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KidsMatter is the Australian national primary school mental health promotion, prevention and early intervention initiative that has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, *beyondblue: the national depression initiative*, the Australian Psychological Society, the Australian Principals Associations Professional Development Council and supported by the Australian Rotary Health Research Fund.

Welcome to our first KidsMatter eNewsletter

We hope it becomes a resource that you look forward to receiving and will use with confidence. The KidsMatter health and education partnership enables us to provide diverse material that can be used to support the work you do. If you click on the logos at right you will be taken directly to each of the partner's websites.

We want the eNewsletter to be responsive to your needs. The Email the Editor function in our KidsMatter banner will enable us to follow up issues important to you. We would also like to promote the great things you are doing to improve children's mental health. Please send us your stories that you would like us to share.

The format for the eNewsletter has been chosen to reflect the four Key Components of KidsMatter. This focus is a way of making the task of improving mental health in schools more manageable. It also ensures that schools are putting their efforts into areas where they can be most effective.

The eNewsletter is designed for easy reading. If an item interests you click on the link to learn more.

Introducing our Stage 1 KidsMatter schools

100 schools representing states, territories, sectors, remote, rural and metropolitan locations were selected by the KidsMatter Evaluation Team from Flinders University to participate in Stage 1 of KidsMatter. All of the applications were considered. Every school described their readiness to begin the initiative and a commitment to a whole school approach. The schools eventually selected were randomly chosen because of their ability to be matched with a like school for evaluation purposes.

180 staff from the first 50 schools met for an implementation briefing in Adelaide on September 11 and 12. The second 50 schools will participate in this briefing next year.

Introducing our Stage 1 KidsMatter schools Group 1 Schools

NSW

Brooke Avenue Public School – Killarney Vale
Curran Public School– Macquarie Fields
Dubbo Public School– Dubbo
Elands Public School– Elands
King Park Public School– Wakeley
Northmead Public School– Northmead
St Bernadette's Primary School– Lalor Park
St John Fisher Catholic School– Tumbi Umbi
St. Columbas Primary School– Berrigan
St Joseph's School Schofields– Schofields

VIC

Christ the King Primary School– Braybrook
Hastings Primary School– Hastings
Monmia Primary School– Keilor Downs
Sacred Heart Primary School– Fitzroy
Saint Joseph's –Trafalgar
St Bernadette's Primary School– North Sunshine
St. Christopher's School– Airport West
St. Vincent de Paul Primary School– Morwell

Tootgarook Primary School- Rye
Upper Ferntree Gully Primary School- Upper Ferntree Gully

QLD

Burdekin School Special School- Ayr
Home Hill State School- Home Hill
Ithaca Creek State School- Bardon
Labrador State School- Labrador
Pomona State School- Pomona
Sandy Strait State School- Urangan
St Joseph's Stanthorpe- Stanthorpe
Cairns West State School- Manunda
Wondai State School- Wondai

WA

Bull Creek Primary School- Bull Creek
Holy Name School- Carlisle
Kinlock Primary School- Ferndale
Liwara Catholic Primary School- Greenwood
Settlers Primary School- Baldivis
St Simon Peter Catholic Primary School- Ocean Reef
Nulsen Primary School- Esperance

SA

Woodville Primary School - Woodville South
Hamley Bridge Primary School- Hamley Bridge
Hewett Primary School- Hewett
Leigh Creek Area School + Marree Aboriginal School- Leigh Creek
East Torrens Primary School- Hectorville
St Aloysius College- Adelaide

TAS

Distance Education Tasmania- North Hobart
Richmond Primary School- Richmond
Waverley Primary School- Launceston

ACT

Turner Primary school- Turner
Blue Gum Community School- Hackett
Canberra Girls' Grammar Junior School- Deakin

NT

Gray Primary School- Palmerston

Living Waters Lutheran School Inc.- Alice Springs

Nhulunbuy Primary School- Nhulunbuy

Group 2 Schools

NSW

Bexley Public School- Bexley

Carramar Public School- Carramar

Faulconbridge Public School- Springwood

Harrington Street Public School- Cabramatta West

St Bede's Primary School- Braidwood

St Oliver's Primary School- Harris Park

St Mary's Catholic Primary School- Noraville

Tahmoor Public School -Tahmoor

St Patrick's Primary School- Macksville

VIC

St Mary's Primary School- Echuca

Benalla Primary School- Benalla

Corio Primary School- Corio

Lumen Christi- Churchill

North Brunswick Primary School- West Brunswick

Southvale Primary School- Noble Park

St Andrew's Catholic Primary School- Werribee

St. John Vianney's Schol- Parkdale East

St. Therese's Primary School- Cranbourne

StLouis De Montfort Primary- Aspendale

QLD

Caloundra Primary School- Caloundra

Goondiwindi State Primary School- Goondiwindi

Mater Hospital Special School- Woolloongabba

Redlynch State School- Redlynch

Tallebudgera State School- Tallebudgera

The Willows State School- Kirwan

Unity College – Caloundra West
Upper Mt Gravatt State School– Brisbane

WA

Geraldton Grammar School– Geraldton
Hilton Primary School– Hilton
Lance Holt School– Fremantle
Leeming Primary School– Leeming
Rockingham Beach PS– Rockingham
Star of the Sea Catholic Primary School – Rockingham
Cooinda Primary School– Bunbury

