



# Early Years

Issue 23 2015

**FREE**

MAGAZINE

**Encouraging  
Literacy at Home**

**Australia's  
Northern  
Territory**

**The Importance  
of School  
Readiness**

**Science  
Experiment  
Fun!**

**All About  
Playdough**

**Plus More!**



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**Cover artist:** Scarlett, 4, painted our  
cover of a beautiful rainbow.

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## Want to join in on the fun?

We are currently looking for suitable  
articles for our 2016 issues of Early  
Years. If you are interested in writing  
for families why not share your story  
with others. If you have a great idea or  
something special to share, then  
please email [marie@earlyyearscare.com.au](mailto:marie@earlyyearscare.com.au)

We are also looking for some colourful  
and imaginative covers for our  
magazines in 2016. Please email  
a photo of your artwork to  
[marie@earlyyearscare.com.au](mailto:marie@earlyyearscare.com.au) for

consideration. The artwork must be  
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imagination, health, travel, parenting  
and anything to do with children or  
raising a family. If that sounds like your  
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[www.earlyyearsmagazine.com.au](http://www.earlyyearsmagazine.com.au)

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# bits & pieces

## Understanding Autism: A Valuable Business Proposition



- ▶ Are you an inclusive employer?
- ▶ Is diversity celebrated and supported in your workplace?
- ▶ Do you want to maximise your market share by developing your workforce to better reflect your community and customer base?

You are invited to attend this 3 hour seminar, delivered by Vicky Little (Autism Spectrum Australia), aimed to equip you with the knowledge and tools to confidently employ and

manage individuals with autism in the workplace.

You will:

- ▶ Increase awareness of autism in the workplace
- ▶ Understand the strengths and skills employees with autism can possess and the value this brings to your business
- ▶ Identify appropriate roles within your organisation and learn best recruitment practices
- ▶ Learn practical strategies to effectively manage and work with employees on the autism spectrum, and steps to implementing these in your workplace

**WHEN:** Friday 23rd October 2015  
11am – 2.30pm

**WHERE:** The Jordan Room, City Diggers Wollongong

**COST:** Free - Brought to you by the National Disability coordination Officer Programme

**REGISTER:** <http://www.eventbrite.com.au/e/understanding-autism-a-valuable-business-proposition-tickets-18322507112>

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**OTHER:** Enjoy a complimentary light lunch and opportunity to network with your peers.

## Let's get children and families reading



- ▶ Children should have access to reading books, even to follow pictures of a story
- ▶ Children who practice reading and are exposed to picture books become better readers and have overall academic success later in life
- ▶ Children read more when they are able to choose the books themselves
- ▶ Children love libraries! Let them choose books to borrow and take them home to care for them.
- ▶ Family involvement at reading at school and home has a positive impact on a child's development
- ▶ Building reading into a child's daily routine positively impacts on a child's understanding of literacy
- ▶ Adult role modelling is a key motivator for loving books and reading.
- ▶ Be involved in 'Paint The Town REaD' [www.paintthegongread.org](http://www.paintthegongread.org)

## ECD Encyclopedia



**Encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development**

Did you know about a free online encyclopedia on early childhood development?

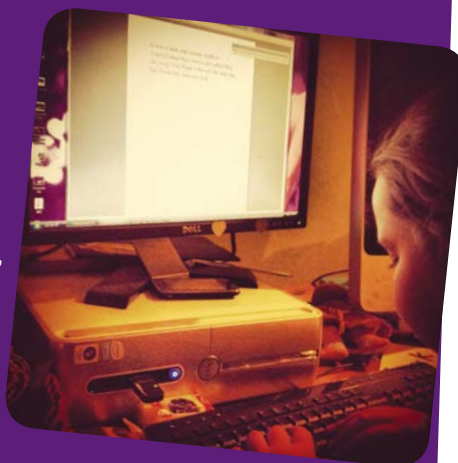
The encyclopedia on Early Childhood Development is produced by Canada's Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development. It brings together articles written by internationally renowned experts on

## Children's Writing Competition

Children aged 5–13 years are invited to write a story. The theme is Summer Holidays. **1st Prize \$150 and Book Prize Packs will be awarded across all age groups.** You can type or hand-write your story, but you need to include your name, your postal and email address, phone number and your age.

Send your entry to:  
**Early Years Magazine**  
46 Central Avenue  
Oak Flats NSW 2529

Competition closes on November 16th and winners' names and their stories will be published in the December issue of Early Years Magazine. Entries will be judged by local authors. There are book prizes for highly commended entries and certificates for all entrants.



early childhood development topics. Most of the topics are examined from three perspectives: development, services and policy. For each topic there is a simplified summary of key points which addresses three questions: What is the importance of this topic? What are the most up-to-

date and conclusive data available on this subject? What can be done to improve services, policies and research?

For many of those topics there is a PDF of key messages for parents, which would be great to reprint, for example, in service newsletters.

Topics include attachment, autism, divorce and separation, language development, play, sleeping, crying and eating.

Visit: **[www.child-encyclopedia.com](http://www.child-encyclopedia.com)**

## All about the nappy collective

### Our Vision

To be a nationally recognised organisation That no unused disposable nappy should go to waste and through the power of collective giving we are able to use these nappies to assist parents in need. for the health and wellbeing of their children

### Our Mission

1. To provide relief to parents and children who as a result of poverty, crisis, illness or disability ('disadvantaged') would otherwise be unable to access essential healthcare items;
2. To provide the disadvantaged with an opportunity to access essential healthcare items in order to relieve the burden on disadvantaged parents and assist with healthy growth and development in early childhood;
3. To promote and encourage community engagement with social welfare issues including in

relation to the lack of resources available to disadvantaged parents and children; and

4. To assist in the prevention of health issues in disadvantaged children associated with a lack of access to essential and hygienic resources.

### Why Left Over Nappies?

It is not unusual for a baby or toddler to grow out of a size of nappy part way through a packet or box of nappies.

Parents may have tried or accidentally purchased a new brand which didn't suit their child or they might have left spare nappies in a different bag, in the car or at the grandparents' house only to find that once again their child had grown out of them. Parents usually pass these smaller nappies on to a friend, keep them for their next child or sadly eventhrow them away.

### Our Impact

Nappies are a basic essential

child care need. Families with limited incomes may have to choose between clean nappies and other basic needs such as food for themselves. Lack of frequent nappy changes can cause subsequent health issues and can be very distressful for an infant, potentially compounding an already stressful situation. Low income families may also not have the opportunity buy in bulk resulting in an inequality of spending power.

By passing on your leftover unused nappies you are providing a resource to these families which can reduce a financial burden and assist with healthy growth and development of their children in early childhood. Parents have more time to focus their energy on their parenting and other daily challenges they face.

Early Years Magazine has registered as a collection point for nappies. If you have any disposable nappy donations please drop them to 46 Central Avenue Oak Flats between the 16th and 30th October 2015.

Thank you for your support.

### HOW IT WORKS

## BECOME A PART OF THE COLLECTIVE



### TOO MANY NAPPIES...

Do you have leftover unused disposable nappies lying around? Drop them off at your nearest designated collection points whilst the collective is on or contact us if there are none nearby.



### PASS THEM ON

At the end of the two week collective the nappies are sorted, packed and swiftly distributed to organisations that support families in crisis or in need. [click here](#) to see the list of beneficiaries The Nappy Collective supports.



### MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Nappies are a basic healthcare need and lack of sufficient nappies can lead to an array of problems for disadvantaged families. So when you donate your spare nappies, you help these families to focus more of their time and energy on getting their lives back on track.

## SOME FACTS ABOUT THE NAPPY COLLECTIVE!

**17**  
CITIES

**217**  
• COLLECTION POINTS

**95**  
• BENEFICIARIES

**473924**  
NAPPIES COLLECTED



# Encouraging Lit

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

Literacy skills are a vital part of your child's overall development. These skills are important for children and their future success at school and later in the workplace depends on them. But before your children learn to read and write, they need to develop the foundations for literacy – the ability to talk, listen, understand, watch and draw.

With time and practice your children will also come to understand the connection between letters on a page and spoken words. Children learn this through:

- ▶ pictures and objects
- ▶ letters and words
- ▶ sounds

These early learned concepts will be the basis of more formal literacy learning in later years.

You can help with your children's literacy development at home in the years early by communicating with them, reading with them and teaching them about different sounds.

The language experiences that children have in their early years form brain connections and development. These connections are used for language and thinking. Without experiences like talking, singing and reading, the brain doesn't develop this rich network of connections.

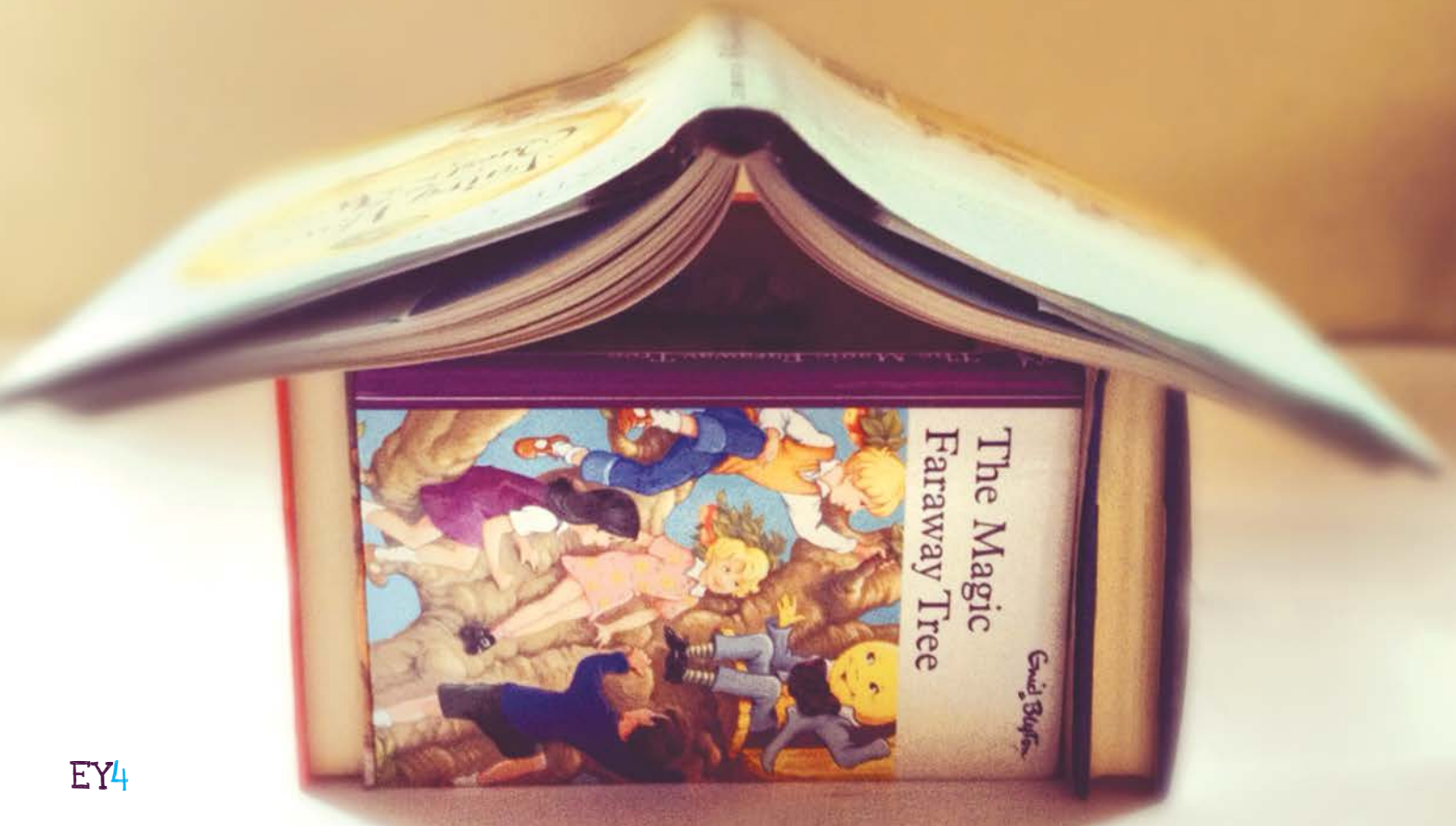
Bonding and interacting with your babies or older children helps create a sense of security in them, an attachment which then creates a desire for them to want to interact with you in return.

