

COPING WITH STRESS

Stress is an unavoidable part of everyday life. Whilst it is important to try and minimise the amount of stress we are subjected to, it is equally important to ensure that when a stressful situation does arise we are able to cope with that situation effectively. How parents manage their stress can impact the well-being of their children, and can in turn affect how those children manage their own stressful situations.

Coping is our way of dealing with the world and the problems life dishes out. There is no formula for coping but there are a number of coping strategies we can call upon in order to manage stress better. There are four different coping styles that people use when faced with a stressful situation.

- 1. Productive coping** – People who adopt this style tend to work hard and solve problems with relative ease. They are able to relax, and are able to indulge in physical recreation or other activities that provide a diversion.
- 2. Non-productive coping** – This style is characterised by worry, self-blame, wishful thinking and tension reduction (e.g. drinking alcohol, gambling, drug taking) in order to feel more at ease.
- 3. Optimism** – This style utilises strategies such as focussing on the positive and seeking spiritual support, or relaxing diversions, to get through the problem.
- 4. Sharing** – People who adopt this style share their problems with others (including professional help). They seek social action and social support and rarely keep their problems to themselves.

Parents need to be able to model the more positive coping styles (Productive, Optimism and Sharing) in order to provide the right message to children. To do this, parents need to believe that they have the resources and skill to manage stressful situations. Parents who model good coping skills, and who are authoritative, confident and capable of taking charge of a stressful situation, are in the best position to build happy, resilient children with good communication and coping skills.

Contributor: Dr Jane De Matteis, Clinical Psychologist



RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Raising Children Network



This Australian-based information website has been developed for parents of children, from newborn babies to 15-year-old teenagers. It offers up-to-date research-based material on more than 800 topics relevant to today's parents; from a baby's developmental milestones, to issues with siblings and managing behavioural difficulties.

The information is provided through videos, forums, podcasts and tips/fact sheets and there is also a section devoted specifically to children with special needs. The website can be found at:

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Contributor: Megan Williams, Psychologist

Little Blue Dinosaur



The Little Blue Dinosaur was established as a memorial to Thomas Maxwell Davis McLaughlin. Tom was tragically killed in a pedestrian accident whilst on holiday earlier this year. The Little Blue Dinosaur is the face of The Tom McLaughlin Road Safety Foundation which aims to educate and protect children from the ever present danger associated with roadways and motor vehicles, especially in holiday environments where roadways lack familiar visual cues such as curb and gutters, pedestrian crossings, footpaths and line markings. Speed limits are very often set above 40 km/hr around these areas where children are running about excitedly and may be momentarily distracted, forgetting their road safety lessons. Tom's loving parents are determined to prevent another family from going through the same tragedy.

Find out more by visiting the Little Blue Dinosaur Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/littlebluedinosaur/>

medicare INFORMATION

Some clients are eligible for Medicare rebates. In order to claim Medicare rebates for 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. For more information visit our website www.sydneychildpsychologist.com.au 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.

CLINIC CONTACT DETAILS

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Newsletter

Sydney Child Psychology Centre

PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICES FOR CHILDREN, ADOLESCENTS, PARENTS & FAMILIES

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IN THIS ISSUE

- Director's message
- Circle of Security program
- How to manage challenging behaviour
- Helping children deal with grief
- The importance of good self-esteem
- Parenting resources
- Coping with stress
- Medicare information

PRACTICE INFORMATION

Psychologists:

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

Early Intervention Therapists:

Ms Stephanie Drake
 Ms Remie Jaggard

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 pride ourselves on being able to offer a unique range of psychological services for children and their families. Our psychologists are continually taking part in the latest professional development training, to ensure that our catalogue of available services is second to none.

This year we have also welcomed two new psychologists to our team, Raechel Auld and Julia Morton, both of whom have comprehensive clinical experience working with children, adolescents and families.

We are pleased to be able to offer career counselling to young people who are in the process of making big decisions about entering the workforce or engaging in further study.

Please contact the office if you would like to arrange an appointment.

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



NEW SERVICES

Circle of Security™

There is strong evidence to suggest that the quality of the relationship between parents and young children can grossly affect a child's self-esteem, their capacity to solve problems and their ability to regulate their emotions and feel empathy towards others.

Circle of Security™ is a relationship based program we offer at the Sydney Child Psychology Centre, that aims to assist parents to recognise and understand both the obvious and more subtle ways that children express their feelings and needs.

The program is designed to enhance a secure attachment between caregiver and child by helping parents to create a secure environment – one that encourages children to explore, question and talk about their internal world and external experiences.

Contributor: Raechel Auld, Clinical Psychologist

If you would like further information on our Circle of Security™ program, please visit our website: www.sydneychildpsychologist.com.au or call the Sydney Child Psychology Centre on 9960 1222.

POSITIVE PARENTING TIPS

How to manage challenging behaviour

All children test the boundaries of acceptable behaviour from time to time. The way parents respond to these behaviours can have a huge impact on the parent-child relationship. Too much negativity when dealing with undesirable behaviour can be the source of ongoing conflict between parent and child.

