

## Desley's Dialogue



Hello everyone and welcome to our regular term newsletter. First term's newsletter was put on hold as life was turned upside down with COVID-19 and all the changes it initiated.

After the abrupt end to Term 1, it was a delight to welcome the children back to kindy. In some ways, it was almost as if they had never been away!! On those first mornings, it was a particular delight to see the children reconnect with one another, revisit favourite spaces and investigate new possibilities.

Second term usually sees the children well settled into the daily routine and although there was a break of several weeks for many, the time away does not appear to have posed any set back. In fact, they settled straight back into the normal routine as well as taking on changes to our days including (as we all know) our new drop-off and pick up procedures, extra hand washing stops during the day and library borrowing!



Just writing of these changes reminds me of how weary children can become as they take in the busyness of life in a group. Please expect that they will be tired at the end of their kindy days and with that tiredness there may well be some emotionality. Added to this is the fact that many are still managing changes to their sense of "normal" as parents continue to work from home and, for some there is still limited, if any, physical contact with grandparents.



Adults can understand, prepare themselves, and generally adapt to most changes but children's often uneven development of emotion, cognition and language can make this much harder for them. With this in mind, and knowing that life is full of anticipated (eg starting school) and unexpected (eg an ill parent or a pandemic lockdown) changes, I have included an article on *Young Children and Stress*. This article was written with transitioning to school in mind but is applicable to all areas of change and challenge.

You will know that we are often talking about Executive Function and so I have included an article explaining this in a little more detail and how this relates to our educational program.

*Desley*

# Young Children and Stress

Stress is a normal, unavoidable part of life. It affects everyone, even babies and young children. Some stress is useful: it keeps us motivated, wanting to do things and change things. However, too much stress can cause a number of difficulties.

Children, as well as adults, face stress from time to time, and stress can result from situations that incur both negative, and positive, emotions. Each child will react individually to different stress factors depending on their personalities, their own needs, and family and cultural reactions. Events which may cause stress for one child may not affect another child at all.

Some examples of situations that are likely to cause stress for children include:

- Loss of a loved one
- Moving house or major changes in routine
- Birth of a new baby
- Beginning or changing school
- Learning difficulties
- Excessive expectations from families
- Social difficulties
- Managing intense situations particularly when hot or tired.

At this time of year, with children leaving a familiar environment, anticipating their beginning at prep or in a new kindy group, facing the excitement of celebrations, holidays away from home and its routines together with the vagaries of Queensland weather, it is reasonable to expect that most children will experience some level of stress in the next few months.



Children show stress in many different ways. Some of these are:

Accident proneness	Hitting
Aggressiveness	Kicking
Anger	Indigestion
Anxiety	insomnia
Appetite loss	Stuttering
Baby talk	Thumb sucking
Bedwetting	Pounding heart
Biting	Grinding teeth
Crying spells	Fingernail biting
Detachment	Tattling
Extreme laziness	Illness

**Helping children manage stress.** If we can teach stress management skills to children at an early age, we can give them a life-long ability to cope with anxiety and tension. We can teach young children helpful techniques for handling stress – and they may quickly generalise these ideas to helping to manage other problems in their lives.

## Ways of helping children manage stress:

- Most importantly help children to distinguish between a major problem and an inconvenience. You will know your child best – how can you empower them rather than building a victim mentality.
- Consider physical management of stress: through diet, sleep, exercise
- Relaxation techniques: Relaxation can be therapeutic and beneficial. Learning how to relax is one of the most useful ways for children to manage stress.
- Deep breathing
- Progressive muscle relaxation (sequentially tensing and releasing muscles – fingers, toes, eyes, teeth, shoulders, tummy muscles)