Babies respond to smiles and baby-talk or sounds, and they will try to imitate your sounds and facial expressions. When you repeat your

children's sounds, it lets them know they are communicating. Singing to your children lets them learn about the rise and fall of sounds. This is all the basis for learning about conversation and language.

## What can parents do?

- ▶ Don't be afraid to use baby-talk – it helps babies understand how language is put together.
- ▶ Sing to your child
- ▶ Talk to your child about the everyday things you're doing and seeing together, while you are walking, in the car, or putting the washing out. Just talk and describe



# eracy at Home

- ▶ Name people and point out special features on different objects
- ▶ Talk about feelings -I feel so happy that Nanny is coming over
- ▶ Listen to your children. Follow their lead and give them the chance to answer questions or source answers before you step in and answer everything for them
- ▶ Tell your children stories. You could share funny or interesting stories from your childhood or tell them about your past. Stories are important
- ▶ When your children are older you can break up words and sound out letters c-a-t

## Always Read!

- ▶ Always read with your child often. Start as early as you can, from birth onwards. Children who have had experiences with language and print from an early age are more likely to develop a solid literacy foundation and will seek out books. They will enjoy reading. Research shows that children who like and read books are more likely to form good study habits later on in formal schooling years. Reading with your children also:
  - ▶ gives you enjoyable time with them bonding and interacting
  - ▶ helps them start to appreciate what books have to offer. Books can be fun and offer information
  - ▶ helps them to learn the sounds of letters in spoken language
  - ▶ helps them to understand that stories aren't coming from you, but from the words on the page – this teaches them about how the printed word works
  - ▶ helps them develop a larger vocabulary of words and sounds
  - ▶ improves their thinking and problem-solving skills.

## Important Things for You to Do

- ▶ **See our list and create an environment full of everyday literacy opportunities**
- ▶ Read to your children.
- ▶ When your children are old enough, encourage them to hold the book and turn the pages. This will help them start to understand that the book should be a certain way up, and that pages are always turned in the same direction.
- ▶ Guide your finger on the line as you read, pointing out each word.
- ▶ Point out pictures and describe them in words.

Children develop at different rates. While some children with foundational literacy difficulties will catch up to their peers, children who make slow early progress often need extra help. If they don't get it, they can experience delays in literacy development over the long term.

There are some early signs that your child might be having trouble with foundational literacy skills. These signs involve both oral language (vocabulary and listening skills) and knowledge of word structure (knowing letters, rhyming, sounding out and blending sounds in simple words).

If you are worried about your child, always chat to a professional and seek advice. You could start by talking to your GP, paediatrician, speech pathologist, or your child's preschool teacher. They will be able to direct you to other services and support.

## Is Your House Literacy-Friendly?

Use this list to guide you (ref [www.getreadytoread](http://www.getreadytoread))

### What my child has...

- ▶ My child has at least one alphabet book (e.g., Dr. Seuss's ABC book).
- ▶ My child has magnetized alphabet letters to play with.
- ▶ My child has crayons and pencils readily available for writing and drawing.
- ▶ My child has paper readily available for writing and drawing.
- ▶ My child has a table or surface readily available for writing or drawing.
- ▶ My child has at least one rhyme book.
- ▶ My child has at least 10 picture books.
- ▶ My child plays beginning reading and alphabet games on a computer (e.g., Reader Rabbit or Bailey's Book House).
- ▶ My child has materials and games to help learn the alphabet.

### What I or another adult do...

- ▶ I or another adult in the house read a picture book with my child at least once a week.
- ▶ I or another adult in the house teach new words to my child at least once a week.
- ▶ I or another adult in the house have a detailed and informative conversation with my child at least once a week.
- ▶ I or another adult in the house help my child learn nursery rhymes.
- ▶ I or another adult in the house encourage my child to tell me what he or she wants using complete sentences. I or another adult in the house take my child to the library or a book shop at least once every two months.



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# Preparing Your Child for Surgery

Words: **Alison Thelan**

As parents it can be a frightening experience to be told that your child needs to undergo surgery. We lose the sense of being in control and looking after our child—after all that is our job as parents. To put our faith in someone else (most of the time strangers—doctors, nurses) can be difficult. These are issues that we have to face in order for our children to undergo treatment and potentially get better. Preparing and educating ourselves as parents is a good start to the process. If we are anxious and nervous, our child will often pick up on these feelings and behaviours. Be armed with knowledge and confidence. That way when your child asks questions, you have the answers he/she may need.

Providing information to your child that is age appropriate will help ease any fears or uncertainties he or she may have. Explaining why the surgery is needed and focusing on the positives will help your child understand the procedure. Taking your child for a visit to the hospital when booking in can help. Explain to your child you will both be having a 'sleep over' after the surgery if this is the case.

Some hospitals have colouring in books for the child to take home and read/colour in prior to the surgery. This explains the exact procedures and what will happen throughout the child's stay in hospital.

Some tips on helping your child survive a hospital stay:

1. Take a teddy, blankie or any form of comforter your child may have. The doctors and nurses are generally really good with things like this and allow your child to take them into surgery with them.
2. Pack plenty of post-surgery entertainment to keep their little minds busy. Sometimes they can



be easily distracted from seeing that drip in their arm or foot with a movie, colouring in book or a sticker book.

3. Be compassionate and understanding of how your child may be feeling. Acknowledge the child's feelings but focus on the positives—reinforce how your child will feel better in the long run. Or all the ice cream and jelly they will get to eat after the surgery!
4. Explain to your child what the theatre will be like. It can be very daunting to walk into that room. When my little boy recently had surgery to have his tonsils out, I told him we were climbing on board a space ship. (He loves

spaceships from Buzz.) This made it a little fun and exciting for him rather than scary.

5. As a parent be prepared to go into theatre with your child, and make this a funny experience by talking to your child about it prior to the event. You will be dressed in a hat, shoes and a gown. Use this experience as a dress up and role play experience.

After the surgery it can be hard to see your child in pain—just keep in mind how good your child will feel after the recovery process. In the meantime, give your child plenty of love, hugs, reassurance and understanding.

# As **real** as it gets – Australia's Northern Territory

Words: **Scott McRae**

To me there is nothing more uniquely Australian than our outback. The red soils, the silent billabongs and gorges, the towering sandstone and granite canyons, the dusty roads that seem to have no end.

The distinctive wildlife that says this is Australia is something else that appeals to my love of what cannot be found anywhere else on the planet, and one particular part of our great nation personifies all those elements with an all omnipresent connection is the NT.

I have been blessed to visit the NT on many occasions over the years and every visit has been decidedly different, making new exciting discoveries and friendships on every sojourn. I have had a taste of the rich indigenous lifeline that is ever present in Kakadu and Arnhem Land. The raw beauty of its two World Heritage listed national Parks. The engaging and vibrant melting pot of Darwin and of course perhaps the NT's most famous inhabitants, those awesome prehistoric beasts known as *Crocodylus porosus*. Seeing those beauties in their own habitat is wild and wondrous.

My most recent journey was again one with new experiences and a totally different tilt to it.

As part of my filming for A Taste of Travel I spent a couple of weeks being hosted by my very own Masterchef, but more

importantly a born and bred and very proud Territorian.

Lynton Tapp is a Katherine boy with a big grin and a friendly loving manner to match it. With the exposure he has gained from The Masterchef series and the unabashed love of his true home, he is also now an ambassador for the NT and he embraces the charge with gusto.

Our mission was to engage in some of the distinctive tastes and adventures that the NT is famous for and have a lot of fun doing it.... sounds easy doesn't it?

I met up with Lynton at Alice Springs airport and after a quick chat and the initial "what's this bloke like" moment we hit the ground running.

Our first adventure was with one of the newest operators in The Alice and would have me taking in that clean warm oxygen deep into my lungs.

Outback Cycling has settled nicely into town and is the second of its operations in the NT with Uluru its other site. With the ever-present blue skies and its relatively flat terrain cycling is such a great way to explore the city and its surrounds. You can hire a bike from the team and explore a choice of self-guided tour options or you can hook up with your own personal guide and get some great insight into the history and culture from a knowledgeable local. Lynton knew plenty about the history but our guide came in very handy, as this was his town. The highlight for me was discovering the original "Alice Springs" although now it is dry as a bone in the sun, is it the exact spot that the town was named after. The Old Telegraph station was also a bit of a treat, with many tales of early settlers overcoming all sorts of obstacles to forge what was the only real form of overland communication, apart from someone on horse or camel!



When it came to a venue for dinner in The Alice, in fact anywhere in the NT over the next week or so I was going to be guided by Lynton, as he not only has the connections but also the culinary knowledge that I am sure would not disappoint. Jimmy Shu's Hunaman at The Doubletree Hilton was on top of his list and the aroma that hit me in the face on arrival was absolutely intoxicating, added to that the combination of aroma, the artifacts and atmosphere that the restaurant exuded I could tell we were on a winner.

Lynton insisted on picking the eye out of the menu and it was nice to get a little running commentary on each dish from him as we devoured some of the tastiest innovative and authentic Asian I had ever savored in this country.

The sensational signature Hunaman Oysters, Punjabi Lamb Cutlets, Green Chicken Curry, Eggplant Pachadi and Meen Moolie. Thai, Nonya and Tamil flavours that took me into a state of gastronomical bliss!

Kings Canyon was our next destination and with the road conditions well maintained it was an easy five and a half hour journey, with





## #askNTmates

plenty of scenic visuals on the way. Kings Canyon Resort is realistically in the middle of nowhere and close to being in the geographic middle of Australia too.

The resort itself is clean and comfortable and would probably be about a 3 and a half star establishment, but it is the Canyon itself that delivers what this area is really about and it is best to get in there on foot and do one or all of the three walks. That is the only way you can really understand the enormity of its 100-metre tall cliff walls and it Bungle Bungle like bee hives. It is unique and typically true Australia. As real as it gets!

