kind to yourself.
- It is a chance to be flexible and adaptable.
- It is a chance to be patient and understanding.

Light in the Dark

Bringing your feelings into the light so you can learn to heal

Emotions pile in the carrying is heavy weight. You may want the weight to be lifted or held or left for only your future. Feeling this like it is long time around the body. Understanding the early warning signs of stress allows you to take charge of your life.

Things that trigger big emotions

- You get stressed out in the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.

Things that regulate your pain into an understandable

- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.
- You are feeling the weight of the carrying is heavy weight.

Strengthening all the sparks of connection

How parents can support the adults who care for their child and improve Family Time

There are three parents who do this support for their child and strengthen important connections in Family Time.

What they may be feeling

- Overwhelmed
- Tired
- Stressed
- Lonely
- Unsure

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Parents can help by

- Supporting the caregiver's needs and well-being.
- Being present and listening to the caregiver's needs.
- Being flexible and adaptable.
- Being patient and understanding.

Shining your own light on Family Time

Remember to care for yourself so you can care for your child

Ask for help

- Ask for help when you need it.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Ask for help when you need it.

What you can do to make the most of Family Time

- Be present and listen to your child.
- Be open to your child's feelings and needs.
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Things to remember

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- It is a chance to be patient and understanding.

Light in the Dark

Powering the healing journey

Whenever you are feeling, you can take steps today to start your journey and get the support you deserve.

What you can do for yourself today

- Take a break from the carrying is heavy weight.
- Take a break from the carrying is heavy weight.
- Take a break from the carrying is heavy weight.
- Take a break from the carrying is heavy weight.

What you can learn about yourself today

- What you can learn about yourself today.
- What you can learn about yourself today.
- What you can learn about yourself today.
- What you can learn about yourself today.

Nourishing the first spark of connection

Remember that there is enough love to go around

Children notice when they are surrounded by people who love them. When parents know what is happening for their child, they can support their child and the adults around them to make the most of Family Time.

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- Unsure

Parents can help by

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Carers as Custodians of Children's Connections

Safe and meaningful connections with birth family

The custodian role includes:

Understanding who the child's family is and nurturing those relationships



Speaking warmly and respectfully about family members



Understanding that these relationships are important



Finding out what the child thinks and feels about family time and helping them to communicate their preferences



When children are in out-of-home care, maintaining relationships with children's family members can be complex and challenging but it's important not to give up and disconnect.

Children who are disconnected from family members can feel grief, rejection, curiosity and a yearning to know more about them. Without efforts to mend relationships, the distress of disconnection can become intergenerational.

Meaningful family relationships can help children heal from emotional trauma and develop a strong sense of who they are.

Carers are the custodians of children's connections to their family members when they are in out-of-home care.

Carers need to build these connections so they can be passed on to the child and they can carry those relationships with them over their lifespan.

The custodian role includes:



Flourishing and celebrating these relationships including displaying photos



Sharing special photos and stories about the child with family members that the child would like to share



Committing to a routine for keeping siblings in touch that matches their changing needs



Keeping the lines of communication open so that as the child gets older, they have the option to pursue these relationships for themselves.



For more information contact: Research Centre for Children and Families, Sydney School of Education and Social Work
e: rccf@sydney.edu.au | w: sydney.edu.au/children-research-centre/children-and-family-research-centre/children-and-family-research-centre



Co-designed with Experts by Experience and Professionals, and informed by action cycles with Caseworkers

Linking lives for siblings living separately in out-of-home care

A practical tool for caseworkers to promote sibling connections

According to the Social Capacity Model, individuals travel through life within a network of relationships that offer social support. These are relationships that accompany the child over their life cycle.

The concept of "linked lives" highlights that individuals' life-course trajectories do not evolve in isolation, but are linked to others through their relationships, obligations and exchanges with important others such as parents and siblings. These links, once lost, are difficult to reconstruct later in life, increasing the risk of isolation and loneliness.

If the link of children's relationships on a journey, it represents how their relationships are both generative and dynamic in nature. Having a strong social capacity helps people of all ages cope with major life transitions and is linked to improvements in overall wellbeing over the lifespan.



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e: rccf@sydney.edu.au | w: sydney.edu.au/children-research-centre/children-and-family-research-centre/children-and-family-research-centre



Visit our website

<https://rccf-fostering-connections.sydney.edu.au/>



Fostering Lifelong Connections

Supporting children's connections to family and culture when they are in out-of-home care

Developed in collaboration with researchers, experts and practitioners in New South Wales, Australia and internationally

Connect With Us

Research Centre for Children and Families
Sydney School of Education and Social Work
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Website www.rccf-fostering-connections.sydney.edu.au

Email rccf.research@sydney.edu.au



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