- Doing an activity that they identify as calming (eg warm bath, read a book, listen to music)
- Creative visualisation: Relaxation exercises which use visual imagery or stories ( eg floating on a cloud or lying on a beach) paint a picture of calm and peace, helping some children to relax more deeply.
- Teach children to identify stressful situations, talk about them and name emotions (“That would make you feel disappointed, frustrated, embarrassed...”). Boys especially find this difficult and their expression of emotions is often only through anger.
- Get into the habit of talking to children about their day. Share good things or funny things that have happened to you, as well as examples of how you solved problems in your day.
- Children need to know that it is ok to make mistakes. Adults can model that mistakes are a great way to learn how to do things.
- Teach positive self statements to help them cope in challenging situations (eg “I can do this” “I will be ok” “I can be brave”)
- Help your child to identify GREEN thoughts (helpful thoughts that lead to pleasant feelings) and RED thoughts (unhelpful thoughts that lead to unpleasant feelings). Encourage them to let the RED thoughts slide away and the GREEN thoughts to stick.
- When children are in a stressful or hard situation encourage them to take a deep breath and think what to do. ‘Even when we are scared we can still think.’
- Allow periods of ‘quiet time’ when children can learn to relax. A rest after lunch, a regular period of listening to music or family rest time when everyone is quiet, will encourage this useful skill.
- Use humour as a model to manage stress. A child who learns to use humour will be better able to keep things in perspective.
- Develop personal mantras: “I can be brave, mum will be back at the end of the day”
- Acknowledge feelings: “I know you find it hard/feel sad when it is time to say goodbye, but...” (follow it with a positive message about their capabilities) – “...you know you can be brave. You have done that before.”
- Engage children in problem solving about the situation “What do you think might make it easier to say goodbye without crying?” eg car pooling with a friend



***You might like to practice the breathing exercises we do at kindy too!***

- **Flower breathing** – holding our hands together at chest height in the shape of a flower. As we breathe in, the flower opens and as we breathe out, it closes.
- **Hand breathing** – holding one hand stretched out, we trace along each finger, breathing in as we go up the first finger (thumb) and then breathing out as we go down the other side.
- **Counting breaths** – as we breathe in we lift each finger of one hand one by one (ie breathing to the count of 5) and then close each finger one by one as we breathe out.
- **Snake breaths** – we inhale a large breath and then exhale with a long drawn out hiss, emptying our lungs. Our next breath in is a deeper, fresher one to refill the lungs.
- **Rocket breaths** – with hands held together in front of our body, we shoot them into the air as we breathe in quickly, and then exhale loudly and forcefully as they come back down to the sides of our body.
- **Balloon breathing** – imagine your tummy is a balloon and make it grow bigger as you breathe in.
- **Alternate nostrils** – use a finger to hold one nostril closed. Alternate nostrils as you breathe in and out.
- **Cooling breath** – with teeth together and tongue pressed at the back of teeth, breathe in through the mouth and out through the nose. Can you feel the cool air?

# From the Office



## 2021 Enrolments

I know that at this stage of the year, many schools are already beginning their enrolment process for Prep. Please feel free to contact me if you have any queries regarding your child's transition onto Prep. The state government has guaranteed funding for any child having a second year at kindy which is testament to the fact that delaying a start to Prep can be beneficial for some children, allowing additional time to develop in a less formalised educational environment.

In June, when we commence kindy's enrolment process for 2021, Chris and I will send an email asking parents to let us know if they are considering giving their child extra time before Prep. We will then be able to reserve a space in your preferred group.

We would also ask that you help spread the word about Ballymore Kindy and let friends, neighbours, Facebook group friends know about us!



## BK Family gathering

### We can get together!!

After 10 July, if all goes according to plan, Queenslanders will be able to have outside gatherings of up to 100 people. With this in mind, please mark your diary (tentatively) for Sunday 26 July for our Annual Family Bushwalk at Bellbird Grove – what a lovely way to celebrate life slowly returning to normal!! There is even a big open space where we can maintain social distancing for adults as we enjoy a morning tea picnic after the walk.

See invitation at the back of this newsletter.

### Sustainability matters:

Perhaps you have already heard of this great little podcast from ABC radio. Mrs Curling (Karen) has brought it to our attention. "**Little Green Pods** is for busy people, like you, who know they could do more to save the world".

This is the web address to find out more  
<https://www.abc.net.au/radio/programs/little-green-pod/>

## Kindy Wish List



When you have your next spring clean please keep us in mind. There are lots of things we can reuse at Kindy:

- ❖ Mobile phones
- ❖ Laptops
- ❖ Small flat screens
- ❖ Cardboard boxes of all shapes and sizes including very big ones.
- ❖ Lengths of material
- ❖ Ribbons
- ❖ Paper – any shape, size, colour, thickness, lined and plain
- ❖ Used envelopes
- ❖ Cardboard rolls – toilet, gladwrap
- ❖ Anything lends itself to being glued sticky taped or painted – corks, bottle tops, ribbons.

THE LIST IS ENDLESS!

## Warm clothes

With the **cooler weather** here, please be aware that our kindergarten can get **very** cold (the downside of our lovely shady space), particularly in the mornings.

Please ensure your child dresses warmly for these next few months and has a spare set of warm clothes in their bag.