If you do stay overnight I suggest you indulge yourself in another unique experience known as 'Under a Desert Moon'. Lynton had promised me an indulgent dining experience under the stars and he didn't disappoint. A Five star menu under the Southern stars, surrounded by ghost gums, the crackle of an open fire and the distant howls of the drifting dingoes. No crowds no disruptions, just remarkably fresh local produce and equally delightful wines served up by friendly and attentive wait staff. A Michelin star experience without the regal pomp and ceremony.

An early start the next morning was called for before we set off for our next move to Katherine. Just down the road (remember for outback folk this sometimes is hundreds of km's but thankfully not today) Lynton was set to give me another unique NT experience with an early morning breaky ride on the back of a camel. Yes the 'ships of the desert' were an integral part of outback NT and still have a place today in tourism and for their meat. Years ago with their Afghan cameleers they were responsible for many major accomplishments in those pioneering years and without them many major endeavors would not have been fulfilled.

Kings Creek Station was set up by Ian and Lyn Conway around 1981 and is a working Cattle and camel station. Here you can engage in station life in many ways and your mode of transport is typically outback also. Quad bikes, Camels or Helicopter are available. I would have gone with the chopper but my host had other plans. Lynton has

done his time mustering on his family's property and wanted me to get a taste of that on ground experience, even though on ground meant about eight feet above it. Still it was really special. The terrain was ruggedly beautiful and the morning air was brisk but not uncomfortable. In fact this was the perfect start to the day and after an hour sauntering along and taking in the sights sounds and comedy routine that the baby camels provided we arrived at our campsite for our authentic bushmans breaky. Billy tea. campfire eggs, pancakes with mouth watering Wattleseed compound butter and some delicious camel sausages. I did feel a little uncomfortable devouring those after we had enjoyed such a pleasant ride, but sitting inside our rock with a view overlooking the NT outback and taking in the whole experience I have to admit that feeling soon passed.

After arriving at our digs in Katherine, I did have to give a little nod of approval to my new mate Lynton, or LT as I had affectionately nicknamed him. Cicada Lodge really is one of those aptly named oases in the outback. Sometimes an overused cliché but in this case it was spot on.

Cicada Lodge sits right on the edge of Nitmiluk National Park. A 100% indigenous owned eco resort that has just won the Unique Accommodation category at the Northern Territory Tourism Awards. Its top end accommodation in the top end, and if you want to have a little splurge in the outback this might just be the destination to do it in.

All 18 rooms are air conditioned, featuring distinct and comfortable furnishings and overlook the distant sandstone country above the gorge. With the inclusion of local Indigenous artwork the rich colours combined with the modern design make for a unique blend.

The cuisine on offer is also top shelf, but definitely reachable. A combination of native Australian foods, fused into a fresh fashionable menu.

It's all about getting to experience the taste of the traditional herbs and



fruits and the freshest local harvest.

So after LT and I had engrossed ourselves in the facilities, food and furnishings of the resort we made our way down to the gorge itself to get right in amongst the beauty and pure nature that is abundant here. Once again you can get yourself involved with the local indigenous touring group or you can explore yourself. The park and the gorge can be experienced via lunch and dinner cruises, canoes, walking, flying or even swimming.

No Crocs here as Parks and Wildlife do a fantastic job after the wet season in removing any that have made their way in.

Having walked part of it and flown it before, Lynton and I hit the water in canoes. The crack of dawn was perfect too, cool subtle breezes, the sun creeping over the cliffs and a multitude of birdlife rising for the day.

It was really an awesome way to experience and get a real feel for the maze of waterways that have been sculpted from the sandstone over countless eras by the Katherine River.

With Lynton showing me some of the inner sanctum of the NT, he had given me a taste of real Australia. I love this country and as I have said many times, we need to embrace what is so unique to us and is undoubtedly our backyard. This story will continue as we make our way further north, but for now I have other fish to fry.

If you want to get the latest info and get your own taste of the NT head to **[www.travelNT.com](http://www.travelNT.com)** or checkout out my Taste of Travel segments at **[www.scottmcrae.com.au](http://www.scottmcrae.com.au)**

# Dental Tips for Families

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**



It is really important to keep your child's mouth healthy.

- ▶ Brush teeth and gums at least twice daily using toothpaste. It's best to do once in the morning and once at night before bed.
- ▶ Children up to the age of seven should still be supervised while brushing. They should be encouraged not to swallow toothpaste when brushing.
- ▶ Try to spit not rinse after brushing as this gives the toothpaste time to work.
- ▶ Tap water and plain milk are the best drinks for teeth.
- ▶ Always keep foods and drinks containing sugar at a minimum.
- ▶ Always remember that each child is an individual and their teeth will develop at different rates as they grow.
- ▶ Seek dental advice on issues early and keep up to date with regular check ups and try to avoid any issues.
- ▶ Try to have a regular dentist that you see like your doctor to build a positive relationship.

Age	What starts to happen	Usual number of teeth by this age.
Around 6 months	Front teeth begin to appear	0-4
Around 1 Year	Top and bottom front teeth may be obvious	4-8
Around 18 months	Some back teeth will be in – others will start to come through	8-14
Around 2 Years	The very back teeth will be starting to come in	12-16
Around 2 ½ Years	Most of the baby teeth will be through	16-20
Around 3 Years	All baby teeth should be through	20

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# Happy driving with kids in the car

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

A vital part of an adult caring for a child is ensuring that you are always a positive influence and a good role model.

The earliest years of a child's life are crucial to their development and hearing how to act in society when they grow up. Children's brains are like sponges when they are under five years old. They watch and learn from everything and everyone and their brain is nearly fully developed by the time they are four. This means that children are watching and learning while they are travelling in your car. Every week children are injured on our roads in Australia which means it is vital that we start to change driving habits and role modelling good skills. It may save their life one day or someone else's.

Sometimes driving can be stressful and how we deal with "road rage" is really important when role modelling. It is easy to get frustrated with time management, other drivers, road works or traffic. Sometimes you say things and react before thinking, you may even forget that little ears and eyes are monitoring you. Remember your language when you are stressed-you may hear it repeated to you later on!

Simple steps such as taking a few deep breaths, talking to your child or opening the window for a moment can be helpful. Even a favourite song or CD can help change your mood.

Don't run orange or red lights! Children learn traffic rules very early through road safety programs at childcare or school. They know what traffic lights mean and what they represent. They constantly

display this through their play. Not only is it teaching your child to break the law, speed and go against everything they know, it is placing their life in immediate danger. Try leaving home even ten minutes earlier to save rushing. If roads are busy, is it not better to arrive late than not at all?

Don't take your eyes off the road for any reason. That includes turning around to tend to your child or using your phone. Studies have shown that even holding a phone or concentrating on a hands-free can impair your judgement and reaction times to situations as much as being drunk. To avoid temptation, leave your phone in the boot or even turn it off. Using your phone while driving is against the law and dangerous. If you need to use your phone, find somewhere to pull over.

If children observe speeding as the norm, they will speed when they are older drivers themselves. Many road accidents are caused by excess speed so by going over the limit you are teaching rule breaking, inappropriate risk and you are placing lives at risk. Speeding is a behaviour that is easy to work on and improve upon. Think about the children in your vehicle whenever you feel like putting your foot down or even the children in other vehicles on the road. A car accident can change multiple lives forever.

Talk to your children about laws when in the car. Tell them why you are doing things and explain when something is wrong. Let's begin with small easy steps to create a future generation of better, safer drivers on our roads.





# The Importance of School Readiness

**S**tarting school is an exciting transitional period for both children and their parents. It can also be a time of concern, especially for first-time parents as it is an area of unfamiliar territory. Primary schools are very different to preschools and long day care centres. Expectations are suddenly higher, independence and responsibility becomes the new focus and there is a structured timetable to follow. Communication with your child's teacher is no longer daily and parents are often unsure about how to help or best support their child. The importance of ensuring that your child has a range of skills before they start school is becoming more essential in today's educational system.

Imagine having the knowledge to answer a written question but not having the skills in linking letters with their sounds to record it on paper.

Visualise the possibility of having the knowledge about how to read, write and spell but not having the strength in your hands to write it down onto paper. Or not being able to write

fast enough, due to poor pencil grip and fine motor skills.

What if a child has the ideas and answers but is unsure how to construct their sentences to make their message clear.

These are the frustrations by some children in kindergarten, year one and year two. It is becoming a more regular occurrence.

Preschool teachers assist children to get ready for school. The early years learning framework has a big focus on play-based learning and incorporates 5 broad outcomes. Preschools provide a safe environment for children to learn and develop social, emotional and physical skills. When children begin kindergarten, there is a large amount of new information to process. There are 12 literacy outcomes and 17 numeracy outcomes that need to be taught in kindergarten, as well as outcomes from other key learning areas. This new learning can be tricky for a child who hasn't had quality learning prior to school. Decades ago, kindergarten teachers used to read a story and the students were expected to draw or

colour in a picture about the story.

Today, the expectation is for kindergarten children to be reading and writing simple texts by the end of the first semester.

Another reason why children are having difficulties, is that they are spending more time on technological devices, leaving less time to develop oral language skills or participate in fine motor activities such as cutting, pasting, playing with play doh, colouring, painting and drawing.

Parents are the first educators of their child and strong foundations for learning start in the home. Parents need to take responsibility and spend the time with their children in preparing them for school. It can often be easier to do everything for your child, however, it is more effective if you teach them how to do things for themselves. Children need to have some independence, show good problem solving skills, be able to self regulate their behaviour as well as be active listeners and thinkers.

Preschool children need to have a healthy balance between free play and



structured learning. If children are given too much free choice, when it comes to group or whole class learning at school, is it difficult to adjust and stay focused.

There are many simple ways parents can help children get ready for school. It requires patience, persistence, effort and spending quality time with your child in a fun, engaging way.

**1.** Read to your child daily, for at least 10 minutes. Talk about the story and the pictures, have fun with the character voices, predict what might happen next, ask your child to join in repetitive phrases and discuss your favourite parts. This will build your child's love of books as well as modelling how reading sounds and how we need to use language.

**2.** Teach your child how to be independent. Demonstrate how to open and close their school bag, lunch box, drink bottle, containers and food packaging. Expect them to have a go. Teach them how to put on and take off their jumper or jacket. Allow children to throw their own rubbish in the bin and clean up their workspace.

**3.** Give your child little jobs to help out at home. This will teach them to be responsible and helpful. Ask simple problem solving questions during purposeful activities. Such as when setting the table, children can work out how many forks and knives are required.

**4.** Set up some good routines and stick to them! Having a visual daily or weekly planner will assist your child in understanding what is happening and what to expect.

**5.** Practise turn taking in games. Teach your child to show patience when waiting their turn. Explain to your child that it is okay to lose a game sometimes and show them how to win gracefully. Educate your child in understanding that there are times to speak and there are times to listen. Teach effective communication skills. Eg. Where do our eyes look when we are speaking and listening? How do we use our voice to make it sound interesting and clear? What do we do with our hands?

**6.** Model how to behave in certain situations and talk about how there are consequences as a result of choices in behaviour. Notice and praise your child when they are making good choices. Help your child to be resilient. Parents can help to do this by role-playing different scenarios.