SA

Annesley College– Wayville
Cobdogla Primary School– Cobdogla
Elizabeth Park Schools– Elizabeth Park
Munno Para Primary School– Munno Para
Open Access College – Marden
Roxby Downs Area School– Roxby Downs
Woodcroft Primary School– Woodcroft

TAS

Kempton Primary School– Kempton
Lauderdale Primary School– Lauderdale
Rocherlea Primary School– Mowbray

ACT

Aranda Primary– Aranda
Gowrie Primary School– Gowrie
St Francis of Assisi Primary School– Calwell

NT

Howard Springs Primary School– Howard Springs
Jingili Primary School– Darwin
Sacred Heart Primary School– Palmerston

A POSITIVE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Belonging and connection

A positive school community promotes feelings of belonging and connection for students, staff, families and the community. Belonging and connection are protective factors for mental health

Why a Positive School Community is important.....

Belonging and connection

A sense of belonging is an essential requirement for building a positive school community. It means building connections with, and between, staff, students, families and the community. A positive school community promotes feelings of belonging and connection for children, which are both protective factors for mental health. A positive school community is also essential for school staff to ensure that the environment supports and promotes their well being. When staff feel supported and connected they are more able to effectively provide for their students' academic, social and emotional needs. A positive school community that is welcoming and respects diversity will encourage parents, families and the community to participate and contribute to school life.

Students who have a sense of belonging and connection to school are more likely to feel happier, safer and cope better with the ups and downs of life. Students who do not feel connected to school are more likely to experience poor mental health, low self concept, be in conflict with parents and teachers, and seek out alternate forms of social connection by belonging to negative peer groups.

For many children who live in challenging circumstances, school can represent a stable and reliable place to belong in an ever changing world. This includes children from fractured families, those caught in custody battles, those living in poverty or with mentally ill or drug addicted parents. A positive school community is vital for these children.

Similarly, children from indigenous communities, refugee families and other culturally diverse backgrounds have to move between the community at school and their 'outside school' community. If there are great disparities between these two communities, students may

not manage the transition and will feel alienated and disconnected. A positive school community will assist in bridging the gap by being responsive to the interests and needs of students and families from diverse cultures, backgrounds and circumstances.

The lack of a sense of belonging within a school community can be seen in many ways, including frequent student absence, inappropriate student behaviour, poor family participation and support for school events, poor family representation on committees, little or no acknowledgement of school correspondence, lack of staff support for new ideas, high staff stress levels, turnover and absence.

Talking to children about death

It is likely that the recent public attention given to the deaths of Steve Irwin and Peter Brock have prompted questions from students. Children can be helped to cope with grief and death by learning to understand the nature of death as a biological event.

Talking with children about death

By Dr Bob Montgomery PhD FAPS
Adjunct Professor in Psychology, University of the Sunshine Coast
Director of Communications, Australian Psychological Society

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Children can be helped to cope with grief and death by learning to understand the nature of death as a biological event.

Children are inevitably confronted by death, through direct or indirect experience or through fictional depictions. Adults understand that death comes to all living things, is the final stage of the life cycle, is inevitable and irreversible, and is caused by a breakdown in the biological functioning of the body. However, children do not think like adults and their reactions to death are shaped by their ideas about its nature.

Early research found that children, like adults, saw death as a highly emotional issue, evoking sadness, anxiety, and fear, particularly of the separation that death may cause. Children's ideas about death involved some consistent misunderstandings (from an adult point of view) that could exacerbate children's emotional responses. Children younger than 10 tended to see separation due to death as similar to other forms of parting. Death is behavioural, in that dead people had gone away, to heaven or the cemetery or some such special place, where they continued to live but from which they were unlikely to return, because they were unable or were permanently asleep. It is easy to see how the language sometimes used by adults to discuss death with children could give rise to such ideas.

