



'A great place to grow up'

NEWSLETTER

Executive News

Dear families

I hope you are all staying healthy and well. Most of our students are now learning from home although the students who are attending school are well catered for with the teachers who are still here each day. We really miss seeing your beautiful faces and hope that you are enjoying the online learning and the home learning packs provided by your wonderful teachers. We are very excited to see students who are sharing their learning with us and staying connected through Google Classroom, 'Hang-outs' or SeeSaw.

Teachers are available to respond to students and families during normal business hours between 8.30am and 5.00pm Monday to Friday. The volume of emails and responses required by students and families is very high at the moment. We love your enthusiasm everyone, but please understand that your teachers are busy and they will respond as soon as they can. If you could keep parent emails brief it would really help us and remember to be patient as we all navigate this new world of online learning.

We also understand that many parents are working from home as well as supporting their children to learn. We are adjusting the types of learning we are providing to try not to overwhelm you. At the end of each week, teachers will provide a weekly wrap-up for their class and some ideas about the learning planned for the week ahead. We are trying to limit tasks that need to be completed each day to a minimum and then give opportunities for optional learning tasks for those who want to do more. We also understand that some of you are creating your own schedules for the day and including learning based around your own family interests. This is great and we encourage a flexible approach. Whatever works for you and your family. The important thing is to keep learning, have fun and stay safe. Here is a great quote for parents/carers supporting their children at home from George Couros, a Canadian educator:

- Create a bit of structure, make a little time for formal learning and more time for play and exploration, and help kids feel safe and secure.



The time you make for formal learning will depend on the age of your children and your own family situation. Be kind to yourselves and each other. It would be great to look back on this time as one where families spent more quality time together and grew closer, rather than a time for stressing and arguing.

Our teachers and support staff are doing lots of learning at school too. The on-line learning platforms like Google Classroom and Seesaw are new to many of us so we are working hard to learn how to use them so we can support all our students and families at home. Our Learning Support Assistants had a Professional Learning session this week on using 'Reading Eggs' which is a great online learning tool for all our students. Reading Eggs and Mathletics allow students to work at their own pace and for teachers to track their progress. The school has a licence for our students to use this resource and we have just extended it to include the senior classes. Let us know if you need support accessing these.

The ACT Education Directorate has created a great resource for home learning which is on their website. It includes regular home learning challenges which can be submitted to the ACTED website. The current challenge is called HOME.

This is the link: <https://sites.google.com/ed.act.edu.au/act-home-learning/resources-to-support-home-learning>

We are very proud of our School Parliament Minister for Education, Aleyna for an inspirational message to our school community. This video is available on our Facebook page and will be posted into Google classrooms and SeeSaw. If you have not liked the Theodore Primary School Facebook page, this is a good time to do so as we are posting regularly.

Debbie Martens
Principal



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Theodore Primary School
(Official Site)



School Psychologist

My name is Monica and I am your school psychologist here at Theodore Primary. It has been a tricky year so far to say the least, but we are all in it together trying to figure things out as we go. It is important to try to keep calm and model this for our children. The routines we are so used to are no longer and we must make new rules and routines for ourselves and our children and be prepared to change them again and again. The times are calling for more spontaneity from parents with the limits that are put in place. What we do with our time and how we handle these situations make an impact on our children. So please stay positive and know that this is not forever.

I am usually available at the school four days a week. Even though you may not be able to meet with me to discuss your needs I am still available for phone consultations and I can provide you information via email. Referral forms are available from the front office, but they can also be emailed to you as we are trying to encourage social distancing as much as possible.

Stay safe,

Monica O'Neill

Fresh Tastes Program

We are excited to announce that Theodore Primary has signed up to the Fresh Tastes program. Fresh Tastes is a free ACT Government service that supports ACT schools to make healthy food and drinks a bigger part of everyday life for Canberra's kids. This is very important because children who eat healthy are more likely to participate and achieve success at school and teaching children healthy eating habits early in life sets them up for lifelong health benefits.



The Fresh Tastes curriculum teaches students the importance of nutrition and healthy eating, supports the school community in making healthy choices for lunchboxes by sending home resources and recipes, helps the school make healthy food and drink options a stronger feature of everyday school life and helps provide an opportunity for students to learn how to grow veggies in the school garden.

