



Australian Family

Summer 2015

**MANNERS
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DIFFERENCE**

**Private parts
are private –**

teaching protective
behaviour

**FIXING FUSSY
EATERS**

***Talking up*
TALKING**

*Australian
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power!**

*Young
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FROM MY DESK

This week as we go to print, the race that stops our nation has recorded an historic moment with the winning ride of jockey, Michelle Payne and the first Melbourne Cup win for Ballarat-based trainer, Darren Weir.

While these are great achievements, what struck us more at Australian Family is the story of the Payne family. They've had their share of sadness, but the benefits of growing up in a large family, connected with animals and a strong work ethic shines through. Because of the loss of their mother, each of the Payne children had to put in to the running of family life, with their father committed to keeping the family together.

They gained resilience and learned to bounce back from set-back. The role of strapper brother Stevie is also remarkable, but not because he has Down Syndrome. Within the Payne family, no one paid any attention to it at all – and who didn't laugh at Michelle recounting how Stevie figured out that he could use that to his advantage to get out of sibling trouble!



In this same week we saw the ABC screen the three-part documentary *Making Families Happy*. In these families, the contrast couldn't be more obvious – argumentative, hypercritical of each other, disconnected, disrespectful to each other - just unhappy. Perhaps the saddest

comment comes from one young participant who said he has “never really seen a happy family”. It can't have been easy to let it all hang out in front of television cameras. We honour the families taking part, for their bravery, honesty and willingness to try to change with the help of clinical psychologist John Aiken, and child psychologist Claire Rowe. What becomes apparent is that as the adults start working together, communicating more clearly and setting boundaries, harmony increases and the families start enjoying their time together as a family. It's must see viewing for all families as it approaches family distress, and offers do-able solutions and hope for the future.

Our story, *Giggle Power* addresses one of the key ideas - for children to be happy, adults need to rediscover the joy in life and parenting as well. In other stories, we've looked at how young children acquire speech and language skills, and why **Private Parts** are just that. Experts in early years have offered some sound advice on how to cope when your previously compliant toddler turns into a food-refusing diva and we check out the winning stories of this year's **Early Education and Care Awards**. And for the last word, John Weldon muses on kids and swearing – is it ever ok?

And finally as we come to the end of another year and the summer break, think about the many great destinations that Australia has to offer when next planning your next family holiday – all those international tourists appreciate our country. Let's make sure our children do too!

Jennifer

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AUSTRALIAN FAMILY MAGAZINE IS PUBLISHED BY

AUSTRALIAN FAMILY MAGAZINE PTY LTD.

ACN 081 005 389

34 HIGH STREET, GLEN IRIS, VIC 3146

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AUDIT PERIOD 1 OCTOBER 2014 TO 31 MARCH 2015.



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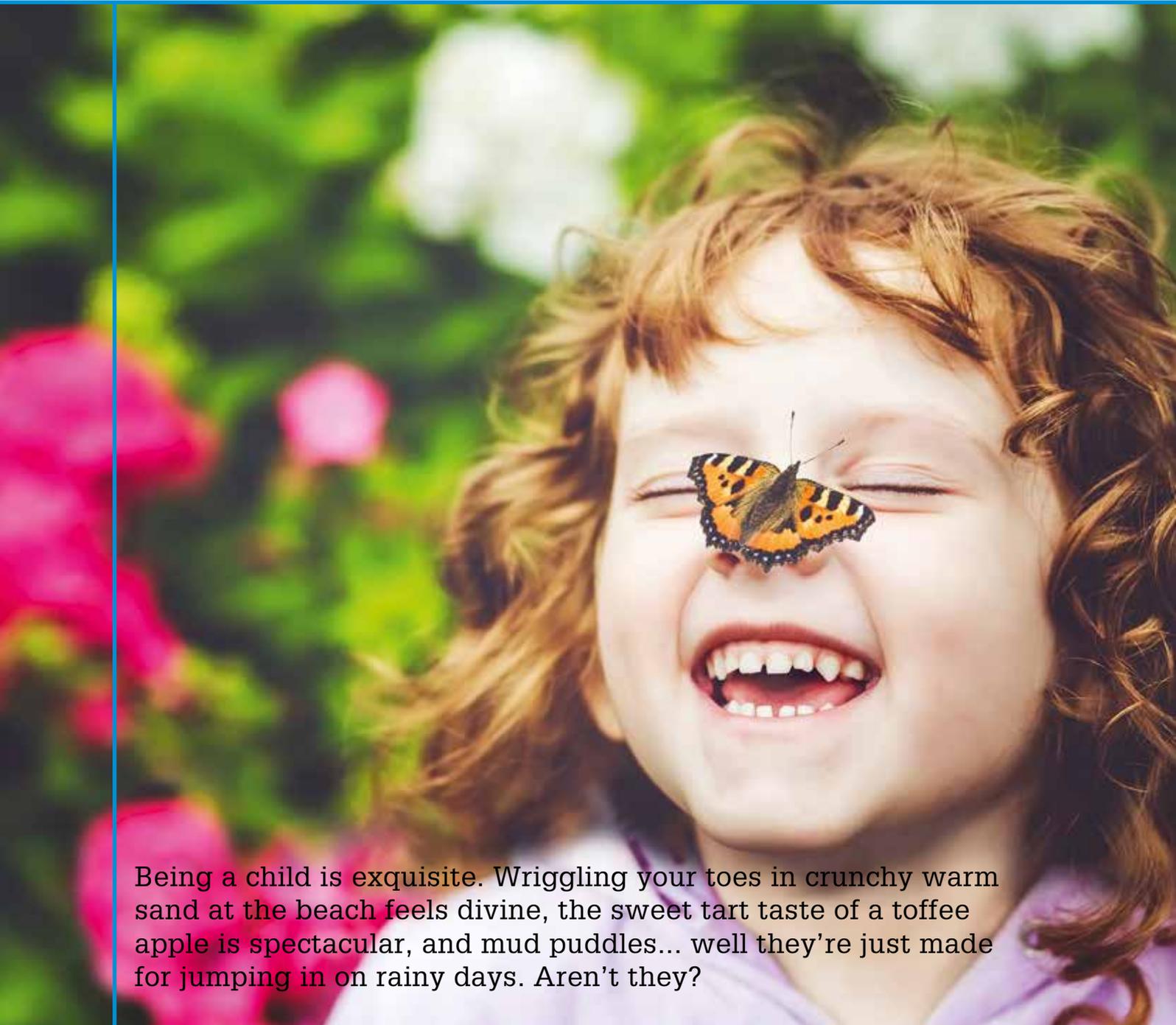
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GIGGLE power

By Carrol Baker



Being a child is exquisite. Wriggling your toes in crunchy warm sand at the beach feels divine, the sweet tart taste of a toffee apple is spectacular, and mud puddles... well they're just made for jumping in on rainy days. Aren't they?

Adults bemoan cleaning out sand encrusted beach-bags, muddy puddles are scrupulously avoided at all costs, and heaven forbid the angst of discovering there's sticky toffee apple hanging off your chin.

It seems us adults could probably learn a thing or two about life from our offspring.

The power of laughter

From little sniggles, to giggles, hoots and side splitting chuckles - kids love to laugh with wild abandon. Kids really are onto something. Laughter has been shown to reduce blood pressure, stress hormones, improve alertness and memory – and that's no joke! Injecting a little more playfulness and fun

into our adult lives is easier than you might think, after all kids are experts at it, so follow their lead! Share a giggle, tell a silly joke, and make it a mission to recapture your sense of child-like playfulness – it's easier than you think.

Banish judgemental thoughts

Have you ever watched a young child at play building a tower with blocks? Their tiny brows furrowed in concentration, tongue stuck out just so... If it collapses they might shed a tear, or become frustrated, but they mostly take it in their stride.

Clinical Psychologist Nicole Cook says when a situation doesn't go as planned, kids pick themselves up and move on, and they generally don't take it personally. "They don't have judgemental thoughts and view it as having a deeper meaning about their self-worth, or that they're worthless or a failure, like adults sometimes do," she says.

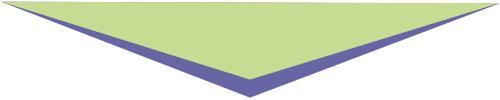
Instead of beating yourself up, if something doesn't work out, think back to your other successes. Be proud of what you have achieved, and move on to something else that will bring you joy.

Practice mindfulness

Kids live their lives moment by precious moment. They'll be enthralled by a butterfly flitting by in the breeze, a conga line of ants meandering up the footpath, or captivated by the sound a wooden spoon makes banging on a can. Dr Timothy Sharpe, Chief Happiness Officer (and Clinical Psychologist) at The Happiness Institute says children have an innate mindfulness. "Walking to the shop one day, it took my daughter and I a few hours just to go a few hundred metres," he says. "Every branch was an amazing magic wand, every pebble had to be picked up to see if it sparkled in the sunlight," he says.

Kids are undeniably gifted at living in the moment. And while it might seem they are intuitively mindful, according to Dr Sharpe the reason they can focus so well on the present is more to do with the way their brains are hardwired. "It's not so much that they choose to live in the moment - they don't have the cognitive capacity, their brains aren't developed enough to think beyond that," he says.

Next time you are playing with your child, join them on the floor and let them lead the play. Tune into the here and



On average, human beings laugh about 17 times per day.

Laughter uses about 15 muscles in the face and makes our bodies move.

Laughter reduces levels of stress hormones such as cortisol.

Laughter releases serotonin into the brain (the happy hormone) and increases blood flow to the heart.

Lab rats laugh when you tickle them!

Animal behaviourists have conducted experiments that show that dogs laugh too (it sounds like a kind of panting)!

now. Be present. And if you find yourself drifting off and thinking about what's for dinner, pull yourself back. Enjoy those moments with your child. Once they've passed you can never get them back.

Be creative

Kids are very creative, they'll eat their dinner, and use the leftovers to paint a masterpiece on the kitchen wall, or they'll raid the ironing basket, play dress-ups and create a world where magic happens. Adults often reign in their own creativity because of their beliefs of how they should act in the grown-up world. But researchers Darya Zabelina and Michael Robinson have shown the more adults think and act childlike (even at work) the more imaginative, and creative they'll be solving complex problems, and finding innovative ways to trouble shoot minor ones. So what are you waiting for! Perhaps it should be dress like a superhero day at work?!

Fighting fear of failure

Kids will have a go at just about anything – even things we know they shouldn't! Dr Sharpe says most kids aren't afraid to fail, but if they do, they'll regroup and try again.

WHAT MAKES YOUR FAMILY LAUGH?

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"When a child learns to walk they take a few steps and fall over, they get up and have another go," he says. "As they grow they make mistakes, they fail, they fall over literally and metaphorically, but part of the process is to take that next step and try again," he says.

As adults we could take a leaf or two out of their book. Fear of failure can hold you back from realising your dreams – never give up. You might just surprise yourself and find you can achieve far beyond what you would have ever thought possible.

Don't be afraid of looking silly!

