



Newsletter

Sydney Child Psychology Centre

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, PARENTS & FAMILIES

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PRACTICE INFORMATION

Psychologists:

Dr Fiona Martin – MAPS, CEDP
 Dr Fiona Aldridge – MAPS, CCLIN
 Dr Fiona McGuigan – MAPS, CCLIN
 Dr Jane De Matteis – MAPS
 Mr Patrick Bryant – MAPS, CCLIN
 Ms Helena Swiatek – MAPS
 Ms Wendy Brown – Assoc MAPS
 Ms Megan Williams – Assoc MAPS
 Ms Kathryn Knights – Assoc MAPS
 Ms Clare Williams – Assoc MAPS
 Dr Zoe Wheeler – Provisional Psychologist

Early Intervention Therapists:

Ms Stephanie Drake
 Ms Alysha Aubin
 Mr Alix Ringbauer
 Ms Remie Jaggard
 Ms Rachael Kiely

Practice Manager:

Michele Newman

Practice Hours:

Mon – Fri 8.30am – 5.30pm
 Sat – 9.00am – 5.00pm

Late appointments are available on **Wed evenings** for couples counselling.

Parking: The closest car park is accessible via Raglan Street, which is connected to Military Road via a laneway known as "The Passage". When you reach our door, just buzz Suite 3 to come up for your appointment.

DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

At the Sydney Child Psychology Centre we are committed to ongoing professional development and this past year has been no exception.

Since our last newsletter our dedicated team have taken time out of their busy schedules to ensure they are up to speed with the latest psychological methods and approaches. Earlier this year many of our psychologists attended a seminar on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy – an innovative approach that uses mindfulness and values to maximise human potential. In addition, a number of our psychologists have trained in the Circle of Security methodology – an early intervention program designed to enhance attachment security between parents and children.

Many of our psychologists have also recently joined the North Shore and Beaches Medicare Local and registered with ATAPS – Access to Allied Psychological Services, DVA – Department of Veteran Affairs, DOCS – Department of Community Services and WorkCover – for workers compensation claims. I personally have taken on the role of Coordinator of the North Sydney and Northern Beaches Child and Adolescent Mental Health Professional Network Group. This position enables me to contribute to mental health services at a community level and it is a role that I am honoured to take on.

As always, we welcome any feedback you may have – questions, queries and concerns can be emailed to: admin@sydneychildpsychologist.com.au

Warm regards

Dr Fiona Martin MAPS CEDP
 Director / Educational and Developmental Psychologist



TECHNOLOGY AND CHILDREN

Screen time addiction

The amount of time spent watching TV and playing on computers and handheld devices is on the rise. Research shows that an increasing number of children are at risk of developing "screen addiction". Several studies undertaken over the last few years have drawn links between the overuse of technology and delays in children's sensory and motor milestones, as well as lower academic performance.

To combat this growing issue, parents need to set clear boundaries with children about the amount

of screen time they are allowed every day, and just as importantly set clear rules about the types of screen-based activities their children are undertaking. Children who engage in regular screen time activities should be closely monitored.

Contributor: Dr Fiona Martin

If you would like further information or strategies for managing screen time addiction, please call the Sydney Child Psychology Centre on 9960 1222.

POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS

How to foster good sleep habits

Up to 25% of children suffer from insomnia or difficulties in initiating or maintaining sleep. Children who are not getting adequate sleep may start to exhibit symptoms such as: irritability, aggressive behaviour, elevated levels of anxiety and impaired cognitive functioning.

Your child's quality of sleep can be improved by adopting these basic techniques:

- Avoid exposure to PCs, laptops and handheld devices well in advance of bedtime. Research suggests that prolonged exposure to the blue light emitted from electronic screens inhibits the sleep hormone melatonin and tricks the brain into believing it is daytime.
- Avoid caffeinated drinks such as coffee and coke.
- Partake in relaxing activities before bedtime, such as having a bath or reading quietly. Avoid exercise and other stimulating activities prior to bedtime.
- Adhere to a consistent bedtime routine. Children should go to bed and wake up at consistent times wherever possible.
- Children who suffer from anxiety over not being able to fall asleep should be encouraged to resist looking at clocks or phones to see the time, as this tends to create more anxiety.

