

MAY/JUNE 2009

Bright Start

The Magazine for the Kidicorp Community

How much
TV is too
much?

MAKE
mealtimes
easy

Grow
your child's brain

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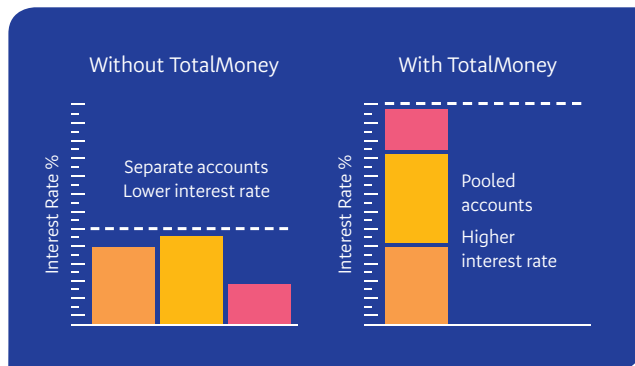
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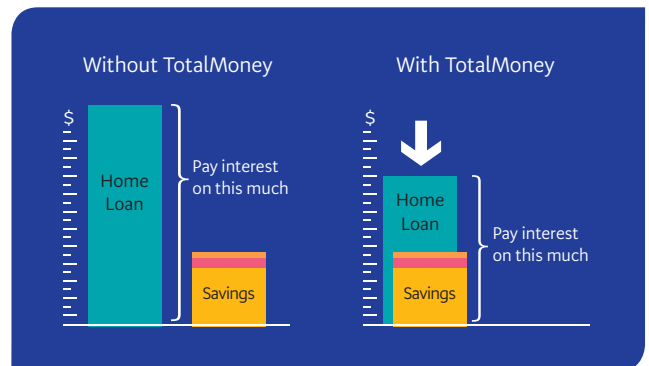


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Introducing Fiona Hughes

Welcome to our sixth issue of Bright Start. I'm Fiona Hughes, General Manager of Quality and Development. Many of you will have seen my name. I'm the person who gets new centres off the ground and opened and who oversees professional development, licensing and regulatory matters.

Here's some things you may not know about me. I've been married to Phill for 25 years and I have three children. Elyse who is working, Adam, who is studying IT and graphic design at AUT and James who is in Year 12.

I also have two grandchildren, Pheonix and Bentley.

I have been around early childhood for over 15 years, I have owned my own centres, managed a group of 8 before now being part of the senior management team at Kidicorp.

What I love about being in early childhood is the opportunity to be a part of an organisation full of inspiring teachers.

There is nothing better than walking into a centre full of children engaged in meaningful learning opportunities. I love looking into the profile books of the children in our centres and seeing how it paints a clear path of the development of each child's learning. The amount of satisfaction that must give to our teachers is immeasurable.

When a child walks up to me wanting to share what is interesting them I become fascinated as to how they developed the interest and the learning possibilities that teachers can bring out of that one area of interest.

Kidicorp spends a huge amount on professional development to ensure our teachers are well supported but to also ensure that our teachers can keep on learning and building on what they know to provide children with the best possible learning opportunities.



The role between parents and teachers in the first six years of life is so important. At Kidicorp we are very proud of the strong relationships we encourage between home and the centre. We think this not only supports the child and means parents can relax knowing their child is getting quality care and education.

Thank you for trusting us with your children, we will make sure they are in good hands.
Fiona Hughes.

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Kidicorp is New Zealand's largest private early childhood provider. Over 8,000 children are enrolled annually in Kidicorp centres around New Zealand.

Bright Start aims to increase our sense of family amongst our teachers and to better connect us with our parents and their families.

Shorts

TOP PARENTING TIP

Keeping your word

Children need to know their parents are reliable. That makes them feel safe. And they know their parents are reliable when they always keep their word.

So when you tell them you will pick them up from day care at a particular time, always make sure you are there then. Keeping a child waiting, not knowing what's happening is very stressful and destroys a child's sense of security.

If something happens and you can't get there, always inform whoever's looking after the child so the child (and the caregiver) knows where they are.

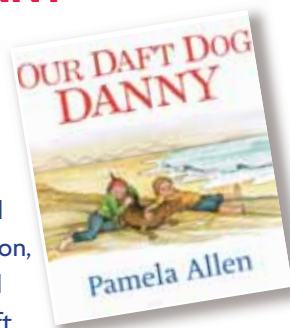
If you pride yourself on keeping your word to the child, never make one of those threats that can so easily trip you up "If you don't behave, I won't take you"... and then you find you can't keep your word, and leave the child behind. So then the child learns that you may not keep your word, and it's worth trying you on.

Being reliable, means children know you mean what you say, you won't let them down, and they know where they are. They grow up trusting their parents, and therefore their environment and ultimately the world.

