

childPSYCH News

A newsletter for professionals and parents

Volume 6, Issue 3
Term 3 2011

Inside this issue:

Happy children

Intellectual ability and
academic achievement

Types of dyslexia



APS Psychologists



Australian
Tutoring
Association



QUEENSLAND
COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Special points of
interest:

- We have a NEW learning centre! Call us now for more information
- At *childpsych* only psychologists who are registered teachers and/or Educational Psychologists will write the report on learning difficulties
- To unsubscribe from this newsletter at any time, either email or call *childpsych*

Happy children

A goal for many parents is to raise happy children. We all know that feeling we get when we see our children laughing. The pursuit of happiness has led to countless books and motivational speakers and so on. So how do we raise happy children?

It is first important to define what is meant by the term 'happiness'. For some people happy is an emotion, for others it is a way of describing how satisfied they are with their life.

When thinking about what makes children happy, it is important to consider that what makes children happy differs for adults. Unlike adults who are likely to cite work, marriage and finances as things that make them happy, children have a different set of needs. For example, children in grade 2 will say good grades in school make them happy but children in grade 8 will not. Younger children seem to link their happiness to achievement whereas older children begin to become more sophisticated about what makes them happy – resembling adults. Interestingly, regardless of age, children and adolescents identified family and friendships as important.

You're born happy?

Temperament is often defined as the biological part of personality – it is how you are born so to speak. Temperament refers to such things as your prewired energy levels, how comfortable you are with new experiences, level of shyness and so on. Research on happiness in adults found extroverts and people



Parents in western countries work far more now than parents in the 1970's

with higher levels of energy were more happy. For children research suggests that the temperament traits of energy, sociability and emotionality are related to happiness. Researchers have found that those children high in energy are more likely to be involved in extra curricular activities (and hence less isolated). Likewise, sociable children had many friends and children who managed their emotions well (e.g. controlling frustration) were happier. It is important to remember we are talking about temperament traits, which are meant to be enduring and difficult to change. Does this mean we might as well give up on raising happy children if we have a child who prefers to be alone or a child who is low in energy? Certainly not.

Helping children to help themselves to be happier

While it is challenging to "change yourself", we can certainly improve ourselves. It is possible to learn to be more optimistic and happier. As an aside, research seems to show that there is a cost to happiness. Happy people seem to pay less attention to detail and make more mistakes. So those cynical individu-

als, while less happy, probably do a better job of managing their finances! Happiness tends to **make us appreciate the "big picture"**. The old saying, "don't over think it" is quite true here but sometimes at a cost. Though, happy people tend to be more creative.

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is a psychological intervention that can help children develop an optimistic mindset. This approach is used by most child psychologists, to not only treat mental health problems, but also to develop resilience. CBT teaches children how to think rationally about things.

Research also suggests that children and youth involved in extra curricula activities tend to be happier. Extra curricula activities allow children to develop confidence in themselves as well as meet other children and feel like they "belong". **A word of caution however, "over scheduling" of activities has been linked to greater stress in adolescents as well as anxiety.** Like most things in life, there is a balance

As adults we need to think about how we contribute to the home environment. Australia is one of the hardest working nations on earth. Parents in western countries now work far more than **parents in the 1970's.** Recent statistics from the USA (not unusual to us) suggests that there has been a 33% decrease in family dinners and 28% decrease in family holidays. Some researchers have argued that we have developed rigid beliefs about how childhood should be resulting in

Continue over...

