

# Griffith Connections



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**A bimonthly Newsletter**

**Issue No. 3 January/February 2007**

**Separation Anxiety**

- we all struggle with new situations, new jobs, meeting new people and being in care in new situations.

Understanding this process is important.

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**Resilience Workshop**

How do we build strong resilient people. Find out more in this free workshop.

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**Children and Food Allergies.**

More and more children are being identified with food allergies, what are they and what do you need to know?

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## Starting School

Is my child ready for school? A question early childhood service staff are constantly asked by parents. The answer is complex and based on a variety of factors. There is no magic pill which makes children ready for school, no magic program which can instantly switch on the brain. However, there are some indicators which can be used to determine if a child is ready for school, but even these can be hit and miss.

School is for a long time, and it is important to ensure that we send our children to school when they are ready and have the ability and interest to grow, and learn in a group of children. Unlike child care or pre-school, most school kindergarten classrooms have only one adult to 20 children, for children to achieve in this sort of environment, they should be ready and able to cope with this challenge.

Children can commence school if they are 5 years old on or before July 31 of that year.

Children develop as individuals, there is no right or wrong, just degrees of difference. Not all children develop at the same pace. Often girls develop at a faster pace than boys in the areas of cognitive, social and emotional and creative skills. While boys are often ahead in gross motor skills.

So what am I looking for to see if my

child should start school? Independence, being able to dress and toilet themselves without assistance, being able to follow instructions, finish a task, share their time with others, sit and listen to stories, use imagination in their play, and being able to play with others are key indicators on children's emotional maturity. Being able to talk with others about familiar things, being able to answer simple questions, use books, and being able to use pencils, pens, paint etc to create recognizable meaning of their experiences are also important communication tools children will need when they start school.

In addition to these, your child may be able to recognize numbers, count, use words like "all, many, a lot," see differences in shape and have a grasp of concepts on colour, shape and number. They should also be able to enjoy a variety of indoor and outdoor play activities, be able to use scissors, and hold a pencil in the correct grip.

It is also useful if children can recognise their written name and even write it out in a linear form. It is not so important if at times the letters are reversed - it takes a while for vision to set properly. Usually by age 6-7 these things have corrected themselves.

If you answered yes to most of these questions then your child may be ready for school. It's really about determining what is the best time for your child to start school, when are they emotionally and intellectually ready to make the most of the experience.

If you are unsure of whether your child is ready to start school it is always best to talk with your child's early childhood teacher or speak to the school. If you de-

cide to send your child to school, your next big question is to decide which school and what transition to school program do they offer. It is as much about how you feel about the school as it is about how well they can cater to your child's needs that determines a successful start to school.



**Being able to use pencils, crayons, paint and other drawing tools are important skills for reading, writing and numeracy**

### Toddler Taming Workshops

Griffith Centacare are hosting a series of workshop for parents on raising toddlers. No parent has all the answers, nor does one solution for every child or situation. This series of workshops helps parents have reasonable expectations of themselves as parents and also what to expect from their child. Contact Centacare on 69641447 to register or find out more.

## Separation Anxiety.

Separation is something we all deal with throughout life. How we handle separations is developed very early in life - when we first start to deal with the disappearance and reappearance of someone we love.

When we start care in a new environment it can be challenging for child, parent and carer. Think about it from the child's point of view - new place they don't recognise, new people who don't look, smell or sound like those that they know and "will they come back to pick me up?" For the parent, the anxiety of leaving their child, "do I know these people? will they care for and love my child? Will they be safe?" and for the staff - getting to know the child, what's the secret to settling them, getting to know the family and what fun can we have - all come to mind.

It is important to build on a sense of trust and support - and to recognise that each child is different and so is each week - some weeks it may be great and some may be unsettled - even as adults we have those weeks.

Time and familiarity are the key to developing strong bonds. It is important to prepare both the child and adult for a new care situation - build on the positives, bringing in a special toy or comforter can make a huge difference. Talking about the child's day as they go home - don't ask the question what did you today? - because the response will mostly likely be "nothing or don't know" check the daily diary in each playroom or talk to the staff in your child's room and ask about what happened - then you ask questions like "did you build a sand castle with David today?"

Time is crucial - we need to give people time to settle in - obviously children who attend less regularly than others may take longer to settle - sometimes not. It just seems to be that if attend just one day, then you have 6 days to forget what fun you had.

Remember if you have concerns talk to staff at school or your child's child care provider.



## Resilience Workshop

Given the recent incidents in our community I thought it would be timely to run a workshop on children and resilience.

This is aimed at parents and carers and will go for about 2 hours. The notion of resilience - or the ability to cope with change and adversity is gaining momentum. We are raising our children in such a way that they are losing the ability to cope with things that go wrong or don't work out the way that they thought. How do we change that? What do we, as adults and carers need to do?

This workshop was first run down the south coast late last year, I developed it for a training organisation called ECTARC, it was well received. The date will be **Wednesday February 28th**, venue is at the Dorothy Waide Centre for Early Learning. Bookings are essential as places are very limited - contact the Centre on 69626833. There is no charge.