OUR DAFT DOG DANNY

Viking HB \$28.00

Pamela Allen is another well known name in children's writing having written over 35 books over 30 years. Reading aloud is so good for children, it develops imagination, helps them understand sound and that words have meaning. Our Daft Dog Danny, is a great 'read aloud' book for boys with lots of action and drama. The dog story, a seemingly grumpy Grandfather and happy ending makes for a warm and energetic story.



THE VERY HUNGRY CATERPILLAR

Puffin - RRP 18.95

Inspired by a hole puncher this timeless classic children's book by Eric Carle was first published in 1969. This story counts to five, teaches the days of the week and covers a lot of food. This is one of the best children's books ever written, it's easy to read and excellent for young readers. **We have 2 copies to giveaway.**

Go in the draw by sending your name and address to Bright Start PO Box 276 177 Manukau City 4136 or email brightstart@kidicorp.co.nz



LITTLE KIWI

Picture Puffin \$17.95

Bob Darroch developed the Little Kiwi series of books in 2001. There are now 6 books with the latest *Little Kiwi flies to the rescue*. This book also comes with a height chart. These books are wonderfully illustrated with New Zealand flora. Fauna and native birds.

Little Kiwi is scared of the dark introduces other New Zealand night creatures as well as telling a tale of overcoming one's fears. *Little Kiwi looks after the egg* is a charming story about looking after a sibling. *Little Kiwi meets a Monster* is all about facing up to one's fears. The books introduce our native wildlife and tell stories of being brave, looking after siblings, and getting over being afraid of the dark.

READER GIVEAWAY

We have 8 sets of 3 Little Kiwi books to giveaway to 8 lucky readers who send their name and address to Bright Start PO Box 276 177 Manukau City 4136 or email [Brightstart@kidicorp.co.nz](mailto:brightstart@kidicorp.co.nz)



ERO supports quality

www.ero.govt.nz

Recent media reports on ERO findings on centres for under twos suggested quality was poor across the board. This isn't the case. Kidicorp supports the ERO process – it provides an opportunity for continual improvement which we think is good for children. ERO supports, motivates and encourages centres.

Recent quotes from some of our many ERO reviews are:

“Kidicorp prides itself on the development of robust policies and procedures to ensure centres not only meet but surpass the required health,

safety, regulatory requirements. Kidicorp has a robust appraisal system and has substantially increased the professional development it offers its teachers.”

Top quotes from ERO

On Coastal Kids, “Relationships with children are warm, caring and based on excellent understanding of children’s learning, wellbeing and developmental needs”.

On St Lukes Top Kids, “Learning environment promotes self choice of equipment, teachers provide additional resources to stimulate play and learning”.

On Topkidz Kope “Generous support is provided for teachers in training... continuous improvement ... effective self review”.

On Topkidz Welcome Bay, “Teacher’s positive relationships with parents contribute to fostering children’s sense of well-being and belonging”.

On New Generations, “Infants benefit from nurturing and respectful care; toddlers actively explore and join in a wide range of experiences.”

Feel free to go to ERO’s website and read their indepth reviews of centres.

Our People



HESTER MCKILLOP

Centre Manager Edukids Manukau

WHAT ROLES HAVE YOU HELD AT KIDICORP?

I’ve worked as a teacher in a number of Kidicorp centres, The House at Pooh Corner, Genesis

Learning Centre where I was promoted to centre manager and now I’m Centre Manager at the brand new Edukids Manukau.

WHY DO YOU LOVE EARLY CHILDHOOD TEACHING?

I love the positive difference we are making in young children’s lives and seeing the children grow, develop and achieve to their full potential. The relationships we build with families is important to me. I enjoy ensuring that the families have nothing to worry about by building relationships with their children and them and making that reassures them their child is well cared for. Having been in this profession for 17 years I still love every moment and each day and would change it for anything in the world.

WHAT GOT YOU INTO THIS AREA?

While doing a basic computer course my teacher said to me her children were in a childcare centre and would I like to do

some work experience there. I jumped at the change and enjoyed it so much that I completed my qualification in Early childhood Education and stayed for 13 years before moving to Genesis.

HAVE YOU GOT ONE OF THOSE ‘THIS IS WHY I LOVE WHAT I DO STORIES’?

I was teaching 3 to 5 years different music and movement songs and we went to a rest home in Papakura to perform. We did our dances and then the children went around the elderly and shook their hands and gave them cuddles, including the shy children. I was so proud. The children made such an impact that we were constantly invited back.

WHEN YOU AREN’T WORKING WHAT YOU ENJOY DOING?

I enjoy spending time with my husband, family and friends and spending time at the family batch at Piha.

HOW DO YOU MOTIVATE THOSE AROUND YOU?