**7.** If your child has been at preschool, spend some time talking to your child about their day. Ask them direct questions. For example, who did you play with today? What story did you read? What did you play with outside? What was your favourite activity? Tell me about something you made. Try to avoid open-ended questions, such as what did you do today? Tell your child about your day too. This helps to model correct sentence structure.

**8.** Provide your child with lots of fun craft experiences. Allow your child to keep a large box and fill it with recyclable materials that they can use to design and make things. Some ideas: cardboard rolls; milk lids; juice containers; yogurt pots; empty cereal boxes; left over paper plates; old socks; empty tissue boxes; shoe boxes; paddle pop sticks; unused patty pans; cotton balls; foil; buttons; ice cream containers; egg cartons; wool; ribbons from presents; used wrapping paper. Add a few purchased items such as pair of safety scissors, glue stick, packet of textas, sticky tape, some coloured paper and a packet of googly eyes. Craft making promotes creativity, imagination, fine motor skills, self help skills, thinking, problem solving, confidence and independence. This is a simple, cheap activity, which is perfect for those wet cold days.

**9.** Buy an empty scrapbook and focus on learning one letter a week. Ask your child to draw pictures or cut and paste pictures from magazines that begin with that letter. This will be a wonderful resource book for your child to use to consolidate knowledge about letters and initial sounds.

**10.** Practise writing lower case letters in different textures and forms of mediums. Eg. In the sandbox; with a paintbrush and water on the ground; using play doh; in a salt tray; using crayons, textas, pens, pencils, chalk or paint. This will help them be confident writers. Model the correct directionality of the letters and ensure children start in the right position.

If children are given regular opportunities to practise their fine motor skills, have experiences to speak and listen, and gain some knowledge about early literacy and numeracy skills before they can start formal education, they will have more chance to succeed at school.

FINE for School is a school readiness program educating children about the three fundamental skills for learning – fine motor, oral language and early literacy/numeracy. Parents

actively participate with their child in the lessons and become empowered with knowledge about how to best help their child get ready for school.

For more helpful advice to prepare your child for the transition to school, go to [www.fineforschool.com.au](http://www.fineforschool.com.au) or [www.facebook.com/fineforschool](https://www.facebook.com/fineforschool)

Christine is a primary school teacher, a reading recovery teacher, a mother and the creator of the Fun, Interactive, New, Educational program, FINE for school.





Words: **Charise Orvad**

# Have **children**, will **exercise!**

It's not always a sentence that fits easily together. Parenting can be all-consuming, restricting the time and energy for a regular fitness routine. I know; I've been there. Amid the demands of sleep routines, after school activities, household duties and work to name a few, exercise often ranks as a low priority for many people especially busy mums. These are genuine reasons as to why mums may avoid getting out and exercising, but what is the cost? Often our self-worth is wrapped up in our children's lives, leaving little time or energy to focus on our own needs. This sacrifice can come at a high price leaving a mum feeling unhealthy, neglected and under-appreciated. How much do you value you? Being a better you makes you a better mum!

As they say, where there is a will, there's a way. Looking on the bright side of life, regular exercise can improve every aspect of your day-to-day lives. Whether you are returning to exercise shortly after giving birth, or if it's been a few years since you've worked up a sweat, improving your fitness will benefit you in many ways. Good health flows from a well-balanced lifestyle. Eating well, regular exercise, good sleep patterns (children

willing!), and positive social interactions enables a person to be the best they can be. So seize the day! This is why you should make the effort to take the plunge into the wonderful world of exercise.

- ▶ Exercise will improve your overall health- physical, social, emotional
- ▶ Exercise will help lift your mood through the release of endorphins leaving you happier and more relaxed
- ▶ Exercise can be a great social experience where you can connect with like-minded people
- ▶ Exercise controls your weight. The more vigorous the activity, the more calories used
- ▶ Exercise can help combat and manage disease and other health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, depression and high cholesterol
- ▶ Exercise boosts energy levels by increasing endurance, muscular strength and increases the efficiency of your cardiovascular system
- ▶ Exercise allows you physical freedom to play with your kids, enhancing the parent/child relationship

- ▶ Exercise can be fun if you find an activity that suits your goals and personality

## **Ways to get yourself started may include:**

- ▶ Joining a mums and bubs class where your children are supervised will help you find friends in the same situation, where you can relax, knowing your children are cared for
- ▶ Head out for a walk with the pram or scooter and ask a friend to join you for extra accountability
- ▶ Take the kids to the park and play chasing or kick a ball around
- ▶ Make a commitment to yourself and schedule in regular exercise and stick to it. Aim for 30 minutes a day if you can
- ▶ Hire a personal trainer, who will be able to help motivate and guide you to better health
- ▶ Become an early bird. If the kids are supervised, plenty of classes are available at 6:00am.

So make yourself a priority, and find out all the benefits exercise has to offer you!

You'll thank yourself later!



# What's In My Lunch Box Today?

Words: **Alison Thelan**

How can i make lunch boxes more appealing.

## **Nutrition**

When packing lunches try to think about the basic food groups.

- ▶ Breads and Cereals – Bread, Crackers, Pasta, Noodles and Rice,
- ▶ Vegetables and legumes - fresh or cooked vegetables, lentils, beans.
- ▶ Fruit – Fresh or canned.
- ▶ Yoghurt, Milk, Cheese.
- ▶ Lean meat, fish, eggs, nuts, legumes, and poultry.
- ▶ When packing drinks, water is the healthiest option for your child. Include a drink bottle of water for your child each day.

## **Lunch Fillers:**

Sandwiches, bread rolls, wraps. Suggested fillings:

- ▶ Vegemite and Cheese
- ▶ Mashed Banana
- ▶ Chicken and Cheese
- ▶ Cream cheese and grated carrot.
- ▶ Mashed boiled egg and lettuce.
- ▶ Mixed salad (tomato, cheese, lettuce.)
- ▶ \* Peanut butter and honey.

## **Snack Ideas:**

- ▶ Cheese Stick
- ▶ Tub of yoghurt or yoghurt bag.
- ▶ Fruit: Banana, apple, orange, mandarin, pear, grapes, seasonal fruit (stone fruit, strawberries, kiwi fruit.) Either whole or cut into pieces in snack zip lock bags.
- ▶ Cheese and crackers.
- ▶ Homemade scones or muffins.
- ▶ Dip with carrot or celery sticks.

Trying to keep lunch boxes colourful and different is the key. Try to add a range of coloured items to the lunch box to make it more appealing to the eye – Green Grapes, Red Apple, Mango yoghurt tub, yellow from the cheese, brown from the wholemeal bread.

I got to the point where I was rolling out the bread and layering it and rolling it up to make pin wheels so my son had an exciting new lunch box. I even used cookie cutters to cut out the sandwiches to keep him excited about lunch each day. Simply wrapping up wraps in coloured



paper and tying with some coloured ribbon to hold it together is a sweet idea too. (This depends on the age of course.)

There are many websites to get ideas when you get stuck for inspiration. (As seen below.) It can be fun to look through these and try them out. Talk to other parents for ideas. You will find you are all in the same boat and may just get a new idea that works for a little while!

Happy Lunch Boxing and Happy, Healthy Eating to your child.

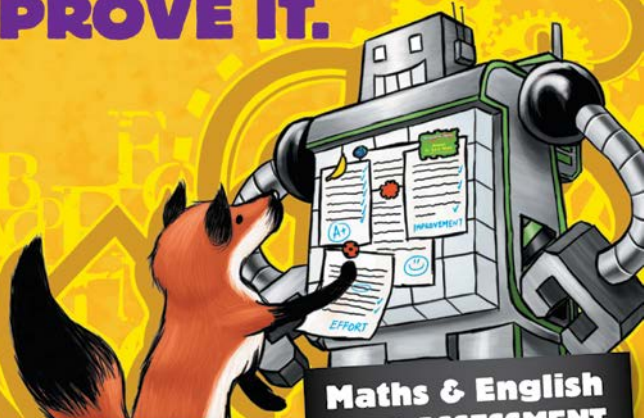
## **Some Great Links for Lunch Box Ideas:**

**[essentialkids.com.au/LunchBox](http://essentialkids.com.au/LunchBox)**

**[lunchboxeswithlove.com](http://lunchboxeswithlove.com)**

**[freshforkids.com.au/lunch\\_box/lunch\\_box.html](http://freshforkids.com.au/lunch_box/lunch_box.html)**

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# Along Came A Sweet Little Spider

Words: **Aleesah Darlison**

We all know the famous nursery rhyme 'Little Miss Muffet', about a young girl innocently eating her curds and whey (doesn't that sound yummy!) until a scary spider arrives on the scene and frightens her away.

But has anyone ever stopped to consider the spider's side of the story?

Perhaps that sweet, tiny spider wasn't trying to scare Little Miss Muffet after all. Perhaps he was only trying to say hello. Or perhaps Little Miss Muffet was being rude and thoughtless because she was sitting on the spider's favourite seat and he was politely about to ask her to hop off when she screamed and ran away, leaving him to clean up her awful mess of sticky dairy delights.

We'll never know. All we've ever heard is Little Miss Muffet's side of the story, which has stayed with us for centuries, helping to taint our beliefs about spiders.

Many creatures throughout the world are misunderstood, mistreated by humans or even hunted to extinction. I often choose these animals as the main characters in my stories to educate, shed light on the truth and prompt people to think in fresh, new ways about stereotypes that may have existed for generations. Some of these animals include

puggles (baby echidnas), bats, wolves, tigers and now, in my latest picture book, Spider Iggy, spiders.

So here, I'd like to set the record straight on spiders.

I hope you'll check out my new picture book, Spider Iggy, too. Like us humans, Iggy is searching for friendship and a place to call home. He really is a sweet, clever and brave little guy. Maybe he'll find a place at your home on your bedtime story bookshelf.]

**SPIDER JOKE**  
**Why did the spider buy a car?**  
So he could take it out for a spin!

Happy reading!

**Aleesah Darlison**

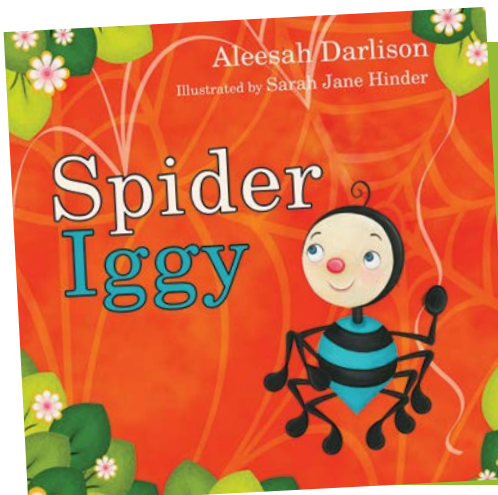
Children's Author & Winner of the 2015 Environment Award for Children's Literature.

## Ten Amazing Spider Facts

### Did You Know?

1. Spiders are arachnids, not insects.
2. All spiders have eight legs and most have eight eyes, although they can't see very well.
3. There are over 35,000 species of spiders in the world.
4. Spiders have blue blood. Wow!
5. Spider silk is made from protein. It is stronger than steel wire.
6. Mother spiders lay up to 3000 eggs at a time. Anyone up for some babysitting?
7. A baby spider is called a spiderling.
8. Spiders are covered in water-repellent hairs so they can't get wet. It also means they always float.
9. Most spiders are harmless to humans.
10. Spiders are important for our environment. They eat harmful insects and pollinate plants.