## Food Allergy in Children

*Merry Netting, APD, Senior Dietician Children, Youth and Women's Health Service. This article was first published in EveryChild 2006*

A food allergy is an abnormal response by the immune system to the protein in a food. It is not unusual for a child with food allergies to be sensitive to more than one protein. In Australia, the most common allergens are egg, cow's milk, peanuts, tree nuts, sesame seeds, soy, wheat, fish and shellfish.

Symptoms of food allergy may affect the skin (eczema, hives, swelling, itching or localised swelling of the lips, tongue or mouth, stomach and bowel (vomiting, diarrhea, reflux and colic) and respiratory system (wheeze, runny nose). Allergic symp-

toms begin within minutes of eating the food, but some symptoms may not occur for 24 hours.

Although rare, food allergies can result in severe symptoms requiring urgent medical attention. Anaphylaxis is the most severe form of allergic reaction and is potentially life threatening - it is a generalised allergic reaction which often involves more than one body system (eg Skin, respiratory, gastro-intestinal, cardiovascular). A severe allergic reaction usually occurs within 20 minutes of exposure to the trigger and can rapidly become life threatening. Anaphylaxis must be treated as a medical emergency, requiring medical attention.

Not all reactions to food are caused by allergies. Carbohydrate intolerance such as lactose intolerance in an inability to digest the natural sugar in milk. Food chemical intolerances are reactions to natural or artificial chemicals in a food (salicylates, amines, colouring or preservatives.)

Allergies are becoming more common in our society. There are a lot of theories as to why this is so. We know that children inherit the tendency to develop allergies from their parents - so a child is more likely to develop an allergy if one or both parents has, for example eczema, asthma or hay fever. Some babies can become sensitised to food proteins even before they start solids, due to exposure through their mothers breast milk.

Food allergies are managed by careful avoidance of the offending food protein - it is important to read food labels to look for hidden sources of allergens.

It is also very important that food allergies are diagnosed correctly and reviewed regularly by a qualified allergist to avoid unnecessary restrictions to diets at a time when children are growing and developing quickly.

Most children outgrow their food allergies by the time they are at school, with the exception of nut and seafood allergies, which can be life long.

# Tantrums

Most tantrums are the result of frustration from the child or as a consequence of realising that the child cannot have it both ways ie. They have to make a choice.

Not all children are able to do this and find throwing themselves on the ground the easy way out. As a parent, this can be very trying, so by offering a distraction to the child this can sometimes be a much more positive outcome than just saying 'no' or 'just do it'.

Some tips to help with tantrums are:

- Never reward bad behaviour- don't give in for the sake of peace and quiet after you have made a decision.
- Reward good behaviour with a hug and a smile.
- Make your home environment is as child friendly as possible
- At all costs avoid physical punishment
- Learn the difference between behaviour that is designed to test you and behaviour resulting from physical causes-such as when your toddler feels unwell, or is over-tired or hungry
- Be in absolute control of your child in a potentially dangerous situation – walking along a busy road, riding an escalator, crossing the street and generally always know whereabouts.
- Be consistent-sit down with your partner or if you are on your own make a list and decide what behaviour is unacceptable, so you are all comfortable and consistent with the decisions.

During the toddler years children embark on their quest for independence and they will make a mess and do the wrong thing. They will get themselves into dangerous situations and seem to ignore what your thought they had learnt. It is in these years that parents and carers can adopt strategies to help their child learn to live happily in their little world.

Some ways to help them achieve this can be:

- Being as patient and encouraging as children learn new skills
- Using distraction: don't play with the remote control- "let's go and see if the postman has been"
- Avoid battles, particularly when it comes to eating, going to bed and toilet training.
- Repeating instructions and showing how it is done. "when we tip blocks all over the floor, we then have to put them away... now let's put them all away".

•Knowing that physical punishment will cause a toddler to react with fear or defiance-not an understanding of what he did wrong. Interrupt what you are doing, if necessary, and stop him from what he is doing with gentle words and actions and, perhaps a distraction.

•Remove your child from dangerous situations- take him away from the dogs bowl the sharp cornered coffee table or the rock garden. You also need to ensure your home is a safe place for your child as well.

•Giving lots of cuddles and praise for the all the good things he does.

## KIDS IN CARS

Did you know that on a typical Australian summer day, the temperature inside a parked car can be as much as 30-40 degrees hotter than the outside temperature is. So if it is 30 degrees outside the car the temperature inside the car could be as high as 70 degrees.

It may be easy for even the most loving and well meaning parent or carer to think "I'll just be a few minutes" and leave the kids in the car with the window down a bit. But even this has serious health risks for the child.

Shopping and running errands with children can be frustrating. In the case of babies and younger children, there can be added exasperation when you find that your child has fallen asleep, just as you get to your destination and find that elusive car park.

Few people are aware of how little time it takes for the inside of a car to reach dangerously high temperatures, even with the window slightly open.