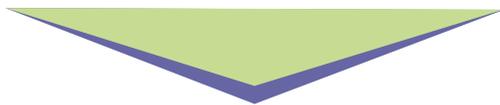
Have you ever been in the checkout at a supermarket and see a small child dance or sing out loud as they wait in the queue? It's sure to bring a smile to your face. Kids really don't care if anyone is watching.

Most adults wouldn't dream of skipping along the pavement on the way to work, or busting out a few dance moves while waiting in line at the bank. Why not? We are all a little nutty anyway! According to Dr Sharpe, adults worry far too much about what others think about them. "If we can lose that

fear of being judged, or being seen to be different, we could probably have a lot more fun in life," says Dr Sharpe. It can be incredibly liberating to sing out loud in the car, to put purple ribbons in your hair because it's your favourite colour, or to eat a rainbow coloured ice-cream for breakfast just because. Try it. Better still get some suggestions from the kids and let them join in. The memories you share will be priceless.

Forgive – let go

A child can tell another "you're not my friend anymore" then five minutes later, happily be playing side by side with their toys. As adults we tend to hold onto grudges for a lot longer, and it's not healthy. According to Ms Cook it's not uncommon for adults to keep a moral scorecard against others who they feel have wronged them for far longer than they should – and in some cases forever. "Holding onto resentment can do far more damage to you than the other person," she says. "By letting go, you're not condoning the other person's behaviour, you're accepting that it was the past and forgiving them." Forgiveness is a choice. Let go, you'll feel better for it. **af**



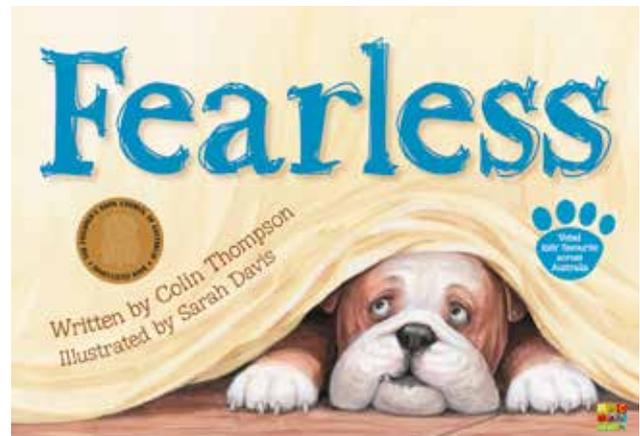
Playtime is important for kids, for adults, and to build relationships between them. But many of us are time poor, as we juggle busy and often competing schedules.

Keep in mind, it's moments that matter.

Whether it's a shared chat on the way to soccer practice, talking to your teen while you chop vegetables together for dinner, or sharing a game of hide and seek with your pre-schooler.

Finding meaningful ways to connect with your child through laughter and play strengthens the bond between you. Have fun. Parenting is a wild ride filled with love, laughter, tears, sticky fingerprints, skinned knees, and magical memories.

Embrace it.



FEARLESS, BY COLIN THOMPSON, ILLUSTRATED BY SARAH DAVIS, HARPER COLLINS AUSTRALIA

Sometimes babies get the wrong name. It's the same with dogs.

So when the Claybourne-Willments, who should have been called the Smiths, got Fearless as a little puppy, it seemed a good name for him.

Except Fearless wasn't.

How does Fearless finally live up to his name? By accident, of course!

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FUSSY eaters

By Tania Connelly

Why won't my kids eat vegetables? How can I get them to try different foods? Why do they eat at day care but not at home? They only eat plain pasta so I give it to them because they have to eat something! Why are my children such fussy eaters?

Rebecca Fisher, lead Paediatric Dietitian at Westmead Children's Hospital, answers, "A lot of fussy eating is just a developmental type of thing." Children's hunger patterns are directly related to their growth cycles. Even babies' appetites fluctuate. Breastfed babies will pull off once they are full so parents shouldn't feel compelled to continue to offer formula fed babies a bottle until it's empty. It's important to note that a child will not voluntarily starve them self. If children are growing, gaining weight and receiving enough nutrition, their fussiness could be attributed to simply not feeling hungry.

Prior generations were forced to finish their plates when wastage was an issue, but Fisher says this is unwise in our current environment of excess and escalating rates of childhood obesity. Parents' attitudes about food are crucial. It is essential they be good role models and eat a variety of foods in front of their children to encourage them to mimic their behaviour. Fisher believes bribing or force-feeding a child can make a tense situation worse and advises not to sacrifice nutritional quality just to get a child to eat. Other reasons children may become irritable at mealtimes are because they are tired, distracted, have grazed throughout the day, attention-seeking or have eaten too much at day care.

Michelle, Early Years Educator at Jindi Worabaek Children's Centre in Victoria, is adamant fussy eating is all about control. Many parents have complained that their child refuses to eat at home but will happily chow down at day care. It's not the industry trained chef and eight weeks of rotating menus including pasta, chicken schnitzels, burgers and rice dishes the children prefer. The secret, Michelle says, is in, "allowing the children to serve themselves." They choose a bowl, pick their portions and sit where they like in the al fresco dining area. Ingredients are also kept separate; sauce from noodles, vegetables away from meat and only individual packets of butter, vegemite and jam are available. If children have control over their portions, they won't feel



Serve small portions

Allow choice – serve themselves

Allow control - serve finger foods

Serve water

Restrict milk or juices

Build appetites – no snacking

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out of their depth and will try something new, according to Michelle. When they have finished, they clear the table and wash their dishes. Fruit is available all day so hungry children can help themselves without waiting for a specific meal and any leftover fruit is made into smoothies. Breakfast, morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and supper are provided at the centre.

Michelle advises parents to place different foods in separate pots in the middle of the dining table at mealtimes, to allow children to have control of what they choose to eat. She stresses give up bad habits of making separate dinners or filling kids up with milk and juice. "It's about not making food an issue, that it's enjoyed and they are in control." Children can become fussy because they crave independence and wish to feed themselves. Michelle admits she doesn't always get through to parents and states time constraints as the most common excuse. But, she says, unless parents put in the time and be consistent, "they won't get the outcomes they want".

Ellyn Satter, Registered US Dietitian Nutritionist and Family Therapist, recommends offering food in a friendly and positive environment to reduce pressure at mealtimes. Paediatric Dietitian Kyla Smith volunteered to host Satter's Perth workshop and incorporates her principles in her practice (see www.mealtimes.com.au)." She explains Satters' concept, *Eating Competence*, as children having the ability to regulate their appetite with their intuitive knowledge of what their bodies need, to enable proper growth and development. The second concept, *Division of Responsibility*, defines a parent's job **as being what foods to offer, at what time and where**. The child's responsibility is **how much they eat and whether they will eat or not**. That means "no coercing, bribing, coaxing, pushing, pleading or bargaining". Satter believes fussy eating develops when there is a rupture



in the division of responsibility as one party attempts to take control.

Smith says Satter's focus is on family meals and structure rather than what's presented. She believes an extra level of pressure is placed on parents if they become fixated with creating healthy meals. Her rationale is the more pressure on parents to make healthy meals the less likely they will get meals on the table. While healthy eating is encouraged, it's not the primary focus. Therefore she doesn't strictly adhere to dietary guidelines.

Based on material provided by the National Health and Medical Research Council, if the updated Australian Dietary Guidelines (which now include infants from 6 months) are followed, good health and reduced risks of some diseases and diet related conditions can result.

1. Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active.
2. Choose amounts of nutritious foods and drinks to meet energy needs.
3. Enjoy a wide range of nutritious foods from the five food groups and drink plenty of water.
4. Limit intakes of foods containing saturated fat, added salt, added sugars and alcohol.
5. Encourage, support and promote breastfeeding.
6. Care for your food, prepare and store it safely.

Janina Busch, who runs a Family Day Care in Victoria, says, "We have a strong emphasis on paddock to plate with the idea of growing the food and learning about the food." Children tend her vegetable and herb garden and Busch says, "If they're involved in the process of growing and taking care of the foods, it certainly seems to help them with wanting to eat it and try new things." Every month she takes the children to the fresh produce shop to choose an item they haven't tried previously to bring back and prepare.

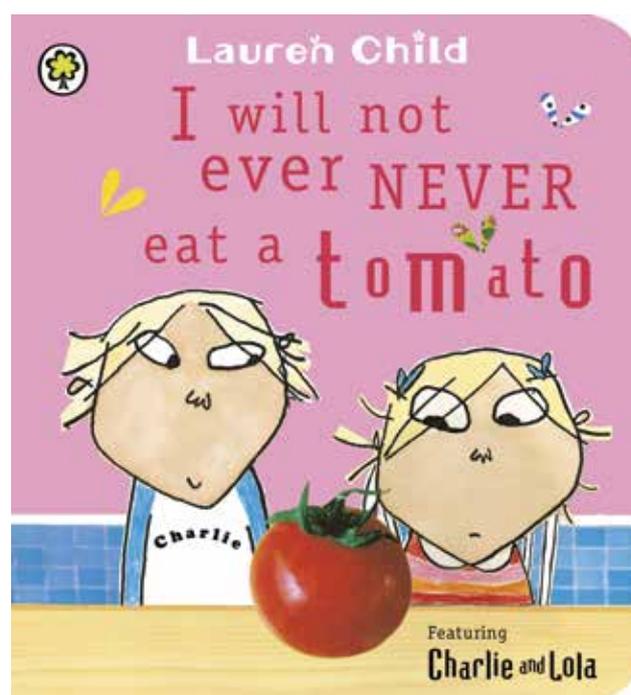
Parents provide lunches for their offspring but one child will only eat honey sandwiches. Busch brings out vegetables and dip for children that refuse to eat them at home and finds that once a child watches others eat, "almost like peer pressure", they'll often try different foods.

Her advice to parents is buy fruit in season as it tastes better, persist with introducing new foods, involve children in food preparation and ensure mealtimes are relaxed. She agrees "Often parents are time poor" and emphasises

the importance of sitting down with their children to "eat together and role model the sort of behaviours you want the children to have." She doesn't believe it's a positive situation for children when mealtimes are a chore and they are forced to remain seated until they've eaten everything. She tells parents to choose their battles and not make food a big deal. "If you force it on them it makes [dining] an unpleasant experience."

Smith agrees the more pressure children have on them the more likely they are to be fussy. While she echoes Satter's sentiments, Smith is more interested in analysing the cause of fussy eating - specifically sensory preferences, biting skills, posture and anxiety. Smith promotes positive food exposure and positive food play where food is introduced through baking, cooking, meal preparation, craft and even throwing grapes into a basket. Her primary goal is to help parents understand why their children are fussy and work out ways to combat it.

Instead of focusing their questions around food, parents need to look deeper, and the answer may be as simple as handing over control of the spoon. **af**



CHARLIE AND LOLA: I WILL NOT EVER NEVER EAT A TOMATO, BY LAUREN CHILD, HACHETTE AUSTRALIA

Charlie's little sister Lola does not eat a lot of things - and she absolutely will not never ever eat a tomato - until one day Charlie plays a good trick on her. This first classic Charlie and Lola picture book tackles fussy eaters in a fun way.

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BRIDGING the GENERATIONS

By Brooke Lumsden



The very idea of intergenerational learning is one which promises valuable benefits. It seems incredible it's taken so long to gain momentum.