Spiders really are amazing creatures. You can find out more about them by buying or borrowing books about them from your local bookstore, library or school, visiting zoos and museums, or by checking out websites such as [www.spiderzrule.com](http://www.spiderzrule.com), [www.livescience.com](http://www.livescience.com), [www.spiders.com.au](http://www.spiders.com.au), and [www.australianmuseum.net.au/spiders](http://www.australianmuseum.net.au/spiders).

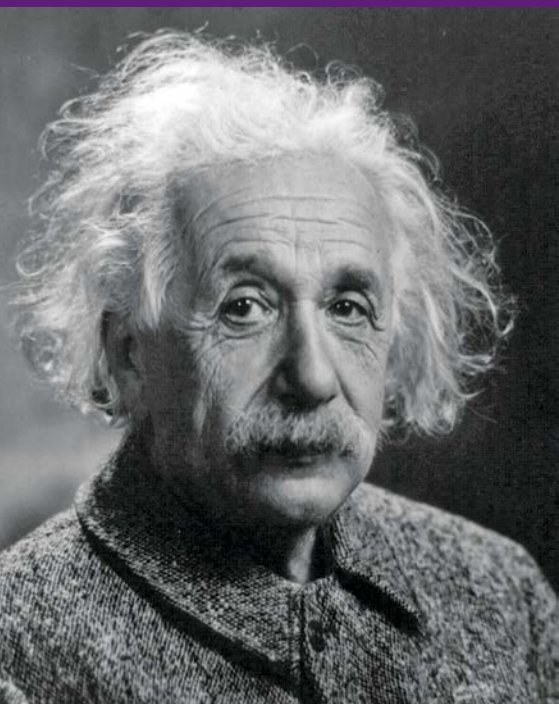


## All About Iggy

Filled with colour and light, hope and love, Spider Iggy tells the story of a lonely little spider named Iggy, who lives in the cold, grey city. Despite the fact that Iggy works day and night, spinning his web into beautiful and intricate designs, no one ever notices. Determined to leave his 'ho-hum' life behind, brave Iggy sets out on an adventure to find the one place he

can finally fit in. Home.

This story is perfect for young children as they identify with the feelings of being small and helpless that Spider Iggy has to face, as well as his desire to find a place where he can be loved and accepted. It teaches children in a fun way the importance of courage, kindness and positive thinking.



Albert Einstein once said, “Play is the best form of research”.

It is now widely recognised that children learn through play. All children have natural curiosity to actively explore, ask questions, make connections, and understand themselves and their world.

Providing positive science experiences in early childhood is important as these experiences will lay the foundations for future learning. Research shows that 75% of brain development occurs during the first few years of life so it is important that we provide experiences for young

children that foster their physical, social, emotional and intellectual growth.

Science is all about exploring, finding out why and how something is so. Science can be found everywhere, whether you're baking a cake, observing insects in the garden, looking at your shadow and even throwing a ball. Play promotes creativity and flexibility and provides opportunities for taking risks and exploring different outcomes in a safe environment.

American Psychologist Jerome Bruner pointed out in his book *Play: Its Role in Development and Evolution* (1976), that play the process is more important than the end product. Through play, children are practising skills and problem solving techniques which they can then apply to real life situations.

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

# Science!

During play is the best time to promote science and give opportunities to learn.

A scientific process of “trial and error” welcomes unexpected outcomes and interprets them as valuable information, not as failure. This concept was expressed by the inventor of the light bulb, Thomas A. Edison, when he said, “I have not failed, I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work”.

A child trying to complete a puzzle tests different pieces to fit into one area of the puzzle. Even if the pieces are incorrect, the child is getting closer to the solution by ruling out others.

Science is based on the Latin word *Scientia*, which means knowledge. Technology is based on the Greek word *tekhne*, which means art or craft.

Sensory science experiences are suited to young children, whilst problem solving, and technical challenges that require more

developed motor skills are more suitable for older children (2-8 years). Open-ended science activities are those that don't always have a predetermined ending and are suitable for children at a wide range of development levels. Examples of open-ended activities include painting, manipulating play dough, allowing children to create their own movements in dance or endings in stories or using building blocks. Blocks, for instance, can be used in many different ways. A child may use blocks to make various structures, to represent a toy car, or bang them together to create a sound. A child may also carefully sort the blocks into different colours or sizes. Making a changeable ball run is another open ended activity that involves the process of designing and making, where children can make their own courses for the ball to roll down. They can alter the direction and speed the ball travels by moving the tracks.

Parents and Educators should ask open-ended questions that promote creative thinking and which can be answered using the child's own observations, investigation or prior experience. For example, the adult might ask, ‘What will happen if you do that?’, ‘Why do you think it is like that?’ or ‘I wonder how it works?’

More direct questions can guide the child's thought processes such as, ‘How does the magnet feel’ or ‘Look very closely; what can you see?’

Scientific conversations are important as talking to others helps people to clarify their own ideas and processes. By reflecting, a people identify the processes they have used and can apply this knowledge to new situations.

Using the correct words to explain to a child what is happening is important. Saying, ‘It's magic’ does not help a child to develop an understanding of science concepts. A child needs repeated exposure to



words to avoid misrepresentation and future confusion. For example, if sugar dissolves in water it does not simply disappear.

Children are natural scientists. They are constantly trying to understand the world around them by asking questions. 'How do aeroplanes fly? Why is Nanna's skin wrinkly? Why does water disappear when you leave it outside? Why is the sky blue but sometimes different colours? Where do rainbows come from? How do animals talk to each other?'

All these questions are essential in science learning. This natural curiosity that children have is the key to science learning and piecing together how the

world works. We as adults should be there to encourage scientific learning through play. The most important thing in science learning is to HAVE FUN! There are a lot of exciting things to discover and explore with your child and many questions that will arise from the both of you. Enjoy exploring the world together!

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# Experiment Fun!

## Fireworks in a Jar!



#### Materials You Need:

Clear jar (glass or plastic)  
Oil  
Water  
Several drops of food colouring  
Plastic fork

#### Directions:

- ▶ Fill your jar 3/4 full with warm water.
- ▶ In a separate bowl, mix a few tablespoons of oil and several drops of different colours of food colouring.
- ▶ Use your fork to gently mix the oil and food colouring together.
- ▶ Gently pour the oil mixture into the jar.
- ▶ Watch what happens—the food colouring will slowly sink out of the oil and into the water. When this happens, it will expand and begin to mix with the other colours.

## GOOP

#### Materials You Need:

1 cup of cornflour  
1/2 cup of water  
Food colouring (optional)

#### Directions:

- ▶ Mix the cornflour and water in a large bowl. It should be the consistency of syrup.
- ▶ Place your fingers in the mixture. When you move your hands quickly, it becomes like a solid. When you keep the mixture still or move it very slowly, it acts like a liquid!
- ▶ Continue playing with it, rolling it into balls and letting it slide between your fingers!

## Marbled Milk



#### Materials You Need:

Shallow plate or bowl  
Milk  
1/2 cup of water  
Various colours of food colouring

Dishwashing liquid  
Cotton buds

#### Directions:

- ▶ In the shallow bowl/plate, pour enough milk to cover the bottom of the dish.
- ▶ In a separate bowl, mix 1/2 cup of water with about a teaspoon of dishwashing liquid.
- ▶ Squirt a few drops of different colours of food colouring onto the milk.
- ▶ Dip a cotton bud into the soap and water mixture. Gently touch the dipped cotton bud onto the milk (do NOT stir). The food colouring will swirl around, making a tie-dye pattern.

## The Bouncy Egg

#### Materials You Need:

Glass jar with lid  
1 egg (uncooked)  
Vinegar

#### Directions:

- ▶ Carefully place the raw egg into the glass jar.
- ▶ Add enough vinegar to cover the egg (watch for bubbles).
- ▶ Let sit for one full day.
- ▶ Use a spoon to remove the egg carefully from the jar. Dump the vinegar out and put the egg back into the jar, adding enough "fresh" vinegar to cover the egg again.
- ▶ Let it sit for another two days. You should be able to see through the egg since the vinegar has dissolved the shell.
- ▶ Remove the egg from the vinegar and gently wash it off with water.



# Fun and Friendship

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

It's those words that many of us parents dread; "Can so and so sleep over?", "Can we go to the park with so and so?", "Can so and so come over, please Mum, please?" Or maybe it's just me?

Children often plead their case at the school gate in front of many other families. They seem to know that parent guilt will set in and you won't say "I'm too tired", "I have to clean up", or, "I have too much work to do", for fear of being known as 'the mum'. That's the mum who puts work and everything else in front of her child's happiness and friendships. The rules of "don't ask me on the day or in front of people" seem to go out the window often; in fact every day they do.

My children seem to think that the fun they will experience with their friends will far outweigh the consequences of my lectures later.

And why? Because friendships really are that important.

Belinda and I have a friendship that stretches back over twenty years through up and downs and life-changing experiences. If I think of one of the only true things that I really couldn't without, our friendship would be one of them. We are so different but our friendship just 'works'. Sometimes I feel I don't give my children the opportunity to experience as much

friendship blessing as I have. Belinda does; in fact I see her as 'the yes mummy' the one who always says yes at the school gate with no consequences ever. She even invites the friends of my children to her house for sleepovers. Come one. Come all. When I was young I never went on play dates because everyone came to my house. My mum was young, cool and baked really nice cakes. There were always "extras" at our house. I had lots of friends and was able to spend lots of non-school time with them. So why is friendship so important and why do I struggle with the issue with my children?

Children from the age of three start to experience real friendships. Friendships before this age are usually mums' and dads' friendships. These social get-togethers are important for Mum and Dad but are still important for children to observe and be a part of social settings early in life. It's important for young children to watch adults and other children converse, show emotion and follow social rules and learn the expectations of behaviour. At two years children are quite egocentric in their play. This is why it is hard for them to play games with rules that involve team work and a give and take attitude. Play dates for this age group don't often flow very well. You may even find yourself spending the whole time

chasing your toddler around. I'm sure you have said, "say sorry to your friend, give them a hug". This is very hard for the children when they aren't quite sure what they have done wrong. You are making them say sorry because you are embarrassed in front of your friend. Children learn quickly that you can do what you want and then say sorry. This age group struggles with expressing themselves through appropriate language which is when physical alternations may occur. Sharing toys is hard to do when you don't know what the term "share" really means. Does it mean giving your favourite toy to another child who is screaming while you cry? Well, sharing doesn't feel that great when you are little. This may even be why public tantrums are seen as beneficial. They learn pretty quickly that if they scream really loudly in public you won't yell at them and chances are they quickly get what they want, because that's what happens when their friends do it.

They don't even care about what will happen later. Consequences for embarrassing you don't seem relevant, because toddlers live in the moment. There is no later for them. They don't understand when you arrive at home and you are still angry three hours after the event. They have no idea what you are stewing over and telling Dad to talk to them at 7pm when he gets home is not going to help either. This age group lives in the moment and friendship altercations need to be dealt with in the moment as well.