2 / 606 Sherwood Road
Sherwood Q 4075

Phone:
07 3716 0445
Fax:
07 3379 8965
Email:
admin@childpsych.net.au



Learning Problems?

childpsych
LEARNING CENTRE

Best learning environment
Best evaluation
Best instruction

✓ Remedial teaching practices based on research

✓ No more than 6 children in a class with 1:1 instruction

✓ Monitoring of your child 's response to our remedial teaching

✓ Educational psychologists and specialist teachers working together to tailor your child 's program

Flying through literacy **Launching into literacy**

Cruise into comprehension **Get Set for literacy**



Learn social skills
8 session program
For ages 5-12

Enrol Now
Ph 3716 0445
See our website for more information

www.childpsych.net.au

parents believing that children should always be happy, content and exciting. This places a large stress on parents who then look to provide this for their children by seeking certain schools and extra curricular activities. The result is that parents work harder to provide these things. Research suggests that the more children spoke to their parents, the happier they were. This finding is more obvious in households where the father was most accessible for children. Unfortunately, depression in adults with children is greater than adults without children. This does not mean that family life causes depression but it is one source of stress and unless parents think about how they wish to "live" their family life, they may be creating unnecessary stress for themselves. Depressed parents certainly do not make for a happy environment. Other research suggests that happiness is largely relative meaning that there is only so much money we need to live and beyond that nobody

is any happier than the other. In fact, the same researchers say that living in a community where you feel the need to "keep up" will only result in lower levels of life satisfaction.

Creating a happy family environment You can rest assured that research suggests that the number of siblings, parents marital status and age of parents had very little, if anything, to do with what make children happy. So how do we create a happy family environment?

First, *communicate* often – eat dinner together as much as possible. Speak about your day. Have *family rituals* – Remember the movie National Lampoons Christmas Vacation. *Be flexible* – be careful not to be the sort of parent who is inflexible. Remember you have to be "fair" and consistent. Have *fun together* – each person in your house should have a reputation for something positive. Remember a family is like a team and parents are the coaches.

Don't worry be happy

Intellectual Ability and Academic Achievement

"The overemphasis on..IQ scores has been a disservice to the profession of school psychology" (D. Miller). Dr Miller a school neuropsychologist has stated what many of us know professionally or intuitively. Having a high IQ is great but not the be all and end all.

An IQ Score can be thought of as a "summary score" or score regarding the overall health of your brain functioning. So a high IQ score means your brain is functioning very well compared to others. However, what happens if parts of the brain are functioning very well and other parts are not? Well you guessed it - your IQ score will either be under inflated or over inflated. Teachers and parents may conclude a child isn't capable of learning much when they are. The risk of low or high expectations are obvious.

It is better to think of "intelligence", not as a single score, but as "types of intelligence". For example, a child may be highly intelligent with visual spatial processing getting a high IQ score for this area but only an average score for verbal intelligence. In this way, we can see why some people may be gifted



artists but not mathematicians and vis versa.

The problem is that most popular tests of intelligence emphasise overall IQ scores or only measure a few areas of intelligence. In our practice we use the Woodcock Johnson Tests of Cognitive Abilities, which measures up to 7 areas of intellectual ability (the most of any IQ test) as well as giving an overall IQ score if needed.

It is important to remember that about half your child's grades in school will be predicted by their overall IQ score. The other half is made of things such as good teaching, a motivated student and supportive parents.

Finally, think about this—success in one's career is even less influenced by intelligence and more by "perseverance" and "people skills"!

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-clinic

Types of Dyslexia

Dyslexia basically means "difficulty with reading". There are several types of dyslexia, each describing the specific type of reading problem.

- ◆ *Developmental dyslexia* is a reading disorder from birth.
- ◆ *Dysphonetic dyslexia* is difficulty reading because of poor phonological skills (sounding out).
- ◆ *Surface (visual) dyslexia* is poor reading because of difficulty with recognising (not sounding out) symbols and over relying on sounding out.
- ◆ *Mixed dyslexia* is the result of poor problems with phonological processing and recognising symbols.
- ◆ *Deep dyslexia* is where problems with over relying on visual and "reading for meaning" and not sounding out enough.

Treatment of any dyslexia requires a thorough assessment by an educational psychologist and then remedial teaching. Usually intensive phonics is recommended for young children with phonological dyslexia.