## Executive Function – Looking through a new lens

A group of children are heading inside to the carpet after playing in the outdoors. I have asked them to “please sit on the edge of the carpet beside someone who you didn’t play with outside.” So...what is significant about this request? Fundamentally, it is acknowledging our program’s focus on building positive relationships with, and between, children. I want the children to build confidence in being with, and interacting with, a range of individuals, not just those they choose to play with. But just as importantly, this request will provide practice for the children (and allow me to observe) their executive function abilities. Will they:



Remember what they were asked to do or will they sit anywhere – perhaps in front of my chair rather than on the edge?

Resist the urge to sit beside someone they played with, someone they know well? and

Be able to shift their attention to the wider group of children and be able to choose another child to sit near?

“Executive function is an umbrella term used to refer to a variety of interdependent skills that are necessary for purposeful, goal-directed activity from learning to hold a crayon to engaging in more complex social play” (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000, p116). As early childhood teachers and educators, executive function affords us another lens through which to consider the behaviour, development and learning of the children with whom we work. Through this lens, we may find that we observe, respond and plan for our children in new ways.

Executive function is generally considered to consist of the following three elements:

Working memory – the capacity to hold and manipulate information in our heads over short periods of time.

Inhibitory control – the skill we use to master and filter our thoughts and impulses so we can resist temptations, distractions, and habits and to pause and think before we act

Cognitive or mental flexibility – the capacity to nimbly switch gears and adjust to changed demands, priorities or perspectives. It enables us to apply different rules in different settings. (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011).

From these definitions, it may be obvious that executive function underlies human behaviour across the lifespan and in all contexts. As I write this paper, I am using my working memory to keep in mind what I am writing about. My inhibitory control means that I am resisting the urge to procrastinate, to turn on the TV, put the laptop away and ‘zone out’; and my cognitive flexibility is also allowing me to consider how to incorporate the points I think are paramount to consider – that executive function requires opportunities for practice and scaffolding in the context of secure relationships to fully develop, or that it offers a significant link between the play based, social-emotional development of early years education to the more academic focus of formal schooling (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011).

Executive function impacts on both children’s social interactions and their engagement in learning experiences. Children with poorly developed or under-developed executive function will have trouble recalling instructions or holding information in mind for short periods of time, they will be restless and likely to respond inappropriately when things don’t go their way. They may find it hard to wait in turn, to keep their hands away from others or to remain focussed on the task they have been given. Their abilities to fully engage in experiences is limited as they will struggle to adapt to changes or to consider more than one piece of information at a time (eg considering two clues at once as they guess what’s in the bag). Likewise their ability to consider different solutions to problems or their ability to incorporate another child’s ideas in play may be compromised.

“Executive function skills are crucial building blocks for the early development of both cognitive and social capacities.” (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011, p3) As such, executive function skills provide an important link between the traditional focus of early childhood education on social/emotional development and the more formalised academic learning of school, thus providing a new way for teachers and educators to communicate with schools and parents about the importance of early education curriculum in relation to their transition to Prep. Blair and Raver (2015) contend that self-regulation (including both the cognitive regulation of executive function, and social/emotional regulation) provides an appropriate framework for considering school readiness.

How can we, as early childhood teachers and educators support the development of children’s executive function? Most fundamentally is the need to base our teaching/learning programs within a context of positive and supportive relationships with, and between, children (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011; Nagel, 2012; Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). According to Blair (2003, p5), “Learning occurs within relationships. Early learning environments in which teachers are attuned to temperamental differences among children may help to provide a comprehensive basis for the development of skills important for learning.”

Such “growth-promoting environments provide substantial ‘scaffolding’ to help young children practice emerging skills before they are expected to perform them on their own.” (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011, p6) Knowing children well means that teachers are able to provide the individualised scaffolding required for these developing skills; when more help is required and when it is time to withdraw assistance. “When information is too complex and environments are stressful, executive functions shut down; when information is too simple and environments are uninteresting, executive functions are not called on. This...is the basis for the Vygotskian notion of the zone of proximal development.” (Blair & Raver, 2015, p718)

Children’s social pretend play is considered to be an important practice ground for developing executive function skills (Centre for the Developing Child, 2011; Nagel, 2012). In this play, children test for themselves the skills that adults have been scaffolding. They have to generate an idea for play, communicate it to other players, resolve issues in socially appropriate ways if the play is to continue, recall what is happening in the play and adapt to new ideas or scripts inserted into the play.

Executive function can be seen to be in operation throughout the day. Because these skills underpin all aspects of our life, it is possible to both observe and plan for them across the early childhood curriculum.