Later research identified seven components in the adult idea of death: (1) irreversibility; (2) universality and applicability (all living things, but only living things, die); (3) personal mortality; (4) inevitability; (5) cessation (body and mental functions cease after death); (6) causality (death is caused by a breakdown of bodily functions); (7) unpredictability. By ages 5 or 6, children have usually acquired the ideas of universality and irreversibility; but the ideas of cessation and causality are usually acquired last, not until age 7 or older. In other words, an understanding of death as a biological event typically comes last.

Recent research has explored how children build ideas about how the world works by actively building causal 'theories'. Dr Virginia Slaughter, a psychologist at the University of Queensland, and her colleagues investigated children's understanding of death in two studies, one in North America and one in Australia. She concluded that young children typically don't have a sufficiently mature 'theory' of the biological nature of life, so they cannot have an understanding of death as a biological event. Researchers generally agree that between ages 5 and 8 children first begin to think specifically about how biology works and how this applies to the human body. Usually between ages 4 and 6, children begin understanding the body as 'biological', seeing its major organs as serving the purpose of maintaining life. So by age 7 children are usually understanding life in a way that allows them to begin understanding death.

Implications

Talking with a young child about death is inevitably difficult, because it is highly emotional and requires a level of thinking more mature than usually occurs in youngsters. But there will unavoidably be occasions when adults need to discuss death with young children and to do so in a supportive way. Euphemistic discussions may only serve to maintain children's misinformation about death, so delaying their coming to terms with it and exacerbating their emotional distress. Expert opinion is that death should be discussed with children in concrete and unambiguous terms.

This means talking, in language understandable to the child, about death as a biological event involving the irreversible cessation of bodily functions. However, such an explanation will not be helpful to a child who has not yet developed a biological 'theory' of life, so this may need to be addressed first. Ask the child open-ended questions about the nature of life and death to allow the child to show whether she or he has developed a biological 'theory' of life. If not, then the child will benefit from reasonably detailed explanations of the biological nature of life, repeated as often as necessary to achieve understanding. One or two age-appropriate library books may help. An understanding of death as a biological event should facilitate helpful, supportive communication with adults and lessen the child's emotional pain.

For reference

Slaughter, V. Young children's understanding of death. Australian Psychologist 2005; 40:179-186.

National Safe Schools Framework

The National Safe Schools framework has a focus to ensure our schools are safe and supportive environments. All State and Territory government and non-government education authorities, and the Commonwealth, are committed to working together to ensure the wellbeing of all Australian students. Providing an environment where bullying, harassment and violence are not tolerated and wellbeing, social responsibility and respect are promoted is the foundation for a positive school community.

Each edition of the KidsMatter eNewsletter will highlight strategies and resources to help further build safe and supportive learning environments for your students.

Examples about whole school approaches can be found on the Bullying. No way! Website at www.bullyingnoway.com.au

TEACHING OF SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Link between social and emotional skills and learning
Social and emotional competence is an integral requirement for good mental health and like all learning is acquired developmentally and needs to be taught. Growing evidence shows that the acquisition of social and emotional skills is critical in achieving better academic performance and success in school and life.

Read more about the relationship between Social and Emotional Learning and Academic performance

EARLY INTERVENTION

Auditing your community resources
Early intervention can make a significant difference to children who are at risk of developing mental health difficulties but very few children with mental health difficulties receive any professional support. It can be helpful to audit what resources are available and build a reference list of contacts. A flowchart is a good way of mapping phone numbers to call for immediate response in a crisis and those that would be helpful for followup or later counselling and referral or support and information. Your own education department student support service numbers are a great start. Every state also has a directory of community resources that are available to download on line or purchase in hard copy. When you 'Click for more' you'll find a list of directory websites and the opportunity to view the Flowchart.

Auditing your community resources

Victoria

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

NSW

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

Local Information Network for Community Services –

<http://www.datadiction.com.au/lincs>

Queensland

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

Some local councils provide local community information:

Charters Towers – <http://www.charterdata.org.au/>

Northern Territory

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

NTCOSS provides a printed Community Services Directory and online database – <http://www.ntcoss.org.au/>

Western Australia

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

Some local councils have community information available online

<http://www.datadiction.com.au/lincs>

ACT

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

Citizens Advice Bureau ACT – <http://www.citizensadvice.org.au/>

Tasmania

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

South Australia

<http://www.serviceseeker.com.au/>

<http://www.cisa.asn.au/>

PARENTING EDUCATION AND SUPPORT

Positive parent – school relationships are very important

The family is central to children's mental health. Making parenting information and education a regular part of what schools offer to families has many benefits including opportunities to improve parenting practice and increase parents' understanding of risk and protective factors in regards to their child's mental health. Many organizations provide helpful tip sheets and great suggestions for parents on many topics related to bringing up children and are happy to supply a range of brochures for free.