### **What are the risks?**

Seventy five percent of temperature rise occurs within five minutes of closing the car and leaving it. Ninety percent of the temperature rise occurs in the first fifteen minutes. Dark coloured vehicles reach slightly higher temperatures than light coloured vehicles.

The greater the amount of glass in the vehicle the faster the rise in temperature. Larger cars can heat up just as fast as smaller cars. The colour of a cars interior has no effect on cabin temperature. Having the windows down five centimetres causes only a slight temperature drop. The temperature inside the car begins to rise as does the humidity, while the airflow decreases. As the temperature rises, children begin to develop heat stress and also to dehydrate. Young children are more sensi-

tive to heat than older children or adults and are at greater risk of heatstroke. The younger the child, the faster the onset of heatstroke and dehydration. Hyperthermia, dehydration and asphyxia can all lead to death.

Children may also become distressed and try to get out of their restraint. If the harness on the restraint is loose, children are at risk of strangulation on the harness.

### **What to do if you see a child left alone in a car.**

**Look for the parents or carers  
See if the child is able to unlock the car from the inside so you can get them out.**

**If no parent can be found, call 000.  
Other options are contact your local police, ambulance or the NRMA for assistance.**

**Give the following details:**

**Your location**

**The registration plate of the vehicle**

**The approximate age of the children**

**The condition of the children**

If the child's health is at serious risk, break a window away from the child- remember flying glass is a safety hazard.

**REMEMBER NEVER UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCE LEAVE YOUR CHILDREN ALONE IN THE CAR.**

## Playdough Recipe

Playdough is one of the easiest activities to do with children, it will engage children for hours and builds lots of skills. This recipe is easy and makes a playdough that can be kept for weeks.

- 2 cups of plain flour
- 1 cup of salt
- 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil.
- 4 teaspoons cream of tartar
- About 2 cups of water and some food colouring.

Mix the dry ingredients and then add water and oil, mix well and then stir over a low heat for about about 5 minutes. When the mixture leaves the side of the saucepan it is ready. Fold it out on to the bench and then knead the dough - careful it will be hot. Knead it until it is soft and pliable.

Store in a sealed container.

Collect some simple tools for playing with dough - cookie cutters, small rolling pin or dowel, plastic knife are all great tools to add. Put these in a special container just for dough play.



Take time out to enjoy nature and our surrounding environment.



## Toilet training

Children can be emotionally and physically ready to use the toilet any time between the age of 18 months and 3 years. By the time they are 18 months old, children have discovered their genitals and are keen to explore them when they are exposed. This is perfectly natural and normal. Parents shouldn't try and stop this exploration as children need to be familiar with these parts of their bodies, just as they do with the rest of themselves. A child needs to be aware of and able to control his own body functions, and try to express an interest in using the toilet or potty. Trying to "train" a child before he has reached this stage is a waste of time, and can lead to frustration and anger.

Relying on your own instincts and your understanding of your child's personality is the easiest way too "toilet train".

Here are some tips you can try when you think your child is ready:

- Take your child with you when you go to the toilet. Be sure to wash your hands and talk about what you are doing. When you notice your child has been "holding on" for a couple of hours, begin to talk

about using the potty or toilet

Dress your child in clothes that can be pulled down easily. Summer is often the best time for toilet training as the child can go without nappies or pants when you are at home. Be sure to keep your child out of rooms where this will be a problem if he wets on the floor

Be sure not to start toilet training if there is any stress in your toddlers life such as a new baby or you have just moved to a new house. Know that you will have to go with your child to the toilet for some time, so if you would rather they use the toilet than a potty put a stool so they can step up to the toilet and wash basin. This will also make it easier for you when they are finally able to go on their own as well.

## Finger Paint Recipe

- 1 tablespoon soap flakes
- 6 tablespoons cornflour
- small amount of cold water to moisten
- About 2 cups of boiling water to thicken - stir while adding boiling water.
- Add food colour or tempera paint.

And there you go some great finger paint for some outdoor summer fun.

This newsletter is prepared and distributed free throughout the community as a project of the Griffith Child Care Centre Inc and Griffith Connections funded through Local Answers. We welcome your comments and thoughts - please email [griffithconnections@gmail.com](mailto:griffithconnections@gmail.com).

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## How to call for help in an emergency:

When possible the person with the best first aid knowledge should stay with the victim while someone else calls for help.

1. To call for the ambulance, police or fire service, use 000 for all fixed line or CDMA telephones. For digital mobile phones call 112 unless your service provider has advised otherwise.

2. When the emergency operator answers, state clearly which service is required.

3. Stay calm and speak clearly to convey the message. Be ready to answer any questions.

4. State the following:

- The exact location with clear landmarks or identification points;

- an outline of the emergency; the number of victims involved;

- any information about the condition of the victims;

- any hazards relevant to the area - such as fire, chemical spills or fumes;

- the telephone number where the caller can be contacted in case further information is required.

5. Wait on line until the operator tells you to hang up.

6. Ask someone to stay in a prominent position to direct the emergency service vehicle to the correct area.

**Call 000 or mobile 112 for Fire, Ambulance or Police**

**Call 13 11 26 for Poisons Information Centre.**