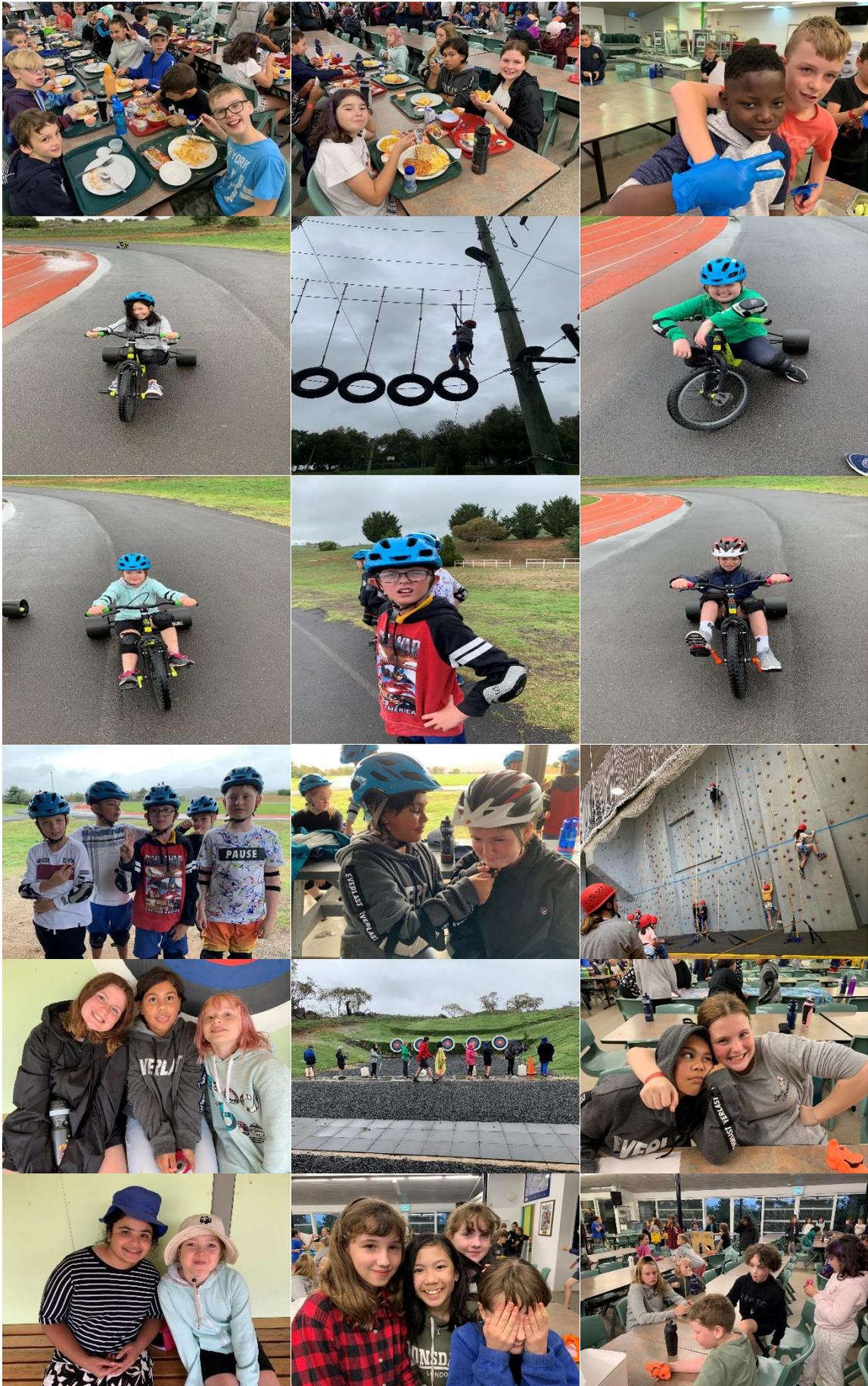
If you would like to know anymore information please visit <https://www.health.act.gov.au/about-our-health-system/healthy-living/fresh-tastes>



Mereki News

In week 5 of this term, our Year 5's and 6's spent 3 days at camp in Jindabyne. We had a fantastic time, even though the weather wasn't so great! We participated in activities including slider bikes, archery, high ropes, initiatives, cooperative games and rock climbing. Our nighttime activities were the Jindy Night Markets and cooperative games with other schools that were there. The students were very well behaved and represented Theodore with pride. We arrived home on Friday afternoon exhausted but happy.