Contributor: Patrick Bryant, Clinical Psychologist

If sleep difficulties persist please contact your GP or call the Sydney Child Psychology Centre on 9960 1222.

What can I do to help my child become more resilient?

Skill area	Goal	How to promote this skill
Social skills	Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and to be responsive towards the feelings and needs of others.	Read a book or watch TV with your child and try to identify characters that are facing a difficult situation. Start a conversation with your child about the way the characters might be feeling.
Social skills	Provide comfort and understanding when your child is upset.	Reassure your child by sharing your own experiences with them. What did you do to overcome a difficult situation? Let your child see you cope with a bad day – in essence you can model the positive behaviours that you would like them to adopt.
Problem solving	Identify different ways to solve problems.	Use mind maps to determine possible solutions. Ask reality based questions: e.g. "How do you think Uncle John might solve that problem?"
Independence	Teach your child to make everyday decisions with confidence and how to set realistic goals.	Promote independence by including children in family discussions and decision-making. Make a point of listening to their perspective.
Optimism	Teach children how to be optimistic from an early age, especially when they find themselves in a challenging or undesirable situation.	Read stories to pre-school children such as "The Little Engine That Could" (by Watty Piper) to illustrate the concept of perseverance in the face of hardship.

And most importantly; Do not continually try to protect your child from negative experiences. Allowing them to make mistakes and experience disappointment is an important part of their development. *Contributor: Dr Fiona Martin*

How to build resilient children

What is resilience?

Resilience refers to a person's ability to bounce back after a negative experience. Research shows that children with a high level of resilience have a much better chance of developing and sustaining good mental health when they enter adulthood.

How can my child become more resilient?

There are 4 major areas that need to be addressed in order to build a more resilient child:

1. **Social skills** – Children need to be able to communicate their feelings to their peers, have an ability to show empathy and possess strong conflict resolution skills.
2. **Problem solving** – Children who show creativity and flexibility in their thinking are usually more resilient. Being able to solve problems means children become more confident making plans and asking for help.
3. **Independence** – A strong sense of self and an ability to think autonomously are both important factors. Children who learn to make decisions for themselves are more confident and less likely to fall victim to peer pressure.
4. **Optimism** – An optimistic child is one who believes in their own potential, and sees the links between their thoughts, feelings and behaviours. They are not easily disheartened by challenging situations.



The importance of EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Executive Function refers to a group of skills that help us to focus on multiple streams of information at the same time. These skills also enable us to display self-control and resist the urge to let frustration lead to hasty actions. The main areas of executive function include:

1. **Inhibition** – The ability to stop one's own behaviour (thoughts and actions) at the appropriate time.
2. **Shift** – The ability to move freely from one situation or thought to another.
3. **Emotional control** – The ability to bring rational thought to help cope with feelings.
4. **Initiation** – The ability to begin a task, to independently generate ideas and responses.
5. **Working memory** – The capacity to hold information in mind in order to complete a task.
6. **Planning/organisation** – The ability to manage current tasks and those planned for the future.
7. **Organisation of materials** – The ability to impose order on work, play and storage spaces.
8. **Self-monitoring** – The ability to monitor one's own performance and to measure against expectation.

Young children who have problems mastering Executive Function skills can experience difficulties at school, and are at risk of displaying aggressive and confrontational behaviour towards adults and other children.

In order to support the development of Executive Function, children need to be guided in their home and school environments by nurturing adult- child relationships. The most effective environment is one that:

- Involves sensitive, responsive caregiving in response to the individual child.
- Does not expect children to have more advanced skills than is reasonable for the child's age, BUT does not treat the child as though they have NO executive function capabilities at all.
- Guides children from complete dependence on adult support to gradual assumption of the 'executive' role for themselves –allowing children to practice their emerging skills in a safe environment before they are expected for perform them on their own.