You can help promote 'good' behaviour by adopting some of these basic principles:

- **Catch your child being good** – Give your child positive feedback when they are behaving 'well'. Descriptive phrases, such as "I loved the way you helped me to put the toys away", is an effective way of letting your child know that their behaviour is appreciated. Rewarding good behaviour with praise increases the likelihood that such behaviour will occur again.
- **Be a good role model** – If you display positive ways of dealing with stress and frustration, the chances are high that your child will mimic your behaviours. For example, if you want your child to say 'please', it is important for you to use 'please' when speaking with your child.
- **Tell your child how you want them to behave** – In addition to asking a child to stop doing something undesirable, it is also beneficial to give them an alternative way of behaving. For example, "Please stop drawing on the table, we only draw on the paper. you can get some from the shelf over there."
- **Give your child responsibility and make them feel important** – Children like to feel helpful and appreciated. Giving your child some simple household chores is a good way of making them feel needed.
- **Choose your battles** – before saying 'No' or 'Stop' ask yourself whether it really matters. By limiting negative feedback you reduce the opportunity for conflict.

Contributor: Dr Fiona Aldridge, Clinical Psychologist

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



Helping children deal with grief

A child may experience grief when the dynamics of the family are changed due to separation, divorce, trauma or death. While each child will respond differently to grief, depending on their circumstance and developmental stage, some of the more common responses to grief include:

- Confusion • Sadness • Anger • Worry

These painful feelings often result in challenging behaviours, and many parents report these behaviours from a child who is grieving:

- Regression to behaviours of an earlier age (Eg bed-wetting, thumb-sucking etc)
- Withdrawal from friendships
- Increased desire to be close to mum or dad
- Unusual outbursts or tantrums over small matters

Research and clinical practice shows that the following strategies can greatly assist a child who is experiencing grief:

1. Be honest and direct with your child

Hiding details can increase a child's worries and fears. But at the same time, you need to ensure that the conversations you have with your child are age appropriate, and in line with your child's cognitive understanding and ability to process information.

2. Maintain daily routines as much as possible

Familiar routines can help to create feelings of normalcy and reduce feelings of anxiety. It may be helpful to introduce some daily rituals that allow all members of the family to share their feelings in a supportive environment.

3. Do not judge your child's reaction

Some children might choose to spend time alone grieving, whilst others may prefer to be around friends and family. Reassure your child that whatever they are feeling is OK. Let your child know that it is acceptable to feel angry and hurt, and that you can feel sad with or without shedding some tears.

4. Be patient with your child's moods

It is normal to have mood fluctuations whilst grieving. Help your child find constructive ways to express how they are feeling – perhaps through art, writing or just connecting with friends.

5. Reassure your child that feelings of grief will come and go

Children who experience grief at a young age may find that these feelings resurface several years later, as they begin to process the event in a more meaningful way. This is absolutely normal and should be expected.

6. Seek the help of a professional if your child is struggling to manage simple tasks and normal relationships for an extended period of time.

Contributor: Helena Swiatek, Clinical Psychologist

Reference: Pearlman, M., D'Angelo Scwalbe, K., & Cloutre, M. (2010). *Grief in Childhood: Fundamentals of Treatment in Clinical Practice.*

The importance of GOOD SELF-ESTEEM

A child's opinion of themselves is strongly influenced by his or her individual experience of the world, and the way they interact with others in their environment.

It goes without saying that parents and caregivers can have a profound influence on the development of a child's self-concept (what the child knows about themselves) and a child's self-esteem (how a child feels about themselves).

Research has shown us that positive self-esteem is linked to superior academic performance, enhanced learning and improved information retention. Importantly, it is a strong sense of self that equips a child to effectively cope with the ebbs and flows of life, and the ability to 'bounce back' from negative experiences.



Signs that your child has a positive self-esteem	Signs that your child's self-esteem may need support
Your child has a warm and accepting nature	Your child is critical, distant or withdrawn
Your child is confident and willing to attempt new things	Your child is unwilling to try new things
Your child shows a willingness to share	Your child is not achieving their full potential at school
At school, your child is social, attentive and curious	Your child tries to avoid social situations and prefers to spend time alone
Your child has the ability to form long-term friendships	Your child gets picked on and/or 'acts up' to draw attention to themselves
Your child displays signs of autonomy and individuality	Your child often behaves in a rude and disrespectful manner
Your child shows a willingness to be a leader or a contributing member of a group	Your child is more fearful than expected in many situations
Your child is tolerant and accepting of others and their differences	Your child is easily frustrated or often appears sad or worried
Your child has a healthy appetite & sleeping habits	Your child has poor eating and sleeping habits

What can you do to help your child develop a healthy self-esteem?

1. **Seek out and reward the positive** – Refrain from focussing on negative behaviours. Remember to be authentic and honest ... children will know if you are not.
2. **Provide your child with undivided attention** – This lets the child know that what they have to say is valued. Let your child know that their feelings and opinions are important, by really listening to them.
3. **Keep your expectations to a realistic level** – Be mindful of your child's age, temperament and history and allow them to express themselves as an individual.
4. **Create a safe and nurturing environment** – Show your child that home is a place where they can feel protected, and secure in the knowledge that you will respond to their emotional and physical needs.
5. **Choose your words carefully** – Praise and encourage your child. Let them know that even at times of disappointment or crisis your love and support remains constant.
6. **Offer choices wherever possible** – Help your child develop confidence by empowering them to make their own choices. Allow them to try new things so that they may learn from any mistakes they make.
7. **Engage in pro-social deeds** – Model and encourage your child to say and do good deeds. This promotes positive feelings of self-worth.

Contributor: Julia Morton, Clinical Psychologist Registrar

For more information on fostering good self-esteem in children, please contact the Sydney Child Psychology Centre on 9960 1222 .