An experience as commonplace as drawing has the potential to engage children’s executive function skills. As they draw, children focus attention on particular aspects of an experience they consider important, inhibiting distractions. Cognitive flexibility is demonstrated as the drawing and the children’s thinking transforms and as they shift back and forth from their mental thinking to the visual representation of the drawing. As children’s use of drawing becomes more complex, they recall previous ideas and thinking, making use of working memory (Sonter & Jones, 2018).

If we consider routine and transition times in an early education program, we can again see executive functions in practice in the basic experiences and games that might be played: children recall instructions (working memory), resist the impulse to deviate from what is required (inhibitory control) and respond to unexpected developments eg if the morning tea mats have been placed in a different location (cognitive flexibility).

Understanding executive function and its role in human development is important for early childhood teachers and educators to explore. Its potential lies in providing us a much richer way to understand children’s learning and development, to recognise how we can appropriately scaffold such foundational development, and to communicate the value of our early childhood programs to the broader community.

***Desley Jones***

## 2020 Management Committee

Thank you to the following parents who have taken on a role on our management committee this year.

The staff appreciate your commitment to our small community kindergarten by taking on a position this year.

President:	Adam Parker (3 day group)
Secretary:	Chantal Di Sipio (2 day group)
Treasurer:	Louise Ware (3 day group)
Working Bee:	Richard McMaster (2 day group)
Grants/WHS:	Severine Navarro (3 day group)
Promotions:	Jacqui Thompson (2 day group)
Social:	Carly Field (3 day group)

## REMINDERS:

### Notification of absence

Please advise us in the morning if your child will be away due to ill health. Thank you.

### Reverse parking in car park

Parents, please remember to reverse your cars in when parking at kindy – and please let anyone else know who may be doing drop-off and/or pick-up. While we have no control over other people who may park in this area, reverse parking helps in keeping children safe as they move through the area. Please see you Parent Information Handbook for more details.

### EKKA PUBLIC HOLIDAY

You have no doubt already heard that the Public holiday for the Exhibition has been changed to **Friday 14 August**. Kindy will be closed on this day.

## Recycling at BK

### Have you seen the coloured bins in our courtyard?

We are collecting **L'OR** and **MOCCONA COFFEE CAPSULES** and **ORAL CARE PRODUCTS**

Please collect from workmates, neighbours, friends, relatives and bring along to kindy and place in containers in our Front Courtyard.

We are hoping that through this recycling activity we will support the children to build an attitude of caring for the environment (reusing materials to make new products) and caring for our wider community (**all money raised through our recycling efforts will go to Ronald MacDonald House**). Given our proximity to the hospital, we regularly hear and watch helicopters landing on the roof of the hospital and have many conversations about why people might be in the helicopter – are they having a baby or are they very sick or have they had an accident. Being able to help families with sick babies who may be staying at Ronald MacDonald House makes sense to the children in the context of their own experiences of wanting to be with family when they are unwell.

#### COLGATE® ORAL CARE RECYCLING PROGRAM

##### ACCEPTED WASTE



#### L'OR, MOCCONA & ILLY RECYCLING PROGRAM

##### ACCEPTED WASTE



## Banana Cupcake recipe made this week at Kindy!

### Ingredients:

- 125g unsalted butter
- $\frac{3}{4}$  Cup Castor sugar
- 1 tsp Vanilla essence
- 1 egg
- 2 ripe bananas mashed
- 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  Cups self-raising flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  Cup milk