You may like to advertise this website in your newsletter www.raisingchildren.net.au It provides a wealth of ideas and some would make a great insert for parents of children just starting school. You could provide them as part of your transition to school suggestions.

Raising Children Network: the Australian parenting website

- * Home
- * Grown-ups
 - o Family Management
 - o Looking After Yourself
 - o Parents Like Me
 - o Pregnancy
 - o For Fathers
 - o Work & Family
 - o Dealing with Separation
- * Newborns
 - o Behaviour
 - o Connecting & Communicating
 - o Development
 - o Health & Daily Care
 - o Nutrition
 - o Play & Learning
 - o Safety
 - o Sleep
- * Babies
 - o Behaviour
 - o Connecting & Communicating
 - o Development
 - o Health & Daily Care
 - o Nutrition
 - o Play & Learning

- o Safety
 - o Sleep
- * Toddlers
 - o Behaviour
 - o Connecting & Communicating
 - o Development
 - o Health & Daily Care
 - o Nutrition & Fitness
 - o Play & Learning
 - o Safety
 - o Sleep
- * Preschoolers
 - o Behaviour
 - o Connecting & Communicating
 - o Development
 - o Health & Daily Care
 - o Nutrition & Fitness
 - o Play & Learning
 - o Safety
 - o Sleep
- * School Age
 - o Behaviour
 - o Connecting & Communicating
 - o Development
 - o Health & Daily Care
 - o Nutrition & Fitness
 - o Play & Learning
 - o Safety
 - o Sleep
- * Services & Support
 - o Child Care to School
 - o Hotlines
 - o Links & Resources
 - o Local Services
 - o Money & Finances
 - o Parenting & the Law

- * A-Z Power Search
- * My Neighbourhood
- * Forums
- * Tools & Activities
- * Make a Book

- * [Subscribe](#)
- * [Feedback](#)

[Home](#) / [School Age](#) / [Behaviour](#)

[School Age Behaviour](#)

[Young girl with gold stars on her forehead](#)

[Did you know](#)[Question mark symbol](#)

* Having to be all grown-up during the day at school might make your child feel like being a baby again at home.

* Your child's adventurous spirit will be back once she 'finds her feet'.

- * [School-age behaviour: in a nutshell](#)
- * [Encouraging good behaviour: 12 tips](#)
- * [Temperament: what is it?](#)
- * [Self-esteem](#)
- * [When you feel you might hurt your child](#)

Learn about some of the strategies you can use to encourage good behaviour in children in our behaviour toolkit.

- * [School issues](#)
 - o [ADD and ADHD: what are they?](#)
 - o [Problem-solving strategies for parents and teachers](#)
 - o [Talking about school](#)
 - o [How to get your child to eat breakfast](#)
 - o [School mornings](#)
 - o [Homework](#)
 - o [Bullying](#)
 - o [Friends and peers](#)
- * [Discipline](#)
 - o [About discipline](#)
 - o [Practical advice about discipline](#)
 - o [Is punishment necessary?](#)
- * [Other troubles](#)
 - o [Fears and anxieties](#)
 - o [Swearing](#)
 - o [Winning, losing and cheating](#)

- o Sibling rivalry
- o Imaginary friends
- o Lies and fibs
- o Habits
- o Disability: brothers and sisters

School Age

5–8 years

* Behaviour

The basics

- o Behaviour in a nutshell
- o 12 behaviour tips
- o Temperament
- o Self-esteem
- o Avoiding abuse

Behaviour toolkit

- o School Age Behaviour Toolkit
- o About behaviour toolkit
- o Attending
- o Praise & encouragement
- o Developing skills
- o Routines
- o Transitions
- o 'Beat the buzzer'
- o Changing environment
- o Requests & instructions
- o Family rules
- o Systematic ignoring
- o Planning ahead
- o Consequences
- o Time-out
- o 'Families' video

School issues

- o ADD & ADHD
- o Problem-solving strategies
- o Talking about school
- o Eating breakfast

- o School mornings
- o Homework
- o Bullying
- o 'Nobody likes me'

Discipline

- o About discipline
- o Discipline – some practical advice
- o Is punishment necessary?

Other troubles

- o Fears & anxieties
- o Swearing
- o Winning, losing and cheating
- o Sibling rivalry
- o Imaginary friends
- o Lies and fibs
- o Habits
- o Disability & siblings

- * Connecting & Communicating
- * Development
- * Health & Daily Care
- * Nutrition & Fitness
- * Play & Learning
- * Safety
- * Sleep

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- * Media Room
- * Link to Us
- * Professionals

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Warning: This website and the information it contains is not intended as a substitute for professional consultation with a qualified practitioner.