I try to do this through being respectful, understanding and positive towards those around me. I listen to ideas they have and encourage them and support them

HAVE YOU LEARNT ANYTHING FROM WORKING AT KIDICORP?

Over the years I have worked for Kidicorp I have learnt that you are never alone. There is always support and guidance from all areas of the company. I have also learnt that if I am unsure or need some help I need never be afraid to ask and in doing so I learn.

Switched Off

Are children watching too much television?

By Annemarie Quill

“You will get square eyes,” my mother used to warn, as I tuned in to the latest episode of *Tom and Jerry*.

My eyes remain anatomically sound. But it turns out that square eyes may be the least of our worries when considering the effects of television on young children. If we are to believe dramatic headlines, then allowing children to watch television is to blame for most of society's

ills: such as bullying, violence, and the breakdown of the family.

British psychologist Aric Sigman claims television not only damages children's morals, but also their health. In his book *Remotely Controlled*, Sigman places children's television viewing at the root of serious childhood conditions such as autism, attention deficit disorder, diabetes, and even the onset of early puberty.

If the medical horrors don't deter you, consider that too many episodes of *Ben 10* might condemn four year old Jack to a lifetime of illiteracy, unemployment and poverty. That's if you believe some educational researchers who claim that permitting young children to watch television stunts their growth and development, hinders language skills, damages social interactions, and lures them away from more worthwhile pursuits such as reading or outdoor play.

Given these severe warnings, it is fair to say that allowing your



preschoolers to watch television has become one of the most pernicious of parenting crimes. Most parents would rather admit to feeding their children lollies for breakfast, than reveal that their preschoolers have free rein of the remote.

We fear the disapproval of self styled experts such as Sigman who scolds:

“To allow children to continue to watch this much screen media is an abdication of parental responsibility. Truly hands-off parenting.”

Yet we all do it. I recognize the irony as I type this article, my four and five year old are glued to *Brother Bear*.

So are we right to be paranoid about the impact of television on our children?

While I can protest that *Tom and Jerry* didn't turn me into a spatula wielding bully, I have to admit that now, I am the one who is concerned about my own children's square eyes. Driving home I asked my five year old daughter what she did at school.

“Nothing.” she replied in a bored tone. Then she turned to me with great excitement.

“I think SpongeBob DOES like Mr. Krabs because they were laughing. He is only pretending not to like him.”

Perturbed by her preference for the workings of *SpongeBob's* inner mind over her real day, I wondered if she had inherited the telly addict gene from me, or if television really is taking over our lives.

No doubt about it, the television landscape has changed vastly since I was a child. Sigman calculates that by the age of six, the average British child has spent a full year of their life in front of a television. In a lifetime, children now spend longer in front of a television than they do at school.

In New Zealand, the Broadcasting Standards Authority reveals that 95% of four and five year olds regularly watch television. Children's television is no longer limited to a few channels: almost half of all New Zealand's households

receive Sky Television, with children's channels such as *Playhouse Disney* broadcasting non stop programmes to preschoolers, bizarrely, twenty four hours a day, just in case they want to watch at 2am!

The growing reach of television is symbolized by its ever increasing physical presence. The friendly 'box' in the corner has morphed into a dominant force in the average household. Supersized and mega pixelated, dubbed 'the elephant in the living room' by television expert Frederick Zimmerman.

they were actually improving their baby's brain by exposing them to so called educational programmes.

Among the pediatric profession there is growing concern about this screen time for very young infants. In the first three years of life, young children's brains are still forming. Experts like Zimmerman warn that babies' brains are being dangerously wired by over exposure to television. These concerns have led the American Pediatric Association to urge parents to ban television time for children under two.



And not just confined to the living room! The New Zealand Broadcasting Standards Authority reports that over one quarter of New Zealand children under thirteen have their own television in the bedroom. A similar US survey reveals a third of children aged two to three have their own television and, incredibly, **one in five American children under one has a television in their bedroom.**

Another disturbing trend is an explosion in television and electronic media marketed to the very young. A US study led by Zimmerman discovered that by three months of age, 40% of babies are regular viewers of television or DVDs. By age two, this number jumps up to 90%. Most parents surveyed did not watch television alongside their babies, but rather used it as a type of electronic nanny. Chillingly, parents believed that

Curiously, there is no such government advice in New Zealand. Professor Geoff Lealand of Waikato University, who has spent years examining preschool children's engagement with television and other electronic media, warns against over reliance on American experiences. He notes that to a certain extent, New Zealand children enjoy protection from the commercial impact of television, as here advertising is banned from children's television at specific times.

Nevertheless, some child development experts in New Zealand caution against too much screen time, if any for children under two.

What about television for our older preschoolers? Is there any saving grace?

Lealand believes there is. He feels we are being blinded by headlines about the harmful effects of television:



“The media cherry pick research to make it more sensational. The true picture is not so black and white.”