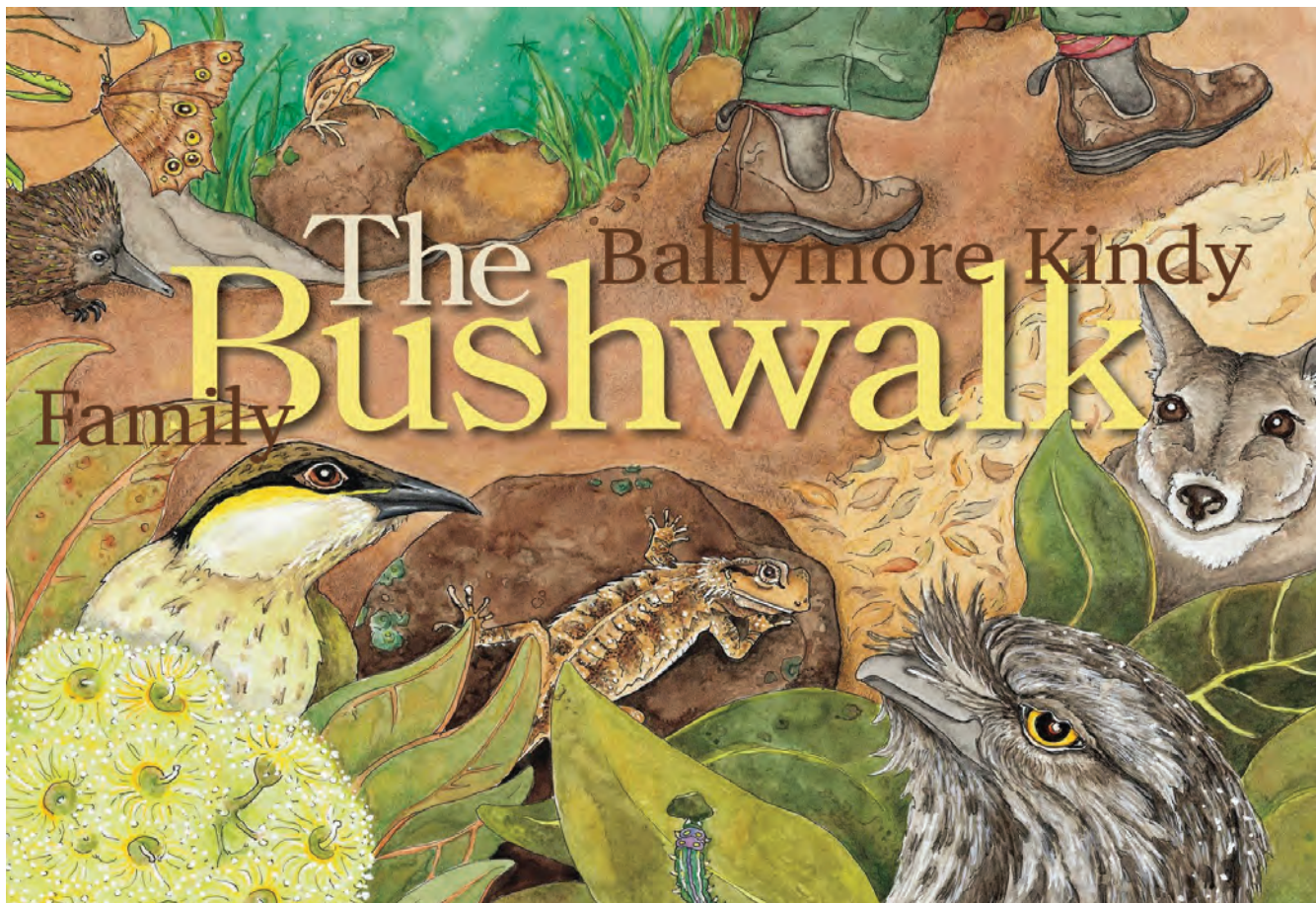
### Method:

1. Melt the butter, sugar and vanilla in a medium sized saucepan]
2. Remove from the heat
3. Add mashed bananas and stir through until just combined
4. Add egg and mix well
5. Stir in the flour, then pour in the milk and fold in lightly
6. Bake as a cake or divide into cupcakes
7. Bake at 170deg celcius for 40 min (as a cake) or less for cupcakes

## Busy May days playing at kindy







**All families are Invited to the  
Ballymore Kindy Family Bushwalk  
9.30am on Sunday, 26th July**

We will be meeting at the site of the bushwalk,  
"Bellbird Grove Turrbal Circuit", Brisbane Forest Park

**Directions:**

Allow for approximately 30 minute driving time.

Bellbird Grove: Off Mount Nebo Road, Bellbird Grove is just a 10-minute drive  
from Walkabout Creek.

(<http://www.npsr.qld.gov.au/parks/daguiar/walkabout-creek.html>)

Take the Bellbird Grove turn-off (to the right when heading west) and drive to the end.

From here, the 1.7km Turrbal circuit begins.

Parking, toilets, picnic tables, gas barbecues and water (treat before drinking) are provided.

**What to Bring:**

Wear your comfortable walking shoes and be sure to bring drinking water, hat  
and sunscreen. Pack your morning tea and picnic mat so we can have a picnic together  
after the walk.

**Questions:**

Please ask Desley should you have any further questions regarding the bush walk and  
if you need to contact us on the day, please phone: 0421 642 690.

*"This is an opportunity for families to spend social time together. Parents are requested to  
take full responsibility for their children and siblings i.e. this is not a kindy excursion".*