I was seven before I realised what the tightened grip of my mum's hand was at the shops and how her eyes said "wait until you get home", even though I had seen them for years. I know now, that I have those eyes myself.

One of my close friends has a very soft demeanour but her kids know she



means business. She very calmly keeps walking with her children screaming at her feet. She just keeps repeating “can we talk about this later?” I always wonder what happens later but I always wish I could be more like this; soft and calm waiting for discussions “later”.

Another wonderful friend of mine and I are very similar. We are both passionate, emotional and wear our hearts on our sleeves even with parenting. I went to the school book fair recently and was busy negotiating chores in exchange for book buying with my daughter. This was very difficult as she is well aware of the fact that I cannot go past books. During my quiet but heated negotiations I heard someone behind the bookshelves with their child.

“Why do you have to do this to me? Now on the day? I have told you before.”

I started laughing as I knew the voice and the conversation. It was my friend and I was so relieved. I think it's hard when you work long hours; you never want to be in conflict with your children when you do have precious time with them but you also don't want to give in to them which will set you up for another issue later. My friend and I treasure our time with our children and it's sometimes heartbreaking when we want to spend time with our children and they just want to be with their friends. I wish I could be more like my friends, who hide their heartbreak so well and act genuinely happy to share her child bonding time with twenty other children. I hate to admit that sometimes I have tried the “but Mummy has been working all day just to finish early to see you”. I have given up on the guilt game now but only because it still doesn't work and I look pathetic.

Friendships become more solid during later preschool years and early primary school. The term friendship probably isn't quite understood but children know who they like and who they don't. They know who likes to do the same things as them. They also know how to be strategic within social circles. Being someone's friend means more party invitations; e.g. “I'll be your best friend” or, “You can't come to my party,” (even when the party is eight months away—is there even a party planned?)

After this children begin to see other children as more fun than Mum and Dad. Even though they haven't established what a friend is they've worked out that hanging around someone else who likes what you do is great, plus they don't usually have to work, cook dinner, answer phones or check emails so they can devote all of their time to you.

Friendships are hard in late primary school and can create much heartache for families. The mistake that adults make is when they see their child hurting emotionally they need to fix it and become involved. They may approach the offending friends or their parents and create even more drama. Sadly for the parents, the children move on and are besties again by the next day; it's the adults who will end up not speaking for the rest of their child's primary school years. Then they wonder where their stubborn teenagers get their traits from...

The friendship bonds that children form with their peers in high school can be among the most important and rewarding relationships of their lives and are vital to their development and success in a social world. These friendships can help determine the type of person your child will become; some of these friendships are for life. Much of the socializing between teenagers and their friends is done through technology which can be hard for parents to understand. Technology is a part of our lives and we have to let it happen. This is the way modern people communicate—as frustrating as it is at times, we need to be accepting of this as a vital part of friendships.

So how do we support children with friendships?

- ▶ Children learn through imitating their parents' behaviour. Think about your own experiences with friendships and how you interact with others. Children are very aware of what we do and how we respond to situations.

## Children begin to see other children as more fun than Mum and Dad.

- ▶ Children need lots of real practice. Invite other children over when you can. Invite children of different ages and backgrounds.
- ▶ Don't expect that younger children will have friendships forever.
- ▶ Don't force sharing and accept that there will be times of conflict.
- ▶ One child at a time is good for a play date for a young child.
- ▶ Ensure that there is enough for the children to do; bored children are not fun children to have around you. Prepare for the play date and ensure there are enough toys/equipment so that sharing isn't a huge problem.

### Primary school children

- ▶ In cases of conflict, listen to and accept your child's feelings about friends. Don't judge if the friend in question is one of your friend's children. You and your child are different people and will like different people.
- ▶ If best friends are arguing let them work it out themselves.
- ▶ If insults are involved, talk to your child about how to behave and respond appropriately.
- ▶ If children gang up on your child and a bullying situation starts to occur, helping your child to respond may not be the answer and you may need to speak to the school.
- ▶ Always make sure that you support your child but don't over question or add more drama to the situation with your feelings.
- ▶ This age group likes to have a little independence and will test out boundaries and rules to impress friends. Give them time to be on their own but also monitor and be aware of what they are doing. Remember this is when children come without their

parents and you are the responsible adult supervising the friend.

### The adolescent

- ▶ Always set limits and ground rules for spending time with friends. Allow compromise where needed.
- ▶ Discuss issues such as curfews, money, chores, clothing, and values often so the child is aware of their boundaries but can have independence within them.
- ▶ Encourage your child to participate in new groups and activities based on their interests so new friendships have a chance to develop. Youth Group or Scouts are great.

Remember that we are all different. Some children prefer one or two good friends while others are happier in larger groups. There is no “right” way and worrying about popularity will just cause more problems.

Respect your children's privacy but

also let them know you will be monitoring social media use. Make rules and stick with them. Always follow through with behaviour management techniques or your children will come to know that you don't mean business

Get to know your child's friends and their families. It helps to know that your child is spending time with other children who have rules and boundaries. Know what the expectations are from different parents in relation to their own child—it may help you to foresee any future issues.

With adolescents, parents do unfortunately seem to have less control, but parents should be always remain involved, get to know the friends, let them spend time at your house.

Make sure your child/teen knows that you are unhappy when they have made a bad choice, always explain why you believe this and listen to their side. It's very important that they know they can come to you when they need to. Try to avoid the “I told you this would happen”. They need to learn for themselves sometimes. We can't cotton wool wrap them even though we want to.

My friendships are important to me. I watch as my friends make mistakes and they watch me. We are all very different but support each other even when things go wrong. We need to allow our children the same learning journey; to make their own friendship decisions, to know what is right or wrong and what to do about it. Many of life's important lessons are taught through friendship.

So, I will go to pick up my children from school and try to remove my urge to argue when they want to bring friends home. I will smile and remove my pathetic, tired, working mum's face and I will be the ‘yes mum’.

Maybe just for today...

# Having trouble getting your little one ready for preschool?

## Get moving with Lavender Lily

Words: **Lavender Lily**

We all know music can affect our mood, calm our nervous system and give us the inspiration we need to create and get moving. Children sometimes need a little inspiration as much as adults and a fantastic way to motivate us all is with a song.

A song has the power to make life easier and even change how we feel about a situation. It's the combination of witty or enchanting relatable lyrics; a melody, which is memorable, and music that makes us dance. This is why I love to write songs and share them with others. Songs can help us all figure out our feelings and make life better. It can bring us together over experiences we share. Often we find that it's one small detail in a series of events that affects how we feel about an entire situation - like a big transitional phrase such as Preschool.

My daughter Czarina asked to start preschool when she was 4 years old. I was able to get her a place much faster than I anticipated. On the 'go-see,' to the preschool I explained

to her that every Wednesday she would have to go to the centre and stay all day, without me. Her eyes lit up as the preschool offered new toys, new books, more equipment and the biggest draw card - lots of other kids. She was ready to play.

But after three Wednesday's she refused to go. It wasn't that she didn't like it once she was there. She always spoke positively about it, so I knew she wasn't having anxiety about the centre or experiencing any socializing issues with the other children. It was the getting up and getting out of the house. She now had a Wednesday routine. Adults find this difficult, so why wouldn't children?

The next Wednesday morning as she was waking up, a fabulous fairy thought came to me (that's what I call an in-the-moment idea) in the form of a tune. The lyrics and melody spilled out of me all at once, (which is how it usually happens) and I started singing - 'It's a preschool day so come on and let's play. They'll be waiting for

you to say Hooray!' I danced about her bedroom, grabbed the maracas off the instrument shelf and leapt onto her bed, shaking and singing.

Springing out of bed Czarina joined me for the impromptu performance.

Czarina was still singing the song as she picked out her clothes for the day and all through breakfast.

Together on the walk to Kindy, we wrote the second part of the chorus, 'It's a preschool day so come on and let's play. They'll be waiting for you

Today!

The song became a ritual after that. Czarina and I started singing it on Tuesday afternoons in preparation for the next day. The songs worked like magic but the other important part of its success was that it was part of the preparation process. I love living in the moment and throwing plans aside when a fabulous fairy thought strikes me. However I too identify that having a few steps in place, can make all the difference to getting where you need to be on time.





Another important part of the strategy was my vibe or energy levels. We all know this but often forget. If we're sluggish, it's likely our children will be sluggish. If we use a negative tone towards getting ready and rush about, then our children will find it difficult.

Here are a few other steps to assist with the process of getting moving in the morning and it starts with the night before.



enables me to bounce into the flow and off I go.

I see children do this all the time too – the second music is turned no matter what they are doing they naturally start moving with it. Movement is really important, particularly now days as we sit down so much and there is much more strain on our brains. We live inside our heads rather than our

## At Night

- ▶ Sing the Preschool song, of course.
- ▶ Draw, act out or write out what's exciting about tomorrow – one thing that you are looking forward too. Do it as a family.
- ▶ Set a reasonable bedtime for your child and for you. A good bedtime for adults is around 10pm-10.30pm. (Schedule depending of course)
- ▶ Turn off computers, Tv and other devices including phones two hours before bed, this also includes white fluorescent lighting as our brain stays on, even if we're tired. You can download blue screen blockers such as 'f.lux' for when you have to work.
- ▶ Prepare lunches together.
- ▶ Set out clothes for the next day, you too. Add a little sparkle or even pick out a matching colour - for a bit of fun.

## ► Establish

a bedtime routine that's enjoyable for everyone. (quick dog walk if you have one, brush teeth together, books in bed)

## In the morning

- ▶ Glass of water beside the bed and have a drink as soon as alarm goes off.
- ▶ Brush your teeth as soon as you get up, you will feel fresh and trick yourself into being awake. It's worth a try.
- ▶ A Morning Movement (and I'm not referring to a visit to the toilet although go right ahead.). We are so lucky to have beaches close by here in the Illawarra
- ▶ Play and dance to 'It's a Preschool Day.'

Music holds this get moving appeal for me. It gets me dancing. Sometimes it can't really be called dancing, it's more like a self-destructing robot spinning around the garden however when music is played something switches on inside and

bodies.

Czarina is still the same. Me too.

Now that Czarina is older she still sings the Preschool song, sometimes replacing the lyrics but she still uses the melody. I've finally added music to the track - it's the first song that I arranged myself. The song is available at <https://lavenderlily.bandcamp.com/releases> I produced a video clip which is available to watch at [www.lavenderlily.com.au/videos](http://www.lavenderlily.com.au/videos)

We are still making up motivational and enchanting songs it helps both Czarina and I how we feel about ourselves and to understand the world.

Play it Purple  
Lavender Lily  
[www.lavenderlily.com.au](http://www.lavenderlily.com.au)

Lavender Lily loves purple and is a local fairy mum (the wild kind) who performs concerts, disco and storytelling adventures for children of all ages.



# Let's Play Dough!

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

Most children find playing with dough so much fun. Younger children love squeezing the soft material in their hands, exploring the texture and consistency of the dough. Older children enjoy playing imaginatively, making things from the dough, creating worlds and stories as they go. Playdough is a great way to develop hand skills as young children poke, pinch, roll and cut. For children feeling a bit out of sorts, angry or sad, playdough can be quite soothing and may help to express their feelings. Playdough is much nicer if you make it yourself and children will love to help you! It is much more cost effective and easier to store your own made play dough.