On one side you have a group of youngsters who are just learning about the world around them, including everything from relationships and their environment to the beginnings of literacy and numeracy. On the other side you have a group of older people with a lifetime of experience, a wealth of knowledge and plenty of time and love to give. It's a perfect partnership.

Recent years have seen increasing interest in "intergenerational learning", so much so that some centres are being designed to house both child care and aged care facilities under the same roof to allow for ease of access and regular combined activities. Providence Mount St Vincent

in Seattle is one such place, offering child care for babies through to preschoolers as well as housing 400 elderly residents. This allows the two groups to come together for both planned and spontaneous activities five days a week in a caring, enriching environment, helping to meet the needs of all involved.

The program provides the children with opportunities such as learning naturally about the aging process, the acceptance of disabilities, and being part of an extended family with people two or three generations older than them – something that many children in today's society do not have. The facility reports the benefits for the elderly residents

include a renewed sense of self worth, the ability to role model and transfer their knowledge, and the opportunity to play, laugh and take joy in young children being part of their home environment.

In Australia, such programs are also on the rise, with many educational and child care facilities engaging with local retirement and nursing homes to run regular joint activities.

An evolving program

After reading about the benefits of intergenerational play, Michelle Bouabaid, Director of All Star Early Learners in Botany in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs decided to give it a go at her centre. Michelle says the reading left a mark on her as a teacher and they started the program as a one-off Mother's Day concert in which a large group of children caught public transport to the nursing home to perform. "We spent the morning singing and dancing, handing out hand-made gifts, and joining residents for morning tea," Michelle explains. "Over the last couple of years, we introduced play sessions instead of a concert, where instead of taking our singing voices, the children would select a range of activities to set up and share with the Sir Joseph Banks residents in small groups."

The visits, which are no doubt cherished by the residents, particularly those without much family contact, are planned each year around special occasions such as Mother's Day in May and Grandparents Week in October. "We alternate locations, one visit at the nursing home and the next at All Star," Michelle explains. "Activities have included jewellery making, storytelling with props, creative arts, puzzles and board games."

However, these activities are not just about child's play. The point is for everyone involved to benefit in a variety of ways, and the flexibility of such a program allows this. "We

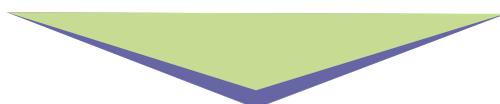
found that the residents like to keep their minds busy, so cognitive activities and art are popular," Michelle says. "We also observed the delight expressed by residents as they taught the children new skills, or offered them assistance. This shows a sense of belonging as community elders."

Michelle explains that although grandparents at their early learning centre are a strong support network for many of the families, unfortunately some of the aged care residents have not had contact with their own grandchildren for a very long time. "The visits became an opportunity to help fill that yearning and bring children back into their lives," she says.

The benefits for the children in this regard are endless, with the core benefit being in forming connections with others. "As humans, young or old, we are social beings and relationships are the basis of who we are," she says.

Michelle says the program places value on what the residents can share with the children - whether it is a story they tell or a song they teach, demonstrating that the elders are valued and important. "The children start to learn how different groups live in the community cohesively, rather than as individuals. The children's skills of communication and self-confidence are extended, as they make new friends, perform songs or stories and talk about themselves during play-sessions."

Travel restrictions on public transport prevented the centre's infants from visiting the nursing home, so they instead started to invite residents to visit their centre. "Now they can interact with children of all ages, from six weeks to five years, whereas when we used to only go to the home it would only be the older pre-schoolers who would attend," Michelle explains. "Including babies as young as two months in the program has added a whole new dimension, with the residents showing absolute delight when interacting with the very youngest."



Benefits for children

- Increase understanding of the aging process
- Develop a new relationship outside family
- Exhibit better behaviour in classroom and other environments
- Learn they can give to others in need
- Learn soft social skills such as manners

Benefits for older adults

- Demonstrate their value to society
- Have other people who care about them
- Increase emotional support, giving and receiving
- Expand social roles
- Work part-time with purpose

Source: The KITE (Kids Interacting with The Elderly) project www.kite.org.au

However, as transport for the residents to visit the centre is limited, restricting number who are able to attend, "So we have continued to visit the home in order for the residents not to feel as though they have missed out," Michelle says. "The staff at Sir Joseph Banks are just wonderful, always welcoming and open to any ideas or visits from the children.

They have the residents best interest at heart."

"As teachers, we get quite emotional seeing the faces of the children and residents engaging in quality interactions - it reminds us of the importance of human connections which we often overlook in today's busy world." **af**

Julie Occhiuto, Australian Family Early Years Educator, 2014, has run an intergenerational program at Tigger's Honey Pot in Randwick, NSW for over seven years. She is continually reminded of the importance and relevance of such programs in today's society.

"Each and every visit I am reminded of the special connection between the young and old," Julie says. "I have observed the change in mood and uplifted spirit of residents when engaging with young children. At the beginning of our visits some residents may be withdrawn and uncommunicative but by the end of our visit there is a sparkle in their eye, a flash of recognition of the children as well as smiles and gestures such as shaking hands to say goodbye to the children."

Julie has also found the experience to pique children's curiosity, asking questions like "Why does Joe have a pram?" (meaning a walker). "Children are accepting of the diversity of residents and eager to join in our visits," she says.

Julie recently presented at the *Intergenerational Action on a Global Scale* conference in Hawaii alongside Suzanne Hobart, the Director of Milford House Aged Care. "I was truly inspired at the conference to hear the amazing intergenerational programs that are running all over the US and was able



to bring back many programs to our service to ensure the continual growth and evolving of our program," Julie says.

As winner, Julie used her prize to visit The Grace Living Centre in Oklahoma in January. She had read *The Element*, a book that explains why finding your passion in life changes everything. "One thing that struck me when reading was the acknowledgement that in most Western cultures there is a tendency of segregating people by age, children go to early childhood centres, older children to school and the elderly to nursing homes," Julie explains. "Intergenerational programs provide the means of bringing the generations together with numerous benefits for young and old. My dream is to establish a shared Aged Care facility and Early Childhood Centre model similar to the Grace Living Centre."



Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards 2015

Hundreds of early child years educators and services across Australia were nominated for the four awards on offer in 2015. State and national winners talked about authentic experiences with children and how their work is integral to the welfare and future of the families in their communities. **By Lakshmi Singh**



Emma Larsen – Rising Star Award

Emma Larsen knew she was destined to become a teacher at an early age.

Emma is at the start of her career but has always believed that children should explore, play and learn in an uninterrupted way, both indoors and outdoors, without too many structured activities.

It's one of the most important gifts we can give children, she says.

"Because our job is to prepare them for the jobs that don't even exist yet, we need to start teaching them skills like problem solving, creativity and that ability to explore and to work through things at their own pace and in their own way."

Emma employs the principles of child psychologist Dr Louise Porter, as well as the Reggio-Emilia philosophy that children can take charge of their learning and that the environment is their teacher.

The outdoor component of the program at Avenel Preschool involves many different interaction points with community services. Emma believes that eating lunch at the football oval, visiting the local primary school, buying groceries from the general store, involves children and allows them to take charge of community experiences it prepares them for real-life and gives them a sense of belonging.

She says working with local councils and getting them to invest in early childhood is crucial to both the children as well as the community's future. However, she acknowledges that there is still more work to be done.

"Often early-childhood services see themselves as islands, isolated away from everything else. We're a part of the education continuum and we need to see ourselves as being part of the wider community."



State winners, Early Childhood Service of the Year, 2015



Jindi Woraback Children's Centre - Early Childhood Service of the Year, 2015

Jindi Woraback Children's Centre has impressed over several years, winning the VIC/TAS award for Australian Family Service of the Year in 2011 and 2013 and then taking out the National Service Award in 2015.

Over this time, Jindi has developed the Little Champs early intervention program. A fulltime Applied Behavioural Analysis (ABA) therapist works with children with diagnosed and to-be-diagnosed needs. Catching problems early in this way is an included service in the program, saving families time

and money in waiting periods and treatment costs.

Many services offer school readiness programs, but Jindi Woraback worked with the primary school located next door. Preschool children who will attend this school are paired with Prep students and participate in a literacy and familiarisation program.

"It means that the transition is not just at the end of the year, they have a full year of transition," says Michelle Walker, director of the centre.

The families love the sense of advocacy programs like this create for the community. They are fully supportive of unconventional and unique opportunities like experiencing university campus life (Victoria University is located near by) on an almost on-demand basis.

Walker hopes that with the prize money and support from the university, she can continue to educate her staff on the foundational qualities of the centre.

"We want to understand how a child's brain develops," she says. Concepts like Neuroscience and Biogenetics are on the agenda, as is Mindfulness to enable a more conscious approach to educating children, she says.

Jacqueline Taylor - Early Childhood Director of the Year, 2015



There is something inspiring when a childcare educator takes on a leadership role not only to provide great service to the children, but to her peers, the families as well as the entire community. Jacqui Taylor embodies the great qualities of a true community leader.

Taylor believes that support for the childcare sector is imperative to allow children to have that 'basis of nurture' instilled in them from a young age. When the time comes to make a choice, early experiences and habits will hopefully guide them to return kindness and make good decisions.

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Taylor applies the same approach to the entire community and through her work with the *Strengthening Children and Young Person Interagency*, she often offers extra support to struggling children and their families at the service.



Top tips for aspiring nominees

Stick to the word limit. Going over the limit may not be worthwhile and could be disadvantageous.

Repeating how a centre is exceeding the National Quality Framework is not enough, show how you stand out.

Avoid buzz words like 'passion', 'journey' and 'critical reflection'



Above: Queensland finalists

Left: Jean Kittson



State winners, Early Childhood Director of the Year, 2015

At the Rainbow Station Early Education centre, children are taught age-specific techniques like controlling their breathing when upset, recognising emotions and also changing their thought processes.

"Even at the age of three or four, you'll have a child come and say to you, 'I

can't do it' or 'No one will play with me'".

It's about catching these thoughts and replacing them with a mindset of 'hang on a second, I'm gonna have a go', or ask for help, Jacqui says.

Taylor plans to use the prize money from the award to mentor and guide her staff (including helping a

grandmother at the centre gain her first qualification) towards gaining professional recognition.

"I want to be able to give others the same opportunities to show that their life is meaningful and that regardless of age they can accomplish anything," she says.



The Judges

Lee-Ann Most - Early Childhood Educator of the Year, 2015



At Glendale Early Education Centre, Lee-Ann Most says every child should be catered for as individuals. Just because there are certain routines and expected standards, doesn't mean it's right for all children.

It is an approach that they have found not only works for children with special needs, but for all children. Tied in with the goal to help children learn at their individual pace, comes the belief that all children deserve to have the opportunity to explore natural environments and develop thoughtful and socially responsible behaviours.

"We run programs like the Engine Room," she says. "It's about calming the nervous system to organise the brain for learning and thinking and play. It's part of a sensory diet and because we have so many children with diagnosed and undiagnosed needs, it's helpful."