Mingari News

Students in Mingari have been working very hard from the start of the year. We have many activities on our timetable to keep us busy learning about reading, writing, maths and sustainability, not to mention fitness and Positive Behaviour for Learning. We are now working from home and learning about all the same topics using Google Classroom. We are having fun connecting with each other, too!





Murrumbidgee & Molonglo News



We have had a busy start to our year in 3/4 and although our learning may look at little different now, we are still very busy students. We were very lucky to be able to complete some OzTag clinics, a hockey clinic and some students were able to participate in some Kulturebreak dance lessons.



At the beginning of the year we looked at the importance of being sustainable students. We also learnt more about bushfires and how we can play a part in helping Australia grow back after the fires. Students wrote many different recounts about the events over the summer. Here are some examples of some recounts that 3/4SW created about a koala.

Life cycle of a bee
Bees are flying insects that work really hard. Bees black and yellow.

Egg
The bees are born. It takes a while for them to grow.

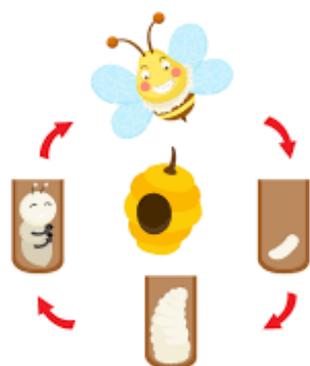
Larvae
They finally have made their cocoon. Just a few more days until the bees are fully grown.

Adult
They are fully grown and ready to fly and collect pollen and it starts all over again.

By Stephanie

This term in Science we have been looking at Eucalypts and how they are so helpful to the Australian climate. We have investigated seed pods, planted eucalypt seeds and watched what helps the seeds grow, looked at the parts of a flower and started exploring the importance of insects such as bees to the life cycle of a gum tree.

In 3/4SW students looked at the lifecycle of a bee and wrote their own explanations of the lifecycle. They even made creative artworks of bees!



Koala recount
A mother and a baby koala were damaged in the bushfires. People found the mother and the baby koala and rescued them from the wild.
After being rescued, the koalas climbed out of their box up into the gum tree. The koalas were hungry so they climbed up higher up the tree to get some gum leaves to eat.
In the tree the mother and baby koala found a spot to make a new home. After a while, the koalas were thirsty so they went down the tree.
The rescuers felt proud and happy because they helped the mother and baby koala they released them back into their natural habitat.
By Marcus and Riley



Bailey

Koala recount
While the bushfires were happening a mother and baby koala got injured. They went to a rehab place and healed. Then they were released by the rescuers back to their natural habitat in the bush by the rescuers.

First the mother koala climbed the tree and the baby hopped on her back. When the mum helped the baby up the tree, the baby helped the mother up the tree. After helping each other they ate some gum leaves.
Then the rescuers felt happy to release the koalas but sad because they had to let the cute animals go.
The End!
By Bryce and Ari



Talking to Children about Coronavirus-Prevention Strategies

1. Be Available to Talk

Children have big questions, and it's important to answer them. Take cues from your children and offer clear but concise answers in developmentally appropriate language. Keep the focus on preparing prevention strategies that are within your control like proper handwashing and avoiding large crowds.

2. Limit News Exposure

Even when it seems like they're not listening, children pick up on what they hear on TV and radio. Newsreaders' tone of voice can be enough to set off alarm bells for them, and unfamiliar words like pandemic and outbreak can be fear-inducing. Watch or listen to news reports when children are in bed or choose to read news articles if possible.

3. Stick to Routines and Boundaries

Children thrive with routines and boundaries -predictability can be very comforting in anxious times. When some things feel out of control, routines can give children a sense of security. School-aged children might be used to seeing a visual schedule in their classrooms, so try using one. Write your daily routine on a whiteboard or make a paper schedule together. Make sure you include fun activities in your daily routine! Play board games, play outside, or have silly dance parties.