You can try all sorts of different play dough to create a different scene or give a new focus of learning. Just use the basic no cook play dough recipe and use some of these ideas or use your imagination. Don't forget to supervise children as play dough can be a choking hazard and be careful that the substances you add to your creations are safe and non-toxic.

Give your child their own portion of dough and show them how to knead it. Encourage them to make their own creations, always remember that the process is more valuable and important than the end product and this is part of the value of play dough. There are no expectations or pre set rules. You can make whatever you want and change

your mind whenever you please.

You can use some modelling tools, you don't need to run out and buy anything, you can use items such as plastic knives and forks, plastic scissors, a rolling pin, potato masher, garlic press, biscuit cutters or piping bag. Paddle pop sticks, pipe cleaners and child safe scissors are effective to use with play dough as well.

Most of the time children don't need tools they just use hand skills and imagination. Play dough is great for fine motor muscle development in the hands. These muscles need lots of practise so they can be strong and developed ready for writing, scissor cutting and other small tasks that they may need to attend to when they are older.

Play dough is important and children never bore of it. I have to say that I have also witnessed many adults taking advantage of the play dough table. The calming effects of play dough can be seen within all age groups

Play dough is a great activity for children needing their own time and space, they can work parallel to each other but it is also a great social activity where children can work together building up team ideas and create important play.

Play dough is the perfect time to explore language. Talk about the texture of playdough. How does it feel?

What happens when you mix colours together? It can be sticky, gooey, slimy, wet or warm. Talk about what you are making: shape, size, colour and number. Use this opportunity for lots of descriptive language and a time to introduce new words.

Children can be reluctant to touch the playdough – encourage them to use a rolling pin and cutters first, then explore the dough as they feel comfortable. If this happens to you just take a moment to see what you are role modelling. Sometimes we don't realise when we are playing with children the feelings that we are projecting are negative. Do you make faces or say 'oh yuck' or quickly wash your hands after touching the dough? Children observe everything and will take their cues from you. For instance I have a terrible fear of spiders but I try never to project this across to children. I stifle my screams and pretend that I think their web is very pretty....

## Ideas for Play Dough

- Make a cake! Sprinkle on coloured rice, poke straws in to make candles. Cut and share the cake- talk about maths, sharing and celebrations. Make a pretend pizza and talk about what you'd like as toppings. This can be a great



## Play Dough recipe

Step One: Take a large bowl and add 2 cups flour, 1 cup salt, oil, 2 tablespoons vegetable oil, 2 tablespoons cream of tartar

Step Two: add in any dry extras such as glitter

Step Three: boil the kettle and pour 1 1/2 cups of the water into your

mixture. Add in any food colouring at this stage so it mixes evenly through the dough.

Step Four: mix the ingredients together to form a dough.

Step Five: done! Your easy play dough recipe is complete and you're ready to play.

introduction to cooking and a time to talk about food and safety in the kitchen. You can use a pretend stove and cooking pots, and make "peas", "sausages", "chips", "pancakes", anything. You can buy great second hand little kitchens on ebay or Gumtree that you can just hose off. You don't need to restrict play dough to a table indoors.

- ▶ Make a zoo or farm Use paddle pop sticks or cut straws to make a fence around plastic animals.
- ▶ Cut straws can also be used to make spiky hair, rays of the sun or legs on a spider.
- ▶ You could make a volcano or garden An ice-cream lid covered in dough can make a good base, then decorate with twigs, leaves, flowers and pebbles.
- ▶ Use a garlic crusher or playdough machine to make "noodles" or "worms".
- ▶ Sing number songs such as "5 fat sausages", or "5 currant buns
- ▶ Older children may enjoy trying to make their name from rolls of dough. Or they can try "writing" on playdough "paper" with a toothpick.

- ▶ You can make imprints by pressing a hand into the dough to then you can count the fingers or compare size to other hand prints. You could make other imprints from bottle tops, coins or a building block. The child can use their imagination and search for printing items.
- ▶ You can make long dough sausages with scissors or make bracelets and rings.
- ▶ Make some funny faces and roll dough pieces into balls for eyes, nose and mouth.

The ideas for play are endless. How about scented playdough? Food oils are best to use where possible

- ▶ Zesty lemon-add a few drops of yellow colouring and lemon essence to your mixture
- ▶ A little apple shampoo added when mixing will give an extra soft feel and a fruity scent.
- ▶ Peppermint essence can be added to the basic mixture for a soothing mint smell
- ▶ Strawberry essence can be added to the basic mixture for another favourite scent

Add hundreds and thousands for party play dough or coloured rice or glitter!

All children will eat play dough at least once. The taste is so salty that they will spit it out and not do it again so consuming large amounts of play dough is not usually a safety concern. If it does become an issue supervision and role modeling correct use is the answer. Taking it away will just make them more curious next time....

## Do you have Play Dough problems?

Play dough too crumbly? Add a little more oil.

Play dough too sticky? Add in a little more flour.

Want coloured play dough? For white snow play dough use corn flour instead of regular flour. For chocolate play dough use a mix of flour and cocoa. For other colours, add in some food colouring. Add the food colouring along with the water, rather than trying to knead it in later, to get a more even colour and you and the children don't end up with colouring all over your hands. Try black space play dough or red Valentine play dough.

Your play dough will last if you store it in an air tight container when you are finished playing.

Is it raining and you've started your mixture realizing you don't have all the ingredients? If you find you have no cream of tartar, no problem – just leave it out. You can make a basic dough just by combining flour and water if that's all you have. Just judge the quantities as you mix until you get the right consistency. The dough won't last as long but will give you a great day's worth of play.

Play dough is suitable for children aged from 12 months and above but you know your own child best so use your own judgement.



We would love to see and publish some of your play dough creations in our next issue! Please email your pictures to [wayne@earlyyearscentre.com.au](mailto:wayne@earlyyearscentre.com.au)

We have some great art prizes to give away for pictures of your creations. You can tell us a few words about your creation as well!

# Fab Crabs

Words: **Marie  
Armstrong Smith**

Do you want an interesting, low maintenance, inexpensive and cute pet? A hermit crab can be the best friend you have ever had.

Before you head out searching for your new best friend, there are a few things you will need to set up home and keep him happy for life.

- ▶ A fish tank with a lid
- ▶ Heavy bowl for fresh water
- ▶ Heavy bowl for salt water
- ▶ Bowl for food
- ▶ Hermit crab pellets
- ▶ Hermit crab salt
- ▶ Drift wood and rocks for climbing
- ▶ Spare shells
- ▶ Shell grit and sand

All of these items can be bought from your local pet store or aquarium.

Use an aquarium with a glass top. This will create a humid environment which is essential for your crab's wellbeing. The floor of the aquarium should be kept dry and can be covered in either shell grit, sand or untreated wood shavings. Hermit Crabs love to climb and exercise—a piece of driftwood or a rock is ideal.

Stress can make crabs inactive and sluggish. They can also come out of their shell and walk about 'naked'. Some crabs just crawl off into the corner and will not return to their shell. This leaves them open to attack from other crabs, and they have no protection. It is not normal for hermit crabs to walk about without a shell to protect their soft bodies.

Bullying due to overcrowding can be a

problem and a cause for stress. Being dropped can also be a cause of stress as can being lonely. Don't let your crabs become stressed! You want them to have a long and a happy life. Remember not to spray chemicals near your crab tank, e.g., fly spray or cleaning products. Many crabs fall victim to poisoning without their owners realizing it.

Signs of illness are not unlike the symptoms of stress. The hermit crab may take its shell off and crawl about naked. They may also head for their water bowl and simply stay there. The shell is held on by muscles in the crab's body, when it is sick, it cannot hold the shell on.

In captivity, life expectancy is really a matter of how well they are cared for. Some people have them for years without trouble. If you follow the simple rules of caring for them, your hermit crab should live for a very long time.

As hermit crabs grow they find bigger shells to accommodate their larger body shape. Make sure you supply extra shells of different shapes so your crab can choose its own suitable shell when it is ready.

Hermit crabs require high humidity to keep their gills moist and allow them to breathe properly. To ensure you have enough humidity in their enclosure, make sure there is plenty of water in their drinking bowl.

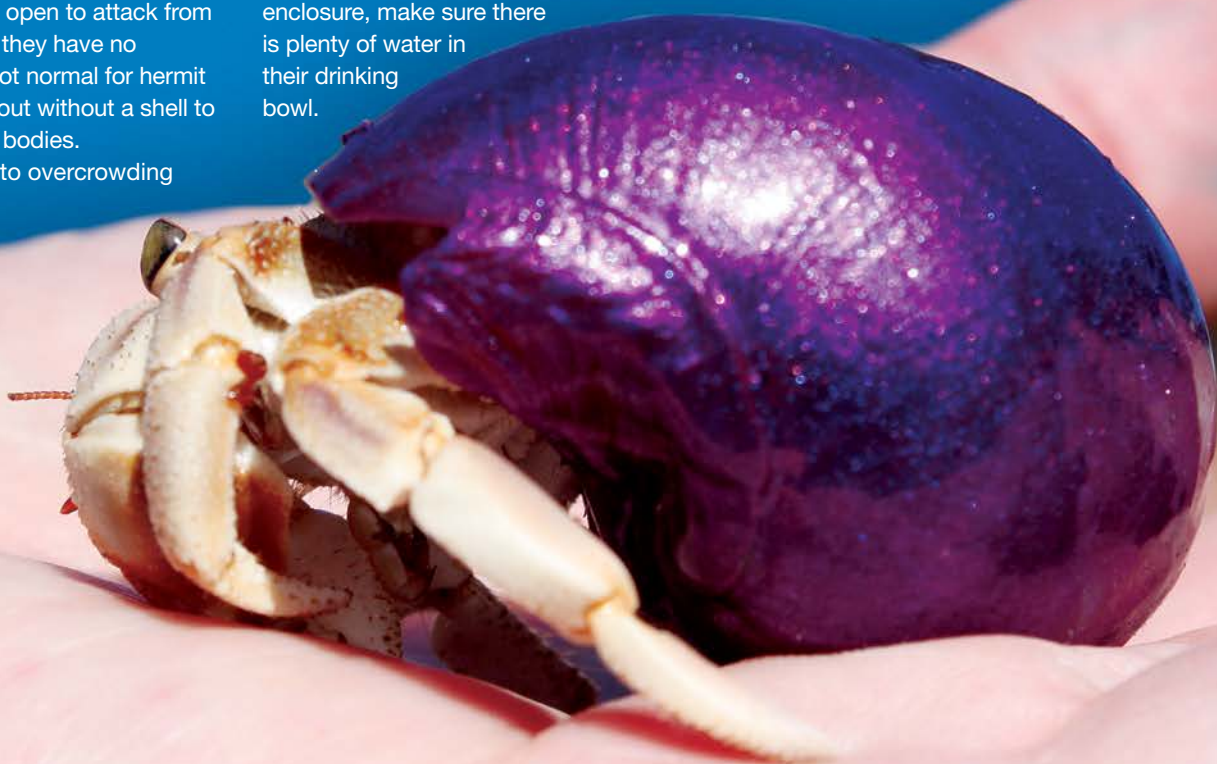
Land hermit crabs need two bowls of water that should be changed daily. The first must contain fresh water for drinking, the second salt water for bathing.