To enable continued professional development, she introduced a tool that encourages staff to self-reflect and hopes to incorporate networking opportunities with other centres and feedback from the community to allow the team to grow.

"It's really important to work with the professionals around us – to work with each other, to respect partnerships and families."

Most believes while research highlights the importance of those first five years, more is needed in terms of representing children as individuals.

"The work that we do is so important in supporting and advocating for children because they will shape the community of the future. So they need to have that respect and that empowerment from the adults of today, because they're the adults of tomorrow."

Nesha O'Neil – A Judge's Perspective

As a previous winner and employer in the early years, Nesha O'Neil, President of the Australian Childcare Alliance (NSW) is familiar with the level of dedication, hard work and innovative methods of those successful educators.

"It's not a popularity contest - it doesn't come down to how many votes you get from families – it comes down to being critically evaluated for your contribution to the sector and to your children and families in particular."

This contribution is often recognised by the centre receiving an 'Exceeding' rating under the NQF, but it is not always about what the centres do to stand apart, but **why** they do it that sets the winners apart from the rest.

The use of technology to enhance programs or new experiences delivered to children really highlights the enthusiasm and energy and brings renewed excitement to the early education and care sector," she says.

"Our jobs can be thankless at times, and when you are pushing to be a professional and a leader, it can be tiring. Awards like this enable us to recognise those people who are truly changing the face of the sector, and highlight the passionate professionals that we have leading the way." **af**

Catching up with Jacqui

Jacqui Taylor, Nestlé NAN® Toddler Director of the Year is a woman on a mission.

Jacqui is Director of Rainbow Station Early Education Centre at Casino in NSW.

Jacqui is modest about herself and winning the award. Mention child protection though and her dedication to the families of Northern Rivers is clear.

The win enabled her to get the message out about her twin passions - early years education and child protection.

“I have gained more of a voice. I feel like now I know what I’m talking about”.

It has also been a boost generally for the staff.

“We really are working somewhere great! It has been fantastic, a team effort. I can’t do the work that I do without them supporting me in my role as well, it’s all of us together”.

Jacqui’s experience of the nomination and award process is common to many prior winners. First they can’t believe they’ve been nominated. Then it’s finding the self-belief that they can mix it with the best.

She urges those nominated in 2016 to take the time to have a go, in fact that is her mantra in life, and one she communicates to the children in her care.

“One way to build emotional resilience is to push through anxiety by having a go at it.”

“With the awards that’s the biggest part. You can surely be nominated and just leave it at that. But what if you had a go at responding?”

She expands on that. “I have to admit, I looked at the questions originally and thought I can’t do it, I can’t do it! I can’t answer this, I don’t have anything to offer, but then when you actually sit down and reflect...and you have a go...well, you never know where it will end up!”

One of the rewards of making it to the national event is networking with other early years professionals, all at the top of their game. “I met some of the others at the spa treatment, was having a chat and thought they were just phenomenal, just amazing...”!



Jacqui cites boss Liesl Pyke-Nott as the one she ‘owes it all to’! Liesl supports Jacqui’s initiatives with staff, and her involvement with child protection agencies. She understands that it gives back to the wider community. Liesl has allowed her every opportunity, trusting her abilities. And while Jacqui may be modest, Liesl has no hesitation in talking up Jacqui’s award!

Originally Jacqui was focussed on a career at the Department of Community Services, but realised that her path lay elsewhere with families, on the education side.

“I started working in child care 11-3, next thing I went back to uni to get qualifications and that’s how I started. “

“I can say to parents and I can say to staff, ‘I started below you. I wasn’t even a trainee’. I have done every single position in child care that you can think of, I’ve been there, I’ve done it and that’s how I’ve made my way to be director”.

The Nestlé NAN Toddler prize money has already been earmarked. The centre has been selected to trial a new initiative in child protection for the Northern Rivers, called *Mijung Jarjums - Kids in Mind*.

Family participation will benefit the centre community as for example, the centre has a number of grandparents holding custody of children. The program will look at strategies for when the child has witnessed or been the victim of trauma, and fits with Jacqui’s long-held conviction about the connection between family protection and education.

“Education is always positive, it looks to build, improve and help families and children”.





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Nominations are now open for the Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards* in four categories: Nestlé NAN® Toddler Early Childhood Director of the Year, MyLife MySuper Early Childhood Service of the Year, Springfree Trampoline Early Childhood Educator of the Year and the Educational Experience Rising Star Award (open to people who have worked in early childhood for five years or less – regardless of their age).



All levels of experience and qualification are accepted across all program types, including long day care (private and community), family day care, occasional care, preschool, early learning centres and school age care groups.

Family, friends, colleagues and parents with children in care are encouraged to nominate in this year's awards which is overseen by Judging Chairman and Australian Family Managing Director, Paul Clancy.

The Australian Family Early Education and Care Awards is judged by a distinguished panel of professionals from the early childhood sector through a rigorous judging process. The judges seek individuals and services that best reflect the highest of quality in their everyday work with young children.



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LANGUAGE

for lifelong success

Louise Wedgwood

We might not think about speech and language development until a toddler seems slower to speak than others, but all children benefit from a proactive approach.

Strong language skills are a leap pad for success in all areas of life. Research consistently shows children with strong language skills do better in school, in their careers, and in relationships.

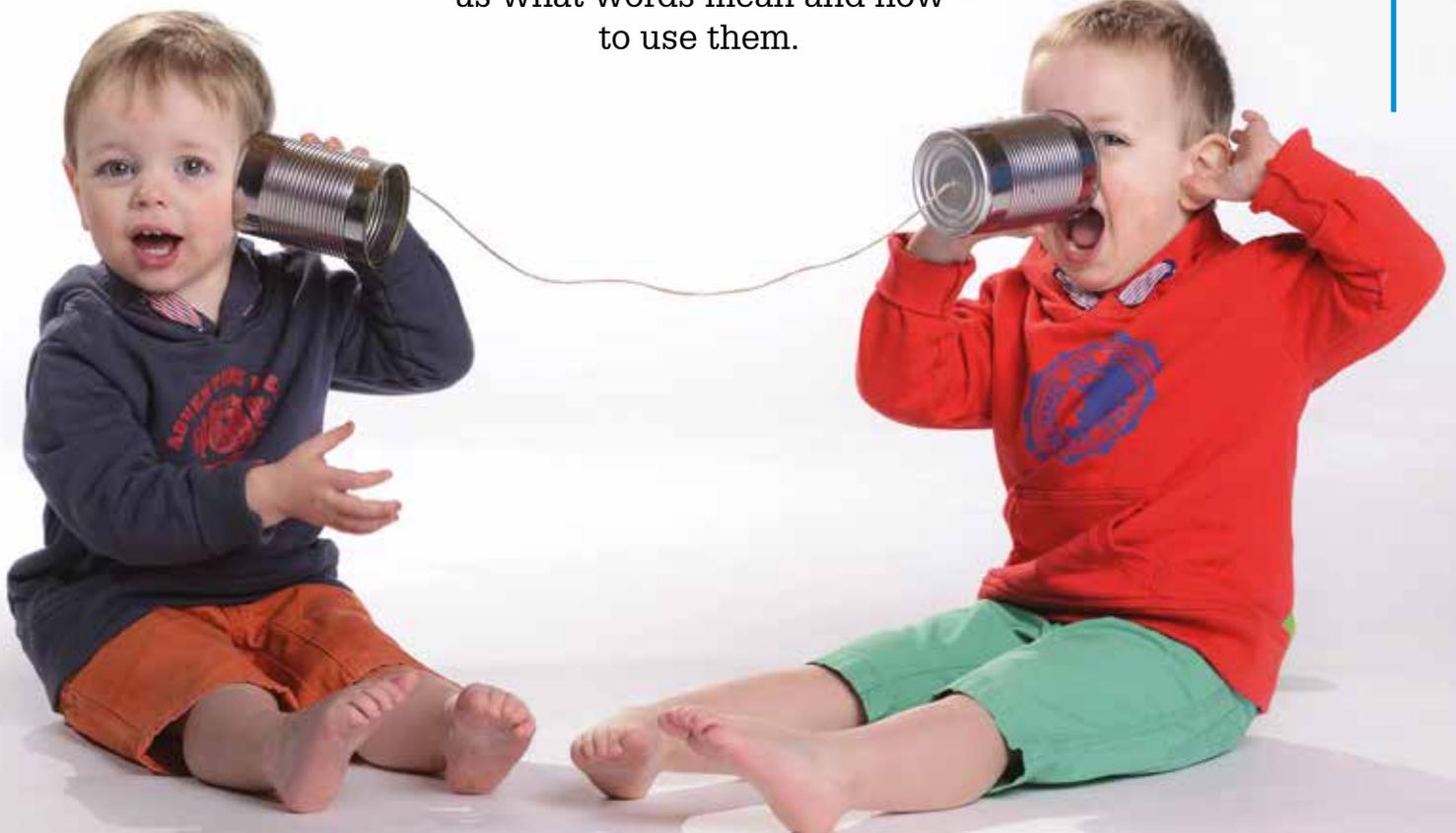
Those toddlers and pre-schoolers who are slower with speech and language may then have trouble reading and

writing. They're also more likely to have social, emotional or behaviour problems that follow them into adulthood.

Most children seem to absorb their first language without even trying. And because of this we don't give much thought to actively helping them fulfil their language potential. It might not be until we suspect they're delayed that we start

Speech is the speech sounds we make.

Language is a set of rules that tell us what words mean and how to use them.



thinking about speech and language development. But it pays to be proactive for all children from birth, including those developing normally.

Start early

While children do have an amazing ability to learn a language in a few short years, it's never too early to think about how we can make it easier for them.

Kath Keiper, a paediatric speech pathologist and mum, encourages reading, talking and singing to babies from birth. She says children are listening and communicating from the day they're born, even if it seems like they're not taking anything in. "They might not be understanding the words but they're hearing your intonation, they're developing those early communication skills like joint attention ... so many early language foundation skills happen in that first 12 months that help get children ready for talking," she says.

It can be encouraging to remember that "speech" and "language" are different things. "Speech" refers to the speech sounds we make while our "language" is a set of rules that tell us what words mean and how to use them. Even though a baby will take a year or longer to respond to you using speech, she's learning about your language from day one.

Lyn Stone is a mum to three girls, now aged 10, 12 and 14, and well-practised in fostering their language skills. Her eldest has a genetic disorder that affects all areas of development and needed extra help with language. So by the time her younger daughters came along Lyn had a lot of experience in proactively supporting their development on top of her background in literacy. She believes the strong language foundation she gave her younger daughters is one of the reasons they're now excellent speakers and thinkers, with her youngest recently scoring in the 99th percentile.

Go with their interests

Creating the ideal environment for kids' language development doesn't mean you have to force them (or yourself) to do special activities. "The main thing about learning and language is it's about the interaction that you have with the child," says Kath. Rather than creating a special learning activity, build on what they already love. Kath says: "I think it's really important to go with the child's interest, because then they're really motivated to learn when they're interested in the activity."