4. Set & Track Daily Goals

Set small daily goals and track progress so children can work toward something important to them! Make sure the goals are within their control. Set goals around how much they'll read each day, how many free throws they'll practice each day, or how many kind gestures they'll show toward family members. Track progress on a goal chart so they can have a visual reminder of the progress they're making!

5. Start or Continue Mindful Practices

Mindfulness is an amazing practice for people of all ages. If you don't have a regular mindful practice already built into your family time, try adding it to your routine. This can look like a 5-minute morning or bedtime guided meditation (look for apps like Calm or Headspace) or simple mindful mandala colouring. Find a [mindful practice](#) that you all enjoy doing together!

Responsive Strategies

6. Practice Controlled Breathing

If your child is showing signs of worry, take a moment to [practice controlled breathing](#). You can simply count breaths for them (inhale 1 2 3 4, hold 1 2 3, exhale 1 2 3 4 5 6, hold 1 2 – *repeat two or three times*) - Help them slow their breathing and really exhale all of the air to calm their bodies and minds.

7. Try Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Help your child release tension from their body with a progressive muscle relaxation. In this exercise, children gradually tense up their muscles and then release them. Find scripts for this on your favourite mindfulness app or on YouTube, reference the confluence post on this or ask Danni or Warwick to take you through the exercise – it's very simple but effective to do.

8. Use Grounding Strategies

Grounding strategies or techniques help children reorient to the present moment when the worries are too big. These techniques help children connect with their current environment in the here and now when their minds are imagining potential future scenarios. Try all of these [grounding strategies](#) to see which one your children like best!





Grounding Techniques for Children

1. 5-4-3-2-1 Senses

This grounding exercise is a great go-to for children. All they need for this exercise is their senses! Have them practice identifying:

- 5 things you see
- 4 things you hear
- 3 things you smell
- 2 things you can touch
- 1 thing you taste

With younger children, identifying a thing they taste in the moment can be tricky (“but I’m not eating!”) so maybe provide a treat for them to taste at that point in the exercise.

2. 5-4-3-2-1 Sights

If noticing each sense is tough for your child right now, try an exercise just with sights. Create categories and have children name what they see. Here’s an example:

- 5 colours I see
- 4 shapes I see
- 3 soft things I see
- 2 people I see
- 1 book I see

3. A-B-C around the Room

This exercise will get children connected with that place where they are right now. Have your child look around the room and name something they see that starts with A, then B, then C and so forth. See how far they can get through the alphabet

4. Be a Tree

There’s nothing more grounded than a tree! Teach your child to feel his or her connection with the ground by imaging him/herself as a tree. Say something along the lines of: “I am firmly planted. I feel my feet rooted to the ground. My back is a strong trunk helping me feel stable in the moment. I feel my toes connecting with the ground. My arms are my branches. I feel them reach out into the world.” Instruct them to see how it feels to be a tree - simply noticing their bodies and feeling their connection with the room helps children feel grounded!

5. Power Hug

Firm pressure is great for grounding. Help children create an affirming statement to use for this exercise. It could be something like, “I am in control,” or “I am safe in this moment.” Practice placing their left hand on their right shoulder for a tap and then their right hand on their left shoulder for another tap. Then squeeze into a hug and say the affirmation. Tap, tap, squeeze, (affirming statement). Tap, tap, squeeze, (affirming statement). Mirror the exercise by doing it on yourself while standing in front of the child. Repeat this as many times as needed!

6. Object Focus

Keep some unique items on hand with different textures and colours. These could be sensory items, colourful rocks, snow globes or something else. Children can hold an item in their hands and tune in all their focus to the item. Notice the colours. Notice the textures. How does it feel in my hand? How does it feel when I squeeze it? What colours do I see? Just notice everything there is to notice about the item!



7. I am Here Hand Trace

For this exercise, you'll need paper and a pencil, marker, or crayon. Children trace a hand on the paper. You can take this a few different directions. Children can simply press the hand into the space on the paper and feel the connection between hand and table. Or they can use the space inside the hand to write things they see or describe the room.