Contributor: Dr Jane De Matteis, Clinical Psychologist

For more information on Executive Function, please contact the Sydney Child Psychology Centre on 9960 1222.

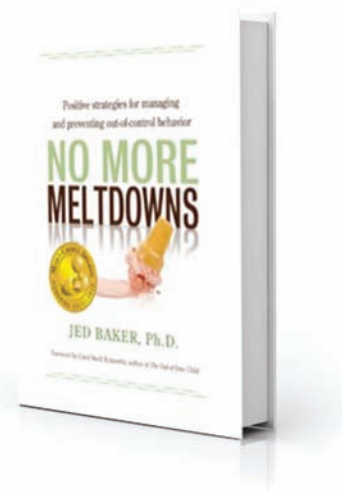
RESOURCES AND TOOLS

No More Meltdowns: Positive strategies for managing and preventing out-of-control behaviour by Dr Jed Baker

Dr Jed Baker is a Clinical Psychologist who is well known for his books on autism spectrum disorders and social skills training.

In this book, Dr Baker focuses on ways to manage and prevent behavioural breakdowns. He offers an easy to understand four-step model to reduce meltdowns and improve relationships. In the final section Dr Baker discusses common situations in which meltdowns can occur. Each situation is discussed using a case study and quick reference guide. This book is an excellent resource for both parents and teachers.

Contributor: Megan Williams, Psychologist



SCHOOL READINESS

School readiness is not just about a child's age and their literacy and numeracy skills. When deciding whether your child is ready for the demands of formal schooling it is important to consider all aspects of their development, including the following:

- **Maturity:** Does your child have sufficient listening and speaking skills and are they able to follow instructions? Do they cope well with change?
- **Social confidence and ability to relate to others:** Is your child comfortable making new friends, and can they share, play and interact with others constructively?
- **Independence:** Is your child independent when it comes to toileting, feeding themselves and dressing themselves. Are they able to pack their own bag?
- **Motor skills:** Does your child have sufficient fine and gross motor coordination – are they able to open lunch boxes and food wrappers? Can they use a pencil and a pair of scissors?

You can help to make the experience of starting school an exciting positive and rewarding one by implementing these suggestions:

- Read to your child every day. Encourage them to point to words and to talk about the sounds they hear.
- Talk to your child about going to school – tell them what they can expect and what will be expected of them.
- Encourage independence and responsibility at home, e.g. with toileting, dressing and taking responsibility for their own things.
- Keep an open dialogue with your child's teacher. Discuss any areas of concern you may have (e.g. speech, hearing, motor, emotional concerns).
- Make the most of the school's transition program. Ask plenty of questions and encourage your child to feel a sense of belonging to the school community.
- Talk to other parents and share ideas, experiences and feelings.

For more information on school readiness, visit: www.det.nsw.edu.au or www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au

Contributor: Dr Fiona Martin



MEDICARE INFORMATION

In order to claim Medicare rebates for psychological services you must be referred by a medical doctor (GP, Paediatrician or Psychiatrist) under a specific care plan. Medicare offers five programs under which eligible clients can claim back intervention and assessment fees:

1. The Mental Health Care Program (referral needed from your GP)
2. Chronic Disease Management Initiative (referral needed from your GP)
3. Helping Children with Autism Package (referral needed from Paediatrician or Psychiatrist)
4. Better Start for Children with Disability (referral needed from Paediatrician or Psychiatrist)
4. Pregnancy Support Counselling (referral needed from your GP)

At the Sydney Child Psychology Centre, we subscribe to the Medicare Easyclaim system – making it easier and faster for you to claim your Medicare rebate. Once your account has been settled at our front desk, we simply swipe your Medicare card through our EFTPOS terminal, followed by your EFTPOS card. Your rebate will appear in your nominated back account almost immediately.

For more information on the Medicare benefits schedule, visit: www.health.gov.au/mbsonline. Further information on funding and rebates is available at our website: www.sydneychildpsychologist.com.au



CLINIC CONTACT DETAILS

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