For example, if a child is into trains, they'll pick up more when you join them at the train table than trying to engage them in role play with dolls. Whatever their favourite activity is, you can find endless opportunities to introduce new words and concepts. Playing with trains, you can talk about engines going faster and slower, pushing and pulling, travelling past the station and through the tunnel.

Just five minutes of quality time can be powerful. Kath says:

TODDLERS – AT TWO

Children make many sound errors as they acquire speech, typically

Switching consonants – "dood" for good

Shortening words – "bella" for umbrella

Lisping – "thun" for sun

What can most toddlers do?

By 2 years, toddlers can say a range of speech sounds when talking (e.g. p, b, m, t, d, n, h, w)

By 3 years, toddlers can say even more sounds (e.g. k, g, f, s, ng)

What do many toddlers still find difficult?

Many toddlers have difficulty saying sounds correctly all the time. Some words are more difficult than others for children to say, so they may make some sound errors (e.g. "tat" for cat and "pam" for pram). Sometimes, children can be more difficult to understand when they are using longer sentences.

PRESCHOOLERS – AT FOUR

Children are generally easy to understand most of the time, but still may:

Substitute w for r – the classic "wabbit"

Substitute b for v – "bideo"

Substitute f (s or d) for "th" – "fing", or "dat"

By the beginning of school, most children use "r" and "v" correctly, "th" may take a little longer but there should be no other errors in speech sounds by 8 years of age.

Source: Headstart for kids

<http://www.headstartforkids.com.au/8.html>

"We can't sit and play with our kids all day every day, no-one has time for that. But if you sit and do car play and provide some language models to your child and then walk away, you'd be surprised with how they pick up on that and they start to use the words in their own play." Seizing small moments when her kids were interested is the same approach Lyn took to stimulate their learning. "It was always a mix with the daily routine. It was whenever the opportunity presented itself."

Use the power of music

"I'm a really big believer in using rhythm and music to help children learn language," says Kath, adding that rhyme and repetition have been proven to help children discover how language works. It doesn't matter if it's a nursery rhyme from your own childhood, a modern Wiggles song, or a ditty you make up on the spot – kids love to hear you sing. "Children absolutely love it, it's so engaging for them, it's one of the most powerful tools for sure," says Kath.

To increase your repertoire, most libraries offer free "rhyme time" sessions for toddlers and preschoolers. You can also borrow CDs from the library, make up new words to tunes you already know, or browse Youtube for new songs by modern kids' performers. Have bells, shakers, drums and tapping sticks on hand so you can both join in with the CD or DVD.

Once they're familiar with a particular song or rhyme, try leaving off the last word of each line and waiting expectantly for the child to fill it in. It gives them an active role and lets them practise that word. You can use the same technique with their favourite storybooks.

Don't correct, just model

To help kids improve their speech and language, Kath recommends modelling the right thing to say rather than correcting them. "I find that to be a lot more powerful, especially when children are just learning to talk, because some sounds can take up to seven years to perfect." For example, if they say: 'Look, a tat!' you can model the correct sound without criticising them by saying: 'Yes, a CAT!'

You can then show them how to expand on what they've said, by saying: 'A BLACK cat. Cat SLEEPING.' Or perhaps the child says: 'More!' You can add on to what they say with: 'More sultanas please'. This way they pick up new words, as well as how to put them together in a sentence.

Keep it simple, sometimes

When you're modelling something for the child to repeat, make it easy for them. "Keeping it nice and short and simple when they're just learning words can mean they're a bit more likely to copy what you say," explains Kath. If a child is only putting two words together, then speak to them in two-word

sentences that they can imitate. Rather than saying: 'Oh, this is a very heavy shopping basket with all our fruit and veg in it!' try: 'Heavy basket!'

However, you do need to use more sophisticated language at other times. Kath says: "It is important to NOT simplify your language every time you talk to your child, as your child still needs to hear language that is above their level." Deliberately using complex language is a strategy that worked well for Lyn's family. When her kids asked her the 'What's that?' questions, Lyn capitalised on their curiosity. "My philosophy is that if I had their attention, I would engage them using the best information I had on hand. That's when I considered them most engaged and ready to learn." Rather than replying; 'It's a bow-wow!' for example, she would answer: 'That's a Jack Russell dog'. Lyn believes that using this complex language suits young kids' huge capacity to learn. "Think about the massive, exponential neurological development that takes place in a child from 0-6. There will never be a time like it again for learning."

Give choices

When you give a child simple choices, you give them a chance to appreciate the power of speech. Not only does it prompt them to practise saying the word for what they want, they see first-hand how useful speech is for getting things. For example, avoid automatically getting their favourite cartoon-character bowl out of the cupboard. Instead, offer both a plain bowl and the favourite bowl using simple words, and let them choose. When you're playing with play-dough, offer them the rolling pin and the spaghetti-maker. When pushing the swing, stop pushing then ask: 'More? Or Stop?'. Very young children may only be able to point at what they want, but this helps them practise their expressive communication. If they do attempt the word, reinforce it by repeating it with enthusiasm.

If you're concerned, get advice

Although there's a huge range of what's normal at each age, if you have any concerns it's worth getting expert advice for peace of mind. Kath recommends parents keep up with their child's health checks. "I find maternal and child health nurses are pretty good at being able to identify when there might be a bit of a delay." You can also contact a speech pathologist directly, or see a paediatrician if you're also wondering about other aspects of their development. Kath emphasises: "If you've got any sort of concerns, just get it checked out, because it doesn't hurt to have an assessment." **af**

Further information

Speech Pathology Australia <http://www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/publications/fact-sheets>

Kath Keiper, Paediatric Speech Pathologist <http://chewchewchatter.com.au/tips-tricks>

Lyn Stone, literacy educator <http://lifelongliteracy.com/>

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PRIVATE PARTS

By Sally Barker

Hoo-Ha, Fanny, or Vagina. Willy, Doodle, or Penis. What words do you use to describe private parts to your kids?



If you're like many parents, you probably use some creatively cute names for certain body parts when you're talking to your children. What if I told you that it's perfectly acceptable to use the words vagina and penis right from birth?

The Traffic Lights Framework is used as a guide to identify, understand, and respond to sexual behaviours in children and young people.

RED Sexual behaviours that are problematic or harmful, forceful, secretive, compulsive, coercive, or degrading signal the need to provide immediate protection and follow up support.

Orange Sexual behaviours that are outside normal behaviour in terms of persistence, frequency, or inequality in age, power, or ability signal the need to monitor and provide extra support.

Green Sexual behaviours that are normal, age appropriate, spontaneous, curious, mutual, light hearted, and easily diverted.

The Traffic Lights® App is available for iPad users. The App helps you to identify, understand, and respond to a child's sexual behaviour. Source: Family Planning Queensland

Andrea Musulin is the Executive Officer at **Protective Behaviours WA**, and has worked in the field of child sexual and physical abuse for more than 25 years. Andrea says from the very first nappy change or bath there will be some communication about body parts.

"A father might say "Daddy's going to clean your pee pee," or "Daddy's going to clean your doo doo,"

"Even though the baby doesn't speak, you say penis," Andrea advises.

Andrea says by using the correct anatomical terms for body parts your children will know that a vagina is a vagina and a penis is a penis. And, she warns there should be no other names used.

"There are no other words for it,"

"But the problem is we don't do that because we think they're too young to have that type of vocabulary,"

"But the reality is, that's what they're called," She says.

Andrea explains that parents bring their own baggage into the topic, and probably use the same terminology they did when they were growing up.

"I didn't grow up calling it that name, I called it a wee wee,"

"So when my daughter was born, I started calling it vagina from the beginning"

"My mother told me it's not right," recalls Andrea.

One of the things taught in the Protective Behaviours Program is to empower parents to break the outdated ways of thinking, and to start a generation of parents who straight away use the correct names, and have no qualms about it.

So, why is it important to use the correct names for our private parts?

It's about protecting children and working to prevent sexual and physical abuse. But there's more to it than simply teaching your children to say vagina and penis.

Touch

Where private parts are concerned, from the age of four children should be taught that they own those parts of their bodies, according to Protective Behaviours WA.

"Unless it's their job to touch those parts of the body, other people shouldn't be touching them,"

"We teach that they own it, it belongs to them, no-one should be touching theirs, and they shouldn't be touching anybody else's," says Andrea.

For example, from the age of four you would say to your son, 'You're a big boy now you can wash your own penis', or 'You can wipe your own vagina, you're a big girl now mummy doesn't need to wipe your vagina'.

Andrea explains that it's equally important to discuss whose job it

would be to touch your children's private parts. Such as, it would be the doctors' job to touch your son's penis if there is a sore on it, or if your daughter has a rash on her vagina. If the doctor recommended a cream to be used, then your son or daughter need to know that it is their parent's job to put the cream on their penis or vagina.

The helping hand

The **Helping Hand** is a group of five grownups that children can speak to if they feel unsafe, if they have unsafe secrets (more on that later), or if someone touches their private parts. The children choose the people to go on the helping hand themselves.

"The reason we don't choose for them is because we don't know how they feel about people,"

"They might be related to somebody and that person could be the person who is touching their private parts," says Andrea.

Once your children have decided who is on their Helping Hand, it's important to share good things with them as well.

"It's about getting the child practiced and used to going to their network,"

"So when something unsafe does happen, it's not new territory for them," Andrea says.

"So then the rule is that even if it is somebody's job to do it, we must always tell someone on our helping

hand that someone touched our private parts,”

“So we still don’t leave anything to chance,”

“We don’t leave it so that a child can be manipulated into believing it’s someone’s job, they still need to tell an adult,” explains Andrea.

Personal safety

Did you know that your mouth is considered a private part?

That’s based on the fact that children are more likely to be indecently dealt with than they are penetrated. Andrea explains that the mouth is used quite often for oral sex and indecent dealings.

“Even kissing a child in an inappropriate way is considered sexual abuse,” Andrea warns.

It’s important to teach your children that the dentist, doctor or nurse can touch their mouth, but no one else is allowed to put things in their mouth.

“What we do know is that when a child is going to be sexually abused, and when we talk about private parts of the body, we also talk about taking photographs of those body parts,”

“We say that you don’t let people touch your private parts and you don’t let people take photographs of those parts of your body because they’re private,” Andrea explains.

Secrets

Most children who are sexually abused will be told to keep it secret. Secrecy is the lifeblood of child sexual abuse.

“Because it’s the lifeblood and the very thing that allows the sexual abuse to continue, we talk about secrets and secrecy,”

“So to teach private parts without teaching secrecy isn’t going to work,” says Andrea.

For example; if you’re talking to your children about secrets, the general guide is that under the age of four there

are NO secrets. But over the age of four there are two different types of secrets. There are **safe** secrets and **unsafe** secrets. A safe secret is nothing more than a secret that doesn’t have to be kept forever.

“It might be what your child is making you for Mother’s Day in class,”

“It’s a secret so mum isn’t allowed to know until Mother’s Day,” says Andrea.

Andrea explains that when children are caught up in a sexual abuse situation they are told they have to keep it secret forever. That’s an unsafe secret.

“You should always tell someone on your helping hand about the unsafe secret,”

“You NEVER keep unsafe secrets,” warns Andrea.