8. Reorientation

To re-orient to the moment, just have child name facts about the moment. You can give them a card to keep with them to remind them of facts they can state and practice, practice, practice! It might sound like:

My name is...

I am in...

Today is...

The season is...

The weather is...

I am wearing...

9. Stomp, Stomp, Blow

For an active grounding exercise, have the child stomp the left foot, stomp the right foot and then exhale deeply. Continue this pattern of stomp, stomp, blow, stomp, stomp, blow, stomp, stomp, blow. Feel the connection of feet with the floor. Blow away anxious thoughts.

10. Room Search

Pick one broad category and search the room. Name everything in the room that's green. How many stars can you find in the room? Say the type of shoe everyone in the room is wearing. Count the bricks on one wall.

9. Set A Timer

When it's hard to let go of worries, set a 3- or 5-minute timer. During those 3 or 5 minutes, tell children they're allowed to think about the worry all they want! But when the timer goes off, it's time to get up, change positions, move to a different room or environment, and think of something else.

10. Exercise Creativity

If you have a child who likes to draw or write, try a creative exercise. Have your child personify their worry by imagining what the worry might look like if it were a real person, creature or thing. Maybe it looks like a big dragon. Maybe it looks like a monster. Or maybe it looks like an annoying mosquito. Then, they can draw a picture or comic or write a story about themselves as a superhero who defeats the worry!

11. Use a Journal or Feelings Tracker (for older children)

Give your children a journal to write about feelings or use a feelings tracker daily. Sometimes worries are so big it feels like they define our whole day, but when we keep track of our feelings throughout the day with a visual tool, it's easier to see that worries are a smaller part of a healthy balance of emotions.

Other Strategies

12. Acknowledge the Worries

It's important to acknowledge our children's worries rather than ignoring them. Acknowledging worries won't solidify them but it will help your child understand that worry is a protective feeling that alerts us to potential danger. We can help ourselves remember it's just potential danger though and use strategies to keep our worries in check. If you're looking for ways to explain worry to your child, [try these methods](#).



Help Children Understand Worry and Anxiety

1 – Smoke Alarm Analogy

Age: All ages

To explain what anxiety is, use the smoke alarm analogy. Smoke alarms are helpful for alerting us to danger when there's a fire and we need to get out of the building. But sometimes smoke alarms go off even when there isn't a big danger, like when we burn popcorn or toast. It makes the same sound for big emergency fires or little non-emergency fires.

Anxiety does the same thing. Anxiety tells us there's a big danger, even if the situation is not that big. It feels like a big danger because anxiety sends the same signals. The good news is we can learn skills to tame that anxiety emergency alarm (no more burnt toast alarms!).

2 – Hey Warrior (book)

Age: Primary School

This book does a fantastic job of explaining what worry is, where it comes from, and how children can be [warriors](#) over their worries. It can be ordered from Amazon

3 – Gremlin Girl

Age: Upper Primary & High School

When I was planning for a [classroom guidance lesson on anxiety](#), I wanted to find a way to break the ice and show my students that talking about anxiety is okay! So, of course, I went straight to their favourite source of entertainment: YouTube. I found this great mini-series called Gremlin Girl. The episodes depict anxiety as a Gremlin that pops up and has a lot to say. This video about waiting for text message responses is my favourite from the series so far:

13. Avoid Participating in Worry Rituals

If your child is demonstrating any type of worry or checking ritual (i.e. washing hands excessively), avoid participating or encouraging these rituals. This sends the message to children that the rituals are necessary when they see the adult, they're looking to for support doing it too. Remind children of the everyday strategies and routines you already have in place to prevent or protect against illness, like washing before eating or wiping down shopping carts with disinfectant wipes.

14. Avoid Excessive Reassurance

It's natural to want to reassure children! We want them to feel safe and calm. Reassure when needed but avoid offering it too frequently as this can prevent children from developing their own positive self-talk. Practice things they can say to themselves when they're feeling worried like, "I can control my breathing," or "My family is taking care of me" or "I don't need to be so scared of this".

15. Be Mindful of Your Own Worries

Again, it's completely reasonable for everyone to have some level of worry. But children do pick up on our feelings and notice our anxieties, and they will take cues from us. If you're feeling anxious, practice your own mindful or calming activities, call a friend or loved one, practice self-care, or reach out for help.



