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childpsych:psychology practice

# childPSYCH News

A newsletter for professionals and parents



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Term 4 2016

### Inside this issue:

Creating happy family memories

Happiness!

See us in...  
Springfield,  
Ipswich and  
Toowoomba



### Special points of interest:

- At *childpsych* psychologists who are registered teachers and/or Educational Psychologists are involved in the child's assessment
- To unsubscribe from this newsletter at any time, either email or call *childpsych*

## Creating happy family memories

Creating happy memories for our children is an important part of being a parent. While the purpose of parenting is to "socialise the child", as one textbook put it, we also want happy citizens. One way to create happy people is to build happy memories.

Little wonder then that when asked what happy memories people have from childhood, they often recall how they were treated by their family members—not the presents, cool car or the Christmas holidays at the expensive hotel. So how do we create these happy family memories?

It is important to focus on how you interact as a family. Unfortunately, it appears girls are more likely to perceive family stress as worse compared to boys. What does this mean? Well, if there is an argument between the parents or a period of marital tension, then girls are more likely to be upset and bothered by this compared to boys. Of course children only become resilient when they experience stress and then overcome it. And children have to understand that the real world isn't rosy. However, it appears that girls who did not experience positive interactions daily, were more likely to overreact to any stress in their families.

Girls seem to need a close relationship with their families. A daughter's time with her father and mother are particularly important in adolescence. One way to achieve this is to try and set up a family ritual such as a "coffee date" with your daughter (don't forget your son however).

So what constitutes a positive parenting experience?



**So all you need to do is kiss and hug your child right while you teach them the four key values? Well if only that's all it takes.**

Research on the development of adolescent personality has suggested that a parents personality has a significant influence. So parents who are conscientious (i.e., like to do the right thing), agreeable (not argumentative) and low in neuroticism (not overly anxious and generally "level") create a family environment conducive to creating a warm and supportive family environment. Such parents listen to their children, don't over react, role-model a rational way to solve problems and celebrate their children's success. This sort of family environment creates children who feel secure, in control and positive about themselves.

The above study found the parental warmth predicted positive parenting experiences. Warmth can be considered affectionate comments towards your child/adolescent ("love you darling") and physical touching (e.g. hugs).

So what should we be trying to achieve in our children? The following four values may help:

1. *Belonging*: Developing positive relationships with peers and adults
2. *Mastery*: Learning strategies to achieve, solve problems, and

manage emotions

3. *Independence*: Developing self-efficacy and making responsible decisions

4. *Generosity*: Cultivating empathy and showing concern for others

Teach your children these values and you are on your way to creating positive interactions in your family and a positive family environment. Just make sure when you're developing these values, you do it with love and warmth.

So all you need to do is kiss and hug your child right while you teach them the four key values? Well if only that's all it takes.

Unfortunately if both parents are not on the same page with how to raise the child, then the child can experience greater adjustment problems. What does this mean? Basically, it means that mum and dad need to agree on how to discipline the child, what makes a child grow into a good citizen and the degree to which they parent the same. We call this the "parenting alliance". A good parenting alliance means mum and dad are not arguing over how to raise the child (particularly when the child has a challenging temperament) and are therefore happier parents (less stress on their marriage as a result).

By this stage of the article you may be feeling guilty. "Parent guilt is free" a midwife told me upon the birth of our son. However, we know that raising happy children is not as simple as dishing out hugs, hiding arguments with your spouse from them or agreeing on how to discipline your children. All of this is influ-

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## Learning Problems?

**childpsych**  
LEARNING CENTRE

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enced by your child's temperament.

Temperament is basically how you are prewired and related to your personality of sorts. Some children are born "negative" and tend to become easily upset. These children are generally challenging to parent (read a book called "The Optimistic Child" if the universe has given you such a child) and all the things I have suggested here may not turn them into a shining ray of positivity. However, trying to bring these factors into your daily interactions will at least show them that there are other ways to experience the world and their family.

## Happiness!

Strong social relationships and offline human connections are the key to happiness for Australians, according to findings from the Australian Psychological Society's (APS) *Compass for Life* survey, Human connections took the top spot on Australia's wellbeing scale, with



the survey finding that people who connected with family, partner and/or children daily, those who caught up with colleagues socially as well as those who were connected into their communities in a variety of ways had higher wellbeing scores than those who didn't.

The survey also found that adults reporting a high usage of social media, a platform designed to bring people closer together, reported significantly higher levels of loneliness and negative emotions.

The *APS Compass for Life* survey - of 1,000 Australian adults and 518 adolescents (13-17) - is part of a campaign that will help Australians measure and improve their happiness and wellbeing by promoting *Ways to Thrive*.

Overall, the survey found Australians report a positive sense of

## Sleep

Sleep is paramount for children. Poor sleep can lead to problems such as hallucinations, impaired cognitive performance and depressed mood. Good sleeping behaviours for school aged children refer to such things as:

- ✓ a set bed time,
- ✓ no caffeine drinks (such as Coke) after 4pm or four hours before bed,
- ✓ daily exercise,
- ✓ a good diet,
- ✓ and engaging in relaxing activities before bed time.

It is important to make decisions about children's bed time based on their developmental needs.

### Sleep Guide

1-4 Weeks Old: 15 ½ - 16 ½ hours per day  
1-4 Months Old: 14 ½ - 15 ½ hours per day  
4-12 Months Old: 14 - 15 hours per day  
1-3 Years Old: 12 - 14 hours per day  
3-6 Years Old: 10 ¾ - 12 hours per day  
7-12 Years Old: 10 - 11 hours per day  
12-18 Years Old: 8 ¼ - 9 ½ hours per day

wellbeing. Other factors linked to a more satisfied life, according to the *APS Compass for Life* survey, include: getting a good night's sleep; keeping active, engaging in relaxation and/or mindfulness activities and 'living in the moment', eating well and having a hobby and being open to new experiences, including travel and learning.

Older Australians aged 65+ have significantly higher levels of wellbeing and lower levels of loneliness and negative emotions than the rest of the population. People age 25-34 scored significantly higher on loneliness than adults 35 years and over.

The survey also found that although money and wealth are rated in the top three things that come to mind when Australians are asked what makes a good life, household income was unrelated to wellbeing.

*Australian Psychological Society Nov '16*



childpsych is offering this evidence-based working memory training program.

The complete program includes:

- Initial interview
- Start-up session
- Five weeks of training with weekly Coach calls
- Wrap-up meeting
- Six month follow-up interview
- Access to the Cogmed Training Web
- Optional Cogmed Extension Training (12 months)

How long does it take?

The cogmed program consists of 25 training sessions of 30-40 minutes each, done over 5 weeks. It is the intensity of this training schedule that is critical to the program's success. The user/family sets the training schedule with the Cogmed Coach, with plenty of flexibility.

## Autism Services

childpsych provides a specialist autism clinic focused on assessment and diagnosis and intervention services. Our autism interventions are delivered by psychologists accredited to work with children with autism spectrum disorders.

- ✓ Assessment and diagnosis of autism
- ✓ Management of children with autism to age 18 years
- ✓ Behavioural interventions, social skills, transition to school, treatment of other conditions such as anxiety, depression
- ✓ Special education development classes and remedial teaching classes

[childpsych.net.au/autism-services.php](http://childpsych.net.au/autism-services.php)