Personal space bubbles and kissing

We now know that the mouth, including the lips, is a private part. Which means that children shouldn’t let people kiss them, or touch their mouth unless they say it’s okay.

But how are you going to work that through?

“By using the concept of what we call a Personal Space Bubble,” Andrea explains.

The Kiss, Cuddle, Squeeze Bubble is usually reserved for Mum and Dad, and maybe Nanna. Then there’s the Big Hug Bubble for those people who give you a quick cuddle or quick kiss on the cheek, and then leave you alone. There’s also the Waving Bubble, High Five Bubble, and Stranger Bubble.

“We teach children that the people they don’t put in their Kiss, Cuddle, and Squeeze bubble shouldn’t be giving them a kiss, cuddle, and squeeze,”

“To determine what their personal space is we get them to put a hula hoop on and show them the physical boundaries of personal space,” says Andrea.

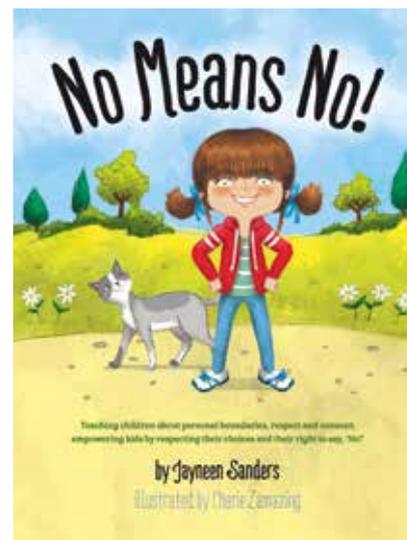
When someone the child hasn’t put into their Kiss, Cuddle, Squeeze, or the Big Hug Bubble comes into their personal space, it is important they tell a grownup.

“Children have the right to decide who can kiss them and who can’t,”

“If that means not even a grandmother or great uncle, that is the way it has to be.”

“If you force them, the message you’re sending is that you must do as I tell you, you have no control over your body,” Andrea says.

The Protective Behaviours WA mantra, ‘Every child has the right to feel safe all the time’ is an important message. As parents we owe it to our children to give them the knowledge they need to achieve that. **af**



NO MEANS NO! BY JAYNEEN SANDERS

A children’s picture book about an empowered little girl who has a very strong and clear voice in all issues, especially those relating to her body and personal boundaries.

Available at
www.somesecrets.info



WIN

Purchase a
RYCO Cabin Air Filter
 and enter the draw to
 win 1 of 20 \$1000
VISA Debit Cards.

Enter at
www.breatheasier.com.au

Did you know the air inside your car may contain 10x more pollutants than the air outside?*

Busy families spend hours in the car every day, so make sure your family's health is protected.

In modern Australia, the average family now has two or more cars, with the car the most popular way to get to work,[†] with 74 percent women.

Parents of primary school age children drive on average 17,400km[‡] by the time children turn nine. No surprise really, considering the after school activities such as swimming, dance, music or sport practice that active Aussie kids love. And while we accept this as part of keeping kids active, there is a hidden health cost.

The closed air inside our vehicles has been found to have a much higher concentration of pollutants than in the air just outside the vehicle - up to 10 times in some cases.

So if your child has asthma, allergies or other respiratory problems, they can be especially at risk when concentrations of pollutants are increased inside the car.

Contaminants in the air such as pollen, fungus spores, dirt and dust that pass unfiltered into the passenger cabin can trigger asthma, allergies, headaches, nausea, fatigue and giddiness. No wonder mums can feel frazzled after long hours at the wheel!

Premium Protection plus
 Most modern motor vehicles in Australia are fitted with air cabin filters, but not all air cabin filters are equal.

Ryco MicroShield Cabin Air Filters incorporate Ryco MicroShield media technology, and are designed to exceed the quality of the original factory-installed car filter product.

MicroShield Technology works to reduce the amount of harmful contaminants entering into your vehicle via the heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) system, whilst providing a much cleaner breathing environment for you and your family.

- less than 2.5 microns offers protection from minuscule particles that penetrate into the respiratory system (a human hair is 90 microns)
- protects your family from airborne particles that can aggravate allergy reactions or asthma
- odour-eating activated carbon contained in the filter keeps out bad smells and harmful exhaust gasses
- anti-bacterial agents embedded into the filter fabric eliminate bacteria from the air flow, and prevent it growing in the filter once trapped. The Ryco MicroShield is the only air cabin filter available in Australia that can protect against moulds, mites and H1N1 strain of the influenza virus

Don't put your family's health at risk.

Trust Ryco to protect your family by ensuring that the air in your vehicle is safe to breathe.

Next time you have your car serviced, ask your mechanic about upgrading to a Ryco Cabin Air Filter. Some are easy to fit yourself – ask your local Ryco Stockist for advice or contact Ryco Customer Service on 1800 804 541 for advice. Cabin Air filters should be replaced every 12 months or 15,000kms.



RYCO
 CABIN FILTER

Sources: †+Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Social Trends, Car Nation, July 2013. <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/4102.0Main+Features40July+2013>
 ‡ Roy Morgan Research, Aussie parents drive up to 4200km per year, 22 July 2015. <http://www.roymorgan.com/findings/6346-parents-drive-more-kilometres-australia-may-2015-201507220016>
 *Research published in the well-respected Environmental Health Perspectives Journal has shown that the air inside your car can contain over 10 times more pollutants than the air outside, if an effective cabin air filter is not installed.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

Five great family holiday destinations

By Ashleigh Mills

Nothing was more exciting growing up than the great Australian holiday. Usually taken in the car, the journey began with arguments about who was going to sit where and ended with "I Spy" games and long days by the beach. In recent times, domestic family travel has been replaced by cheap flights and package holidays to places like Bali, Fiji and Hawaii. But recent trends suggest the tables may turn. With the Australian dollar continuing to fall, Tourism Research Australia suggests that domestic travel is on the rise for families and singles alike. Taking the family on an in-country holiday not only benefits our economy but also gives the little ones an opportunity to learn about our culture, environment and history.

Here are five great picks for families for your next Australian holiday.

Canberra, Australian Capital Territory

Our nation's capital puts a lot on the table where families can learn and have fun. A day can slip away at Questacon, The National Science and Technology Centre. Only the brave will attempt to battle the crowds on weekends, but those that swing by midweek are in for a treat. The centre has over 200 exhibits (the hands on kind) and a spectacular science show.

No Canberra trip is complete without a visit to the Australian War Memorial. This interactive environment is a great way to introduce young ones to



Australian wartime history. Visit the Discovery Zone to see inside a trench and listen to wartime stories of home and abroad.

With the sun out, seize the moment and head to Tidbinbulla Nature Reserve. This nature park, a fifty-

minute drive out of Canberra, covers an area of 54 square kilometers. The park includes a series of well-trodden trails, a discovery park and an animal sanctuary. Complete the trip back to the city by stopping to send a message into outer space from the Deep Space Communications complex.



How about a home swap?

Home swapping is on the rise as a cheap and comfortable way for families to travel, both in Australia and overseas. Companies such as Love Home Swap have seen a rise in recent years of the number of Australians registering their homes for exchange. The system works by trading your home for a holiday in someone else's. Families not only enjoy more space and save on the cost of accommodation, but can benefit from the additions thrown in like the family car and bikes, (not to mention, a built in pet sitter.)

Tony Bradford, from Kensington in Sydney, is a client of Love Home Swap, and is a huge fan. "We get to stay in real family homes and experience living in communities like a local...it saves us money and is so much more comfortable than traditional accommodation. This is the only way we travel now as a family", he says.

The Blue Mountains, NSW

Stunning in summer, cosy in winter, The Blue Mountains are a great pick for families all year round. A rite of passage in the mountains for everyone is a trip to Scenic World (as kitsch as it seems). Here, take a trip on the world's steepest railway, ride the cable car or walk the skywalk above Jamieson Valley. Plan ahead, as weekends around these parts can get crowded.

Fun for all ages, the Jenolan Caves, is found at the foothills of the mountains. Children under the age of six can enter the

world's oldest cave system for free and those between the ages of 6 to 12 will love the 'Stones and Bones' tour. Held every weekend this children's only tour is an imaginative treasure hunt through the caves. But this attraction is not just for the little ones. Jenolan also runs school holiday adventure camps for teenagers, which promote confidence, teamwork and fun.

With stunning walks and picnic spots, there's plenty to do without reaching for the wallet. Before leaving, a visit to the famous Leura Toy Shop with its floor to ceiling displays is a must (and will bring out the child in everyone!).

Litchfield National Park, NT

Just an hour and a half from Darwin, Litchfield National Park is a great introduction to the Top End without having to drive for hours. Covering an area of 1500 square kilometers the park is home to a number of cascading rivers and waterfalls, Aboriginal sacred sites and homesteads.

The most popular swimming holes, Buley Rockhole, Wangi and Florence Falls have picnic facilities and are easily accessible by sealed roads. While one-day tours from Darwin are possible, this will feel a little rushed. Staying in one of the campsites in the park itself will add to the experience. The nearby town of Batchelor is also a popular base with a number of holiday parks to choose from.

Stopping by the Adelaide River on the way back to Darwin for a Jumping Crocodile cruise is a must. The trip is suitable for the whole family, with safe and knowledgeable guides, (and lots of crocs of course!). For a swimming hole where the crocs aren't an issue, Leanyer Recreation Park in Darwin is a free and fun way to cool off.

The Gold Coast, QLD

Who could ever complain about a holiday that includes a roller coaster ride? Easily accessible from Brisbane or Coolangatta airport, The Gold Coast is home to Australia's biggest theme parks; Sea World, Wet n Wild, Dreamworld, Magic Mountain and Movie World. Every Aussie kid should go at least once! Save and plan ahead by looking for online specials and group deals for tickets. There's plenty here to mix it up with too.

For nature lovers, beautiful Burleigh Heads National Park is just a twenty-minute drive from the Gold Coast. The park is home to rainforests, eucalyptus, nature trails and whale watching. Organise a walking tour with the Yugambah people through Jellurgal Cultural Centre to learn about this



park's significance in Aboriginal history. To cuddle up with a feathered friend, head north of Coolangatta to Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary. This sanctuary includes a high ropes course where the kids can burn off some energy and watch vets in action in the sanctuary hospital.

If this all sounds a little exhausting, there is plenty of opportunity for down time at one of the many patrolled beaches.

Perth, WA

For those of us living on the eastern seaboard, Perth is often considered a little out of reach. But with a number of airlines now offering deals, a trip to the west is now much more affordable.

The number one plan for most visitors to Western Australia is to take a ferry ride to Rottnest Island. This turquoise playground has more than fifty beaches and plenty of activities to keep families occupied. Snorkelling, fishing, cycling and walking are just some of the ways to explore.