Bullying. No Way!



A few weeks ago, Theodore Primary participated in the nationwide movement with schools across Australia to Take Action Together against bullying. Students learnt about what bullying is and what they can do to prevent and stop bullying from happening. Here are some photos of students engaging in activities on the day.



Last week I sent home some information about what you can do if your child is being bullied this week the focus is on what you can do if your child is bullying others.



If your child is bullying others

It can be upsetting to find out that your child has bullied others.

Stay calm and learn more about your child's behaviour so you can respond appropriately. **Children who bully others need help and support to learn better ways of relating to others.**

- Focus on positive solutions
- Ask your child why they are behaving this way
- Explain why bullying is unacceptable
- Apply your family rules and consequences for their behaviour
- Consider what's going on at home
- Teach conflict resolution skills
- Discuss the behaviours with the school
- Get more help for your child

Focus on positive solutions

Children who bully others need help to:

- understand the effect of their behaviour on others and to be supported while learning to repair the harm they have caused
- take responsibility for their behaviour and the harm they have caused
- develop their social and emotional skills (especially conflict resolution) and to treat others with respect.

Ask your child why they are behaving this way

Try to understand why your child may be behaving in this way. Ask them about what they think is going on, and why they are bullying someone else.

Ask them what they think might help them to stop bullying.

Sometimes a student who bullies other children in one situation may themselves be bullied in another. Bullying is complex and changing.

Think about any issues or problems your child might be experiencing at school that may be impacting on their behaviour.

Explain why bullying is unacceptable

Explain what bullying is and why it is not acceptable.

Talk about the other person's feelings and help your child to understand what it is like for the person being bullied.

Ask them how they would feel if they were being bullied.

Apply your family rules and consequences for their behaviour

If the bullying has been happening at school, decide if there should be consequences at home too.

If you have already discussed the family rules for behaviour and consequences for inappropriate behaviour, these could be applied once you fully understand the situation including your child's perspective.



If you haven't established these rules for behaviour yet, you will need to discuss your expectations with your child. Explain these to your child and that the consequences are linked to their behaviour.

Consider what's going on at home

Have any major events taken place recently to upset your child (parents separated, death in the family, significant illness in the family, siblings bullying your child)? Is the bullying happening because your child is feeling sad or stressed? Do other issues need to be resolved?

Watching the way parents interact with other people helps children learn how to get on with others. Does your child see good examples of how to deal with issues and resolve differences with others at home?

Increase supervision of your child when they are with other children. Praise your child when they play cooperatively with others.

Take opportunities at home in sibling interactions to help children learn the social and emotional skills they need to get on with others. For example, teach them how to join in with other children in a friendly way:

- first observe a game and the other children
- look for a natural break in the game for joining in
- choose a person with a friendly face and ask them if you can join in.

Parents can use fights between siblings to help the children learn to manage their strong emotions and to learn more effective conflict resolution skills.

Teach conflict resolution skills

A critical part of growing up is learning how to get on with others and what to do when there is conflict. Learning conflict resolutions skills begins at home.

It is possible for a child to learn how to sort out problems in a way that makes everybody happy.

Children may see many examples of people dealing with conflict aggressively and trying to convince other people that their way is the best by force or argument. Such conflict can occur in the family home, on television, in the school yard, on the news.

However, there are excellent ways of dealing with conflict that lead to a peaceful solution, without 'giving in' to others.

The following steps are useful in helping children find peaceful ways of solving problems with other people.

You can change the way you ask the questions depending on the age of the child, but the general steps are the same for all ages.

- Begin by letting children know that it is **possible to find a good solution**. Parents could say something like: "I'm sure if we all think about this, we might find a way of everyone getting what they want".
- Help children **identify how they are feeling** and help them to label and express their emotions. (e.g. 'You're looking cross – I'm wondering if you're maybe feeling cross, but also a bit sad and hurt that you can't join in their game. How do you feel about it?').