Like all animals, land hermit crabs have special dietary needs. Their diet should be specially formulated hermit crab pellets, which contain all the vitamins and minerals they need. As a treat they can also be offered corn flakes, shredded coconut, apple and other varieties of fruit. Ensure they are given fresh food daily. If they don't eat it, remember to take it out, as the humidity in the tank will cause the food to go mouldy very quickly.

Hermit crabs are nocturnal so they may be most active at night—leaving some new owners to think their new pets are very boring! Night time activities include eating, playing, digging and probably dancing. Your crab will still enjoy a play with you during the day but while in its 'crab habitat', it will be most active after dark.

Hermit crabs are easy to look after and can prove to be very interesting pets!

Take a look at this website [www.krabooz.com](http://www.krabooz.com) I recently bought a great kit from them and we are having lots of fun with our new friends.





# Tips for working parents

Words: **Marie Armstrong Smith**

It can be very challenging being a working parent and can sometimes feel like a never-ending juggling act. It is hard to balance work, family and the relationships you have within those areas of your life while trying to be a great employee, parent and partner as well as still have time for yourself.

To strike a workable balance routine is often the key and setting achievable goals for the whole family.

Here are some tips that may help with your situation

- ▶ Ask for help if you can. Make life a little easier for yourself, don't feel like you have to do it all yourself.
- ▶ Change your expectations of what your house needs to look like. Prioritise what is more important for you and your family.
- ▶ Be realistic about what can be achieved in one day.
- ▶ Share household and child duties with your partner or older children. When something doesn't work, be open, realistic and talk through issues as they arise and don't let things build up.
- ▶ Mornings can be difficult and can set you on your way with a less than positive attitude that will radiate throughout your day. Try to give yourself extra time in the morning for yourself before anyone else is up. Don't press the snooze button! Hop up and go over your morning list or even better sneak in some exercise.
- ▶ Try to pack bags for school and childcare the night before. Give children a list of items to pack then have an older sibling or yourself check them so you avoid the issue of looking for lost notes and uniforms as you are trying to get out the front door.
- ▶ Use time in the car to connect with your family on the way to school or childcare. Turn the radio off and ask about their day, leave work issues at work.
- ▶ Make sure the whole family has a good nights sleep and that they have a regular bed routine. Tired children and tired rushed parents in the morning is not going to get anyone anywhere without tantrums and arguments.
- ▶ Prepare double amounts of food when you cook, freeze some and store for later. Consider having a menu that you stick too and have your groceries delivered. There is a small delivery fee but you won't be paying for all of the extra treats you see while at the shop!
- ▶ Remember an evening meal does not always have to be a glamorous hot meal. Cold meats, pastas and salads are still a meal and can be prepared the day before.
- ▶ Place a time limit on TV and the computer and always make sure tasks are done before they are switched on
- ▶ Wash and hang clothes the night before and if you fold them properly this will save ironing.
- ▶ Make sure that your employer knows you are also a parent. Your children will get sick and need to have time off school or childcare. Perhaps you can work out leave time in your work agreement. Work out with family or your partner what to do in the event that your child is sick and always have a back up plan.
- ▶ Always remember to take time out for yourself and your partner, even if it's a half hour chat at bedtime or a walk. Even a chat with a friend.
- ▶ Plan enjoyable family times. Even if you want to stay at home and sort the washing, spending a day out with the family is more important and far more beneficial in the long run.



# Mr Moon's Balloons

Words: **Jemma Towse**

Local Illawarra Author Susan Pattison is a first time author – illustrator and self-publisher of children's book – Mr Moon's Balloons. Mr Moon's Balloons is illustrated in beautiful and bright colours – capturing the essence of childhood this book teaches children not only about colour and simple beauty but a clever way to describe loss and despair.

## **Tell us a bit about yourself**

My name is Susan Pattison and I am 43 years old. My father is an English descendant and my mother, a Dutch. I was born in Zimbabwe where we lived for 4 years. I have 2 younger brothers and after living in England for 10 years, we immigrated to Australia in 1986.

I went to a public school in the Illawarra region in NSW. I am married and have 2 gorgeous little girls. Taya is 5 years and Teagan, who is 2 years. We live in Albion Park NSW, which is about 45 minutes south of Sydney.

I currently work as a Nurse at our largest regional hospital.

My hobbies include gardening, minor home renovations and everything that comes with being a mum.

## **What made you decide to sit down and write Mr Moon's Balloons?**

Mr Moon's Balloons originated from the time, we as a family, went to Dapto's Street Fair in early spring. It was a particularly windy day but the sun was shining and after a cold dreary winter, this day was welcomingly warm. My eldest daughter absolutely loves balloons and was so chuffed when a stallholder gave her one free. A little while later a gust of wind whipped the balloon out of Taya's hand and off it went into the air. She was so distraught and inconsolable. Then I came up with the idea that Mr Moon would collect her balloon. Instantly she settled and became her happy, cheery self again. This total turnaround reaction had me thinking and now, here I am, an author of Mr Moon's Balloons.

## **What can we expect when we read Mr Moon's Balloons?**

You can expect a little bit of suspense, a little bit of curiosity, a little bit of despair, a lot of colour and a feel good ending!

The front page is a picture of my daughters looking out over Warilla beach and on the left is Windang Island.

Also, there's a recurring image that the little ones can search for. There's a clue on the back cover!

## **What is the hardest thing about writing?**

I would say it's the audience. Knowing what to write about and writing about it in such a way so as to keep their attention. Children can be easily distracted so I had to find ways to keep them focussed. My eldest daughter, Taya wanted a crescent for a moon. My youngest, Teagan likes to repeat herself. A lot. So that's why I used a bit of repetition, both in words and pictures, for my book. I thought that if I got input from my girls, then I stood a good chance at maintaining focus.

## **How long on average does it take you to write a book?**

It took me about 3 months to write my book and about 12 months to get around to illustrating it.

**I read that you were donating 10% of your profits to Convoy? What inspires you to do this?**

My book is about loss and I think that children who are suffering with cancer or any other loss in quality of life can benefit immensely from reading my book. It is hard to teach children about loss and I hope that my book can make it a bit easier for children to understand. I want to donate some money towards the convoy because it just feels good to do so.

## **What would you say are the main advantages and disadvantages of self-publishing against being published or the other way around?**

I began researching about how to publish a book and I found that the big publishing companies received hundreds and hundreds of books a month and I didn't want to try and compete against that many books. So I did an internet search on how to self-publish. - stumbling across 'Serenity Press' and I started to do some research. It was a Sunday morning and I emailed some contacts asking some basic questions about what was involved with being a self-publisher and what I had to do to get my book idea published. It was only a matter of minutes and I had a reply. From that moment on, I knew that I had found what I was looking for.

The major advantage of self-publishing is that Serenity press were so professional and experts at what they do. They believed in my book from the moment they read the draft. Getting my book from virtual reality to physical reality has been incredibly rewarding on this journey of self-publication.

The only disadvantage is that self-publishing is the upfront costing( as you pay for my books to be printed) but it is all well worth it when my book brings smiles to children faces.

## **Can we expect to see more books from you?**

I'm working on an idea of clouds and storms. Some children are petrified of storms so I want to write a book to help alleviate their fears. And I will also make the concept it a bit funny too.

## **Where and how can we purchase Mr Moon's Balloons?**

You can reach me on 0414 984 847 or Mr Moon's Balloons on Facebook. They are \$10 each for a paperback and I will sign them too if the buyer wants that.

## **What is your favourite motivational phrase?**

It's OK to make mistakes. That's how we learn.

## **What is your favourite book and why?**

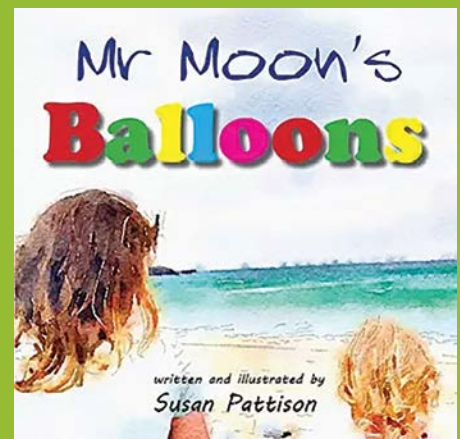
Hairy Maclary from Donaldson's Dairy. I read it as if I'm auditioning for a movie. Haha I love the repetition. Something I used subtly in Mr Moon's Balloons.

## **What is your favourite quote?**

You can please some of the people some of the time. But you can't please all of the people all of the time.

## **What advice would you give to your younger self?**

Don't be so shy. Go for what you want and don't worry about what people think. The only person holding you back is you.







# Cooking with Charlie

## Cheese and Mushroom Jaffles

Serves 2

### INGREDIENTS

4 slices wholemeal or wholegrain bread  
50g mushrooms, thinly sliced  
50g tasty cheese, grated  
baby spinach leaves  
cooking spray

### METHOD

- ▶ Place 2 slices of bread on a board and top with spinach, mushrooms and cheese. Place the other slice of bread on top.
- ▶ Lightly spray both sides of the sandwiches with oil. Place in pre-heated sandwich press and cook for approximately 5 minutes or until golden. Then serve.

## Chicken nuggets

### INGREDIENTS

500g chicken breast, diced into large pieces  
1 1/2 cups mayonnaise  
2 cups breadcrumbs  
2 tbsp butter, melted

### METHOD

- ▶ Preheat oven to 200°C fan-forced. Line a baking tray with baking paper.
- ▶ Dip chicken pieces into mayonnaise and then breadcrumbs to coat. Place onto tray and drizzle melted butter over each piece carefully.
- ▶ Bake for 20 minutes, stopping to turn nuggets after 10 minutes

## Chocolate Crackles

Servings: 24

### INGREDIENTS

4 cups of Rice Bubbles/Rice Puffs  
1 cup of icing sugar  
1 cup of desiccated coconut  
3 tablespoons of cocoa  
250g chopped copha

### METHOD

- ▶ Mix the Rice Bubbles, icing sugar, cocoa & coconut together in a large bowl.
- ▶ Slowly melt the copha in a saucepan over low heat. Allow to cool slightly then add to Rice Bubbles mixture, stirring until well

combined.

- ▶ Spoon mixture into paper patty cases and refrigerate until firm.

## Cookie dough truffles

Serves: 24

### INGREDIENTS

1/2 cup (125g) unsalted butter, softened  
1/2 cup (80g) brown sugar  
1 tsp vanilla essence  
1 cup (150g) plain flour  
3/4 cup dark chocolate chips  
2 cups dark chocolate melts

### METHOD

- ▶ Beat butter and sugar until pale and fluffy. Add vanilla. Beat in flour until just combined. Stir through choc chips.
- ▶ Form into 24 small balls and place into a zip-lock bag. Freeze in a single layer for one hour.
- ▶ Place chocolate melts in a bowl over a saucepan of simmering water, or in microwave if preferred. Stir until melted.
- ▶ \*Dip frozen cookie dough balls into melted chocolate and place on a rack to set.

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