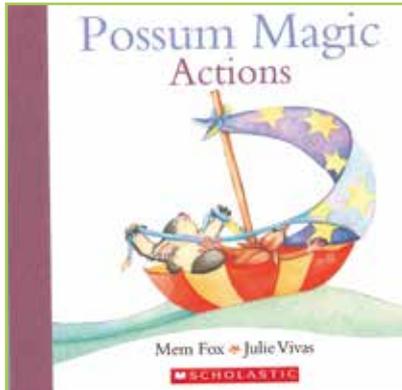
Perth city has plenty on offer as well. Rio Tinto Naturescape Park is free to enter and provides hours of outdoor fun. Not designed for a quiet picnic, the aim of this park is to reconnect families with nature and encourage safe risk taking. Here the kids can wade through creeks, get dirty and build their own cubbies. For something a little cleaner, head to the city centre to take a tour of Perth Mint. Highlights include the chance to watch gold pouring and engrave your own coin. For animal lovers, the small but well run Perth Zoo is worth a look before the journey home.

So plan your next family adventure in Australia, because there's no place like home. **af**



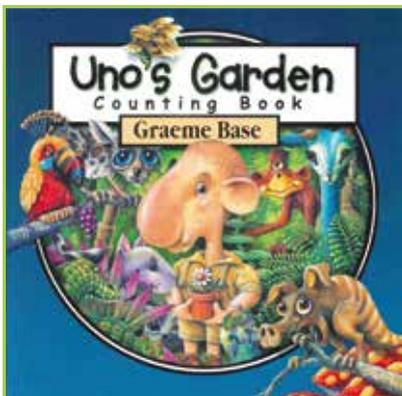
kidstuff

POSSUM MAGIC - ACTIONS
by Mem Fox, Julie Vivas,
Omnibus \$9.99



For the younger fry, the famous story is pared back to all of the favourite characters engaged in simple action words.

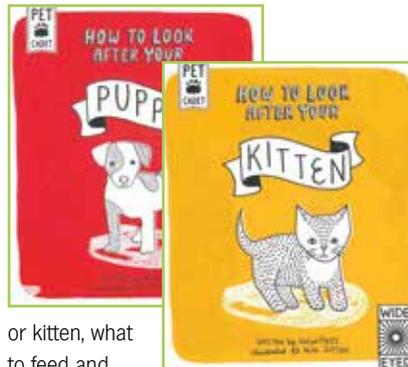
UNO'S GARDEN COUNTING BOOK
by Graeme Base, Penguin
\$14.99



A lift-the-flap version of the weird and wonderful creatures in Uno's garden for the very young, which also encourages learning to count from one to 10. Each illustration contains progressively more detail for children to seek out!

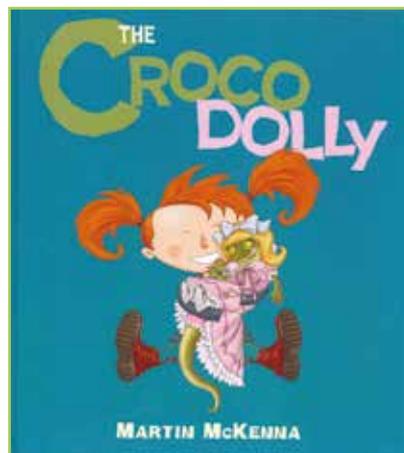
PET CADET: HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR PUPPY, HOW TO LOOK AFTER YOUR KITTEN by Helen Piers, illustrated by Kate Sutton, Allen & Unwin, \$12.99

Pet Cadet handbooks provide young animal owners with all the information they need to look after their new pet. Illustrated with cute black and white cartoon drawings, information includes how to choose a puppy



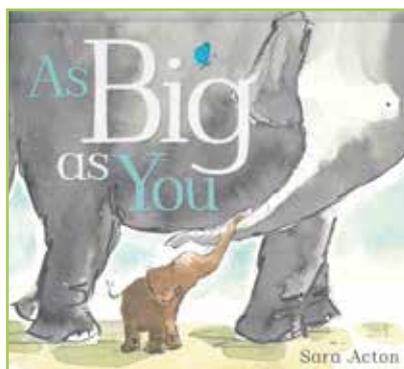
or kitten, what to feed and how to care for them; as well as training tips and even cat language meanings and puppy tricks to teach.

THE CROCO DOLLY by Martin McKenna, Omnibus \$24.95



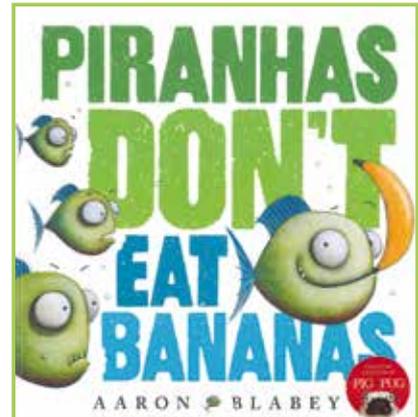
Delightful story of feisty Adelaide, who doesn't have a good track record with pets – but wants one of course. So when Ozzy the Crocodile emerges one day from the egg carton, she makes up her mind to disguise and keep him – with amusing consequences!

AS BIG AS YOU by Sara Acton,
Scholastic Press, 24.99



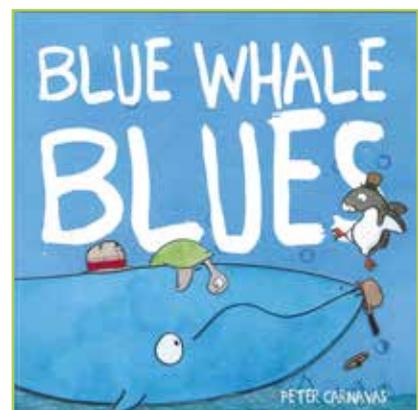
Here's a book with a difference – it opens vertically! That's because this is the story of Claude – a very large elephant! But this is also the story of Finlay – who is not so big and in a hurry to grow up.

PIRANHAS DON'T EAT BANANAS
by Aaron Blabey,
Scholastic Press, \$16.99



A very "cheeky" take on what piranhas will and won't eat. Brian the piranha loves his fruit – the other piranhas point out that they don't! Still they grudgingly give fruit a go; a funny story that might encourage more fruit eating in your house from the author of Pig the Pug.

BLUE WHALE BLUE by Peter Carnavas,
New Frontier Publishing, \$24.99

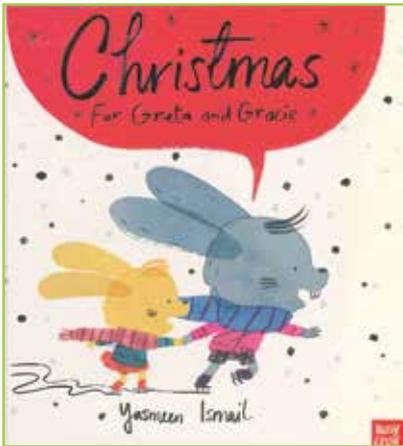


To the sea this time and Whale is singing the blues – because he can't get his bike (a dumped shopping trolley) and his helmet (an old saucepan) to work. Subtle message about human junk that ends up in water habitats but told with a twist!

kidstuff

CHRISTMAS FOR GRETA AND GRACIE by Yasmeen Ismail, Nosy Crow, \$22.99

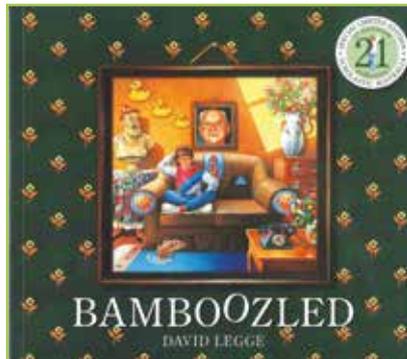
Greta and Gracie are sisters and very excited about Christmas. Greta is a typical big sister and talks...a lot. Poor Gracie can't get a word in edgewise, or do anything right. Greta always seems to know best! That is, until the night of Christmas Eve - when quiet little Gracie gets her reward!



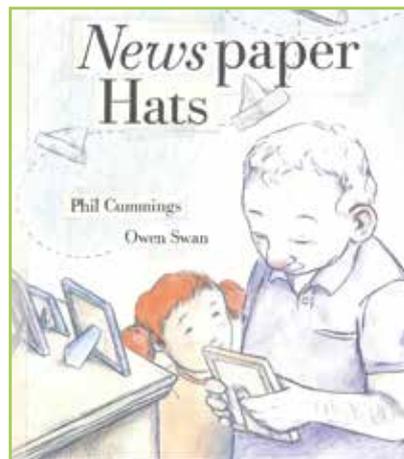
BAMBOOZLED by David Legge, 21st Anniversary Edition, Scholastic Australia, \$15.99

Winner of Seven Children's Choice Awards and a CBCA Honour Book, this is a special anniversary reprint. This is the story of a grandad and his granddaughter, who spend time together each week. But this week there is something strange about Grandad, and Granddaughter just can't figure it out!

The delightful oddities in the illustrations have tickled generations of children's funny bones. Bamboozled indeed! This special edition includes a double page layout on the author's creative process.

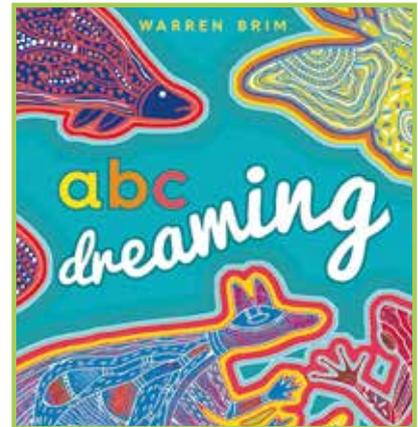


NEWSPAPER HATS by Phil Cummings and Owen Swan, Scholastic, \$24.95



Another granddaughter and another grandfather. This time Grandpa has a fading memory - but when he, Georgie and Dad make newspaper hats - he remembers! Gentle story about ageing, with newspaper illustrations in the endpapers recording famous moments in 20th century history.

ABC DREAMING by Warren Brim, Magabala Books, \$17.95



Here's an ABC picture book that is truly Australian. Featuring linocut images of native Australian animals from the rainforests of Far North Queensland, near the home of Aboriginal artist and painter Warren Brim. Developed in partnership with education specialists, each page depicts an Australian animal or insect (with more than just dot painting style). Perfect resource to merge indigenous artwork with early literacy, and ignite the wonder of your early reader.

AUSTRALIAN FAMILY'S NEW ONLINE PARENT FORUM ASK AN EXPERT IS NOW OPEN FOR YOUR QUESTIONS.

Questions to *Ask an Expert* will be answered by qualified early childhood and health professionals.

The answers and advice you receive will be based on sound theory and professional experience.

Our expert panel are ready and waiting to solve your trickiest parenting and early childhood dilemmas:

- Australian Family Early Education and Care Award winners: Marion Collison, Melissa Hendry, Lee-Anne Most, Cara Nightingale, Kerri Smith, Belle Spillman, Jacqui Taylor, Stephanie Woerde
- Maternal Child Health Nurse/Mental Health Nurse - Helen Mack
- Nutritionist - Ruth Wallace
- Occupational Therapist - Aimee York



Visit www.australianfamily.com.au/ask-an-expert

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Win great prizes for the whole family!

Enter at www.australianfamily.com.au Entries close 11.59 pm Friday, 29th January, 2016.