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- Help children to **work out what they really want** by asking them what they would like to have happen. Help them to work out what the underlying need is, (e.g. ‘You say you wish your friend would go away. I’m wondering if you are also wishing that you could help everyone else build the cubby’).
 - Help your child to **understand the other person's point of view** and to learn how to take their perspective. Ask them what they think the other person might be feeling, or how they might feel if they were in the same situation. You could get them to ask the other person to say how they are feeling and what they would like to have happen.
 - Encourage all the children involved in the potential conflict to brainstorm **different ways that they could solve the problem**. Encourage them to come up with several different and interesting ways that they could go about it.
 - Help the children to **choose the option(s) that they think work best for everyone** and get them to have a go at putting them into practice. Stay around to see how they get on and help them fine-tune the solution if needed.

Reading children books that teach conflict resolution skills through stories can also be helpful.

Discuss the behaviours with the school

A consistent and co-operative approach by both the home and school is important.

Ensure your child does not hear criticism from you about the school's management of the issue. Take any issues you have about what the school is doing directly to the school staff you have been working with.

Get more help for your child

If necessary, consider enrolling your child in a group program that helps children to manage their behaviour, learn appropriate social skills and relate in more positive ways with other people.

Your school will be able to suggest local organisations and agencies that provide suitable programs.

Seek professional help and support if you feel that your child's bullying behaviour is part of a bigger behavioural or health problem.



TAKE A STAND TOGETHER

BULLYING. NO WAY!

www.bullyingnoway.gov.au



Family & Community News

During this uncertain time, students, families and staff are facing many changes in their everyday lives – my priority during this time is to do what I can to support the wellbeing of students and their families.

If you require any support during this uncertain time please do not hesitate to contact me by phone or email – aimee.shires@ed.act.edu.au.



Last week I sent home some information around how to support children during this time. Below is some wellbeing advice for adults from Beyond Blue. For more information please visit the Beyond Blue website <https://www.beyondblue.org.au/the-facts/looking-after-your-mental-health-during-the-coronavirus-outbreak>.

Try to maintain perspective

While it is reasonable for people to be concerned about the outbreak of coronavirus, try to remember that medical, scientific and public health experts around the world are working hard to contain the virus, treat those affected and develop a vaccine as quickly as possible.

Find a healthy balance in relation to media coverage

Being exposed to large volumes of negative information can heighten feelings of anxiety. While it's important to stay informed, you may find it useful to limit your media intake if it is upsetting you or your family.

Access good quality information

It's important to get accurate information from credible sources such as those listed below. This will also help you maintain perspective and feel more in control.

- [Australian Government coronavirus \(COVID-19\) health alert](#)
- [Health Direct – Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- smartraveller.gov.au – travel information for Australian citizens
- [World Health Organization – coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#)

Managing your mental health while in self-isolation or quarantine

There are a number of ways to support your mental health during periods of self-isolation or quarantine.

- Remind yourself that this is a temporary period of isolation to slow the spread of the virus.
- Remember that your effort is helping others in the community avoid contracting the virus.



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- Stay connected with friends, family and colleagues via email, social media, video conferencing or telephone.
 - Connect with others via Beyond Blue forums: [Coping during the coronavirus outbreak](#).
 - Engage in healthy activities that you enjoy and find relaxing.
 - Keep regular sleep routines and eat healthy foods.
 - Try to maintain physical activity.
 - Establish routines as best possible
 - For those working from home, try to maintain a healthy balance by allocating specific work hours, taking regular breaks and, if possible, establishing a dedicated workspace.
 - Avoid news and social media if you find it distressing.

Support for those experiencing financial hardship

As the ongoing spread of the coronavirus continues to affect the global economy, many people in Australia are losing jobs, livelihoods and financial stability. For information and services provided by the Australian government, please visit [Services Australia](#).

If you are experiencing financial hardship, [National Debt Helpline](#) offers free financial counselling.

Seek support

It's normal to feel overwhelmed or stressed by news of the outbreak. We encourage people who have experienced mental health issues in the past to:

- activate your support network
- acknowledge feelings of distress
- seek professional support early if you're having difficulties.

For those already managing mental health issues, continue with your treatment plan and monitor for any new symptoms.

For anyone who feels like they need some additional support [Beyond Blue Support Service](#) offers short term counselling and referrals by phone and webchat on **1300 22 4636**.