Parenting courses

5 to win

Child Psychiatrist Dr Kaylene Henderson has developed the acclaimed online course series, 'Raising Good Kids: Managing Behaviours and Emotions in 0-5's'.

This research-based yet practical course will teach you how to be a more calm and confident parent, how to foster a close bond with and between your children, manage your young children's challenging behaviours and promote social and emotional skills that will help your children at school and throughout their lives.

Visit <http://drkaylenehenderson.com/blog/>

Valued at: \$198



Dr Kaylene Henderson
Child Psychiatrist

My Happy Pillow

8 to win

Animal Character Pillows for Emotions

Young determined Isabella was six and frustrated trying to express herself, without speaking. Luckily her ingenuity and imagination came up with the idea of a lovable, charming soft toy that would allow children to learn about their emotions. The idea of My Happy Pillow was born, with the first 2 characters, Sunny the Bear and Zee the Monkey, each with a "happy" and "angry" side.

Visit www.myhappypillow.com.au

Valued at \$24.95

Sunny the Bear



Zee the Monkey



STAEDTLER Noris Club®

10 to win

STAEDTLER Noris Club® range of products offer the brilliant world of colours for kindergarten, primary school and home use. All Noris Club® products are designed for comfortable handling to assist perfect writing, drawing and colouring results every time. Now all Australian children can develop their creative abilities through play and embark on voyages of discovery with products that will last the distance!



Pack includes: Noris Club® coloured pencils (pack 36), Noris Club® Wax Crayons (pack 24), Noris Club® oil pastels (pack 16), Noris Club® Jumbo Colouring markers, (pack 12), Noris Club® rubber paint stamps – set of 5 'Traffic', and two colouring activity books

Valued at \$50.00

Dragon Voice Dictate for Mac4

2 to win

Nuance's Dragon Dictate for Mac is the ultimate productivity tool that enables busy people to save time and get more done. Dictate, edit, transcribe and control your computer all by using your voice. You can also surf and search the Web and update your Facebook and Twitter status. Dragon's accurate speech recognition, customisable capabilities, easy-to-use interface and full transcription flexibility means you get more done – at home, school or work – quickly and accurately.

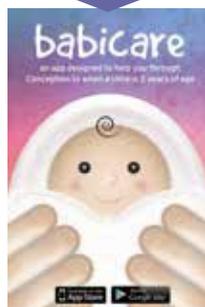


Visit www.australia.nuance.com/dragon

Valued at \$24.95

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Babicare enhances your pregnancy and child experience from the time you conceive until your child is two years old. Babicare promotes a special bond between you and your child, which is important for baby's well-being and provides you with ongoing age-appropriate information and tips about your pregnancy



and baby. A weekly pregnancy and baby journal, including the ability to upload photos, is available to give you and your family the opportunity to benefit from lasting memories of your pregnancy and baby.

Download FREE from the App Store or Google Play. Visit: www.babicare.com.au

noticeboard

Bellamy's Organic.

Bellamy's Organic Toddler Milk Drink is a nutritious supplement to the broadening diet of busy toddlers! Made from certified organic cow's milk, it contains added iron, and other vitamins and minerals to support the rapid growth of your child. Bellamy's Organic Toddler Milk also contains inulin – a natural prebiotic fibre, which stimulates good bacteria for a healthy digestive system. With Bellamy's Organic, you can be sure that our specially selected certified organic ingredients have been grown without synthetic fertilisers, pesticides and growth hormones.



More information: visit www.bellamysorganic.com.au

RYCO MicroShield Automotive Cabin Air Filters

Research published in the Environmental Health Perspectives Journal has shown that the air inside your car can contain over 10 times more pollutants than the air outside, if an effective cabin air filter is not installed.



RYCO recently launched the ultimate in vehicle air filtration, the MicroShield Cabin Air Filter. The RYCO MicroShield is the only cabin air filter available in Australia that can protect against mould, mites and the H1N1 strain of

influenza virus. It is recommended that Cabin Air Filters should be replaced every 12 months or 15,000km.

More information: visit breatheasier.com.au.

Springfree Trampoline

Springfree Trampoline believes kids deserve safe backyard play, so they've created the world's safest trampoline. What makes Springfree trampolines the safest? Their revolutionary design



eliminates 90 percent of all product related injuries through the removal of all hard impact zones and springs. The frame is below the jumping surface, there is a shock absorbent SoftEdge mat to cushion jumpers and prevent falls, and a FlexiNet which flexes on impact.

With a Springfree Trampoline, not only will your family enjoy the benefits of bouncing, you have the peace of mind knowing that they're bouncing on the world's safest trampoline.

Visit www.springfree.com.au

My Happy Pillow

Sunny the Bear and Zee the Monkey are usually happy, but sometimes they are mad! Invented by a young girl to help children learn about feelings, each pillow comes as a furry plush reversible with embroidered character features that are humorous and lively. The pillows are also super soft and huggable, so perfect for children needing a tactile tool to help with self-regulation of their emotions, and as a comforter during times when they are feeling sad.



Visit www.myhappypillow.com.au

Sipahh

Looking for a product with less sugar for your family? Consider Sipahh Milk Flavouring Straws. The new Sipahh online store means that for the first time Sipahh can be delivered direct to homes, school canteens and childcare centres. Each Sipahh straw contains less than half a teaspoon of sugar per straw, has a Health Star rating of 4.5 stars and a Green Star rating in school canteens (except SA) when served with reduced fat milk.



Sipahh has also recently launched a new and exciting fundraising programme. Not only is Sipahh a lower sugar option compared with donut days and chocolate drives, it also offers healthy profit margins, helping you reach your goals sooner.

Visit www.sipahh.com.au

See in the New Year at the Woodford Folk Festival

The Woodford Folk Festival is one of the largest folk festivals in the world with over 500 acts across 25 venues with programmes for the whole family.

Patrons will be taken on a world of discovery with a line-up of Festival favourites and a stack of hidden gems held over six days and nights on the beautiful 500 acre venue. The vibrant, contemporary programme includes music, dance, poetry, talks, circus, health and visual arts workshops combined with a depth and maturity that Festival goers have come to expect from the iconic event.

For more information on the Festival ticket pricing and camping options please visit www.woodfordfolkfestival.com



Mates' Escapes

Go Cycling in Sicily with Mates' Escapes



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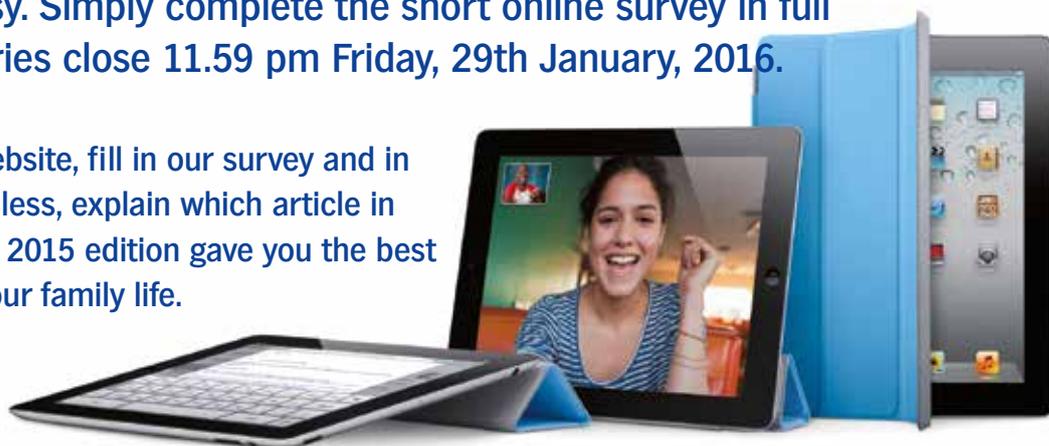
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I'm a stickler for manners

By John Weldon

My children all know why and when to say 'may I?' rather than 'can I?' They're pretty good at 'please' and 'thank you' too. Just ask the ladies in Tony's Pies in Yarraville – they always remark on how well mannered my young ones are.

But they, my children, also know exactly when and why to shout 'Get a move on &~%\$#@!' The 'when' being whenever daddy is driving and 'why', because everybody else driving at that time is, by definition, an '&~%\$#@!'. If you don't believe me, ask the drivers of Yarraville.



I don't mind if my children swear, as long as they are aware of the company they're in, so not in front of grandparents, teachers, other parents, other kids, the Pope etc, and as long as it's not wholly gratuitous. So, as a result - or so they tell me - they only cuss at home, at me, or when we're in the car (see paragraph 2). But I do mind if they forget their manners.

That might make me sound like a bit of a w%*&#r, and perhaps I am (only perhaps, you say?) as both manners and not-swearing are about respect for

others. But I think it's more important to be nice to the ladies in the pie shop (and not just because they make the best snot blocks in town), than it is to make sure you only say 'whoops-a-daisy!' when you fall off your skateboard. Besides, swearing can be affectionate; calling someone a 'silly old @#\$%^&' can be a sign of intimacy, it can be sweet. But rudeness, forgetting to be polite, is always, and only, rude. So feel free to call me a w#\$%r if you like, I don't mind, as long as you do it nicely.

Giving kids license to swear might make you think that dinner time in our house is all 'Dad, may I please have some more gravy, you old *%&\$#'. But it's not. It's quite the opposite. My kids rarely swear, but they know it's no biggie if they do. They understand that context is everything when it comes to swearing. I think that's better than just a blanket ban, especially as they're much better at controlling their language than I am, as they're more than happy to tell me (see paragraph 2).

Like my kids, I was brought up to have good manners - nothing special about that - but I never really understood their importance until I worked in hospitality. When you stand behind the pump in a pub you're often invisible; you become a beer ATM and you're treated as such. I would see my co-workers' faces light up, as would mine, every time someone smiled and asked politely for whatever it was they wanted, rather than the usual, 'Can I grab a...' or 'Give me two...' When you're pulling beers eight hours a day, those little nuggets of kindness are golden, they make your day and they make you want to be nice in return.

So, it will come as no surprise that I'm a big believer in the old adage 'manners maketh the man'. But they also maketh the child and everyone else too and they can also maketh a person's day. I was once given half a kilo of free bacon at the market because I started my order with: 'May I please have...'

'No one's ever said that in all my years in this place!' said the butcher in question. 'Give that man as much free bacon as he wants.'

His day was made, and so was mine, and so was breakfast.

Good things can happen when you're polite, but that's not why being polite is a good thing: you won't always get free bacon just for saying 'please'.

Being well mannered shows that you have respect for yourself as well as others. It shows that you care enough to show the world only your best side. That's how I want my kids to behave even when they're dealing with *%&~%\$ %\$#&{*s' on the road (see paragraph 2). **af**

John Weldon has freelanced for publications and organisations across Australia such as The Age, The Western Bulldogs and Overland as a journalist, sports reporter, media manager, blogger and columnist. Currently he coordinates Professional and Creative Writing at Victoria University. His first novel, Spincycle, was published in 2012 by Vulgar Press. He is also a dad and in his spare time is president of Australia's premier giant vegetable appreciation society: the Yarraville Marrow Growers Association (YMGA). Find him on Twitter at @johnweldon

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