He points out that much of the so called medical research on the topic is actually scientifically unsubstantiated:

“It is impossible to prove that watching television at four produces a violent adult at sixteen. The cause and effect argument is flawed as there are so many other environmental factors that come into play that might also contribute to violence –such as genetics, socioeconomics, family background or other experiences.”

Lealand is also concerned that much of the negative view of television is fuelled by a nostalgic view that this ‘plug in drug’ is contributing to the death of childhood. He thinks these opinions are shaped by adult prejudices, rather than considered appraisals of the role of media in the lives of children:

“Many adults have an idealistic view of childhood as running outdoors, reading books, with mum, growing vegetables. Of course all these things are hugely important. But television and other technologies are also a key part of children’s lives. Just like play and reading, television contributes to children’s growing imagination, curiosity, problem solving language and cognitive skills.”

By ignoring this potential of television, we are marginalizing and misrepresenting children’s interests. To ignore television or try to censor it means we miss out on a valuable context to teach our children about life.

Broadcasting Standards Authority Chief Executive Dominic Sheehan agrees that some of the complaints against television may be tainted by the view of children as helpless victims of television content.

“We need to recognize that even young children are critical media users, not passive sponges” he says. “Children are clear about what media content is inappropriate or upset them and have opinions about it.”

Driven by the bad press, we have become intellectual snobs about television. Back to *SpongeBob*. Is he so bad? Would I have felt better if my daughter was quoting Shakespearian characters?

Concerns about lack of understanding about children’s television usage prompted the UK Literacy Trust to review all global research on the topic.

This review concluded that given the right circumstances, children’s engagement with television can enhance children’s development, particularly in areas of language acquisition.

Literacy experts believe we need to shift

our mindset from traditional beliefs that only books are good for children, to embracing a wider definition of literacy, which includes television as an important influence.

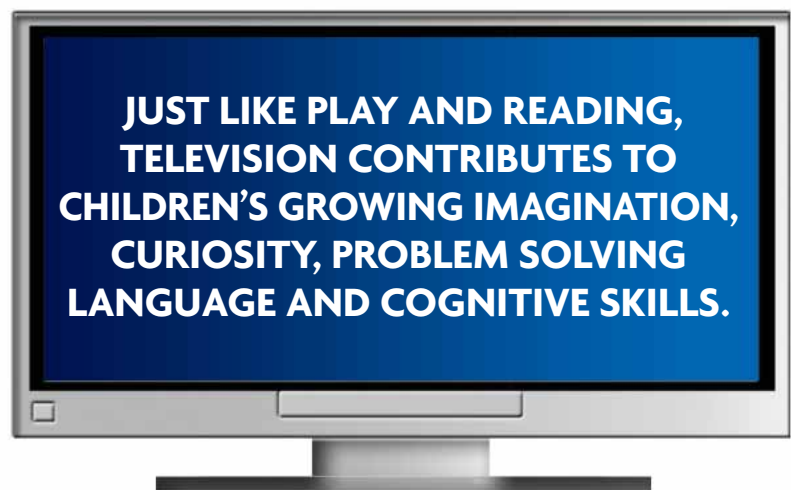
If we continue our moral panic about television, we are hindering children from realizing the potential of new technologies to orient them to literacy futures that are very different from the past.

The Literacy Trust’s review found that whether or not television is a source of stimulating learning opportunities or a brain numbing waste of time hinges on three core factors: the quantity of time spent watching; the type and quality of programme; and lastly and most importantly, whether adults watch alongside children.

The BBC had it right all those years ago when they called their children’s hour *Watch With Mother*. All experts are unanimous that children benefit most when watching quality programmes with you.

Watching together can mitigate the negative effects of television, because we are there to recognize and explain any confusing meanings children may see, and link it to more familiar ‘scripts’ from real life, relevant to the child’s own experience.

Teaching children to decode television and become critical viewers is as



important as learning to read and develop social skills

The Broadcasting Standards Authority's Dominic Sheehan agrees:

"Media literacy, the ability to access and understand media in order to use it effectively, is becoming increasingly important. Kiwi children need continuing information and support so that their media experiences can be safe and productive ones."

Lealand agrees that New Zealand children deserve better than being propped alone in front of the set:

"Access to quality children's programmes and input from parents makes television viewing a positive enriching experience, triggering lively conversation. In this way television expands horizons rather than limits them, and supports children's development rather than exploiting it."

With this in mind, experts advise setting guidelines for appropriate television usage, which are summarized in the box below.

Inspired by these guidelines, and still fretting about SpongeBob, I decided it was time I 'got with the programme' too. I revisited the topic with my daughter:

"Its great you noticed how SpongeBob laughs with the crab man."

"MR KRABS, not crab man", she corrected, looking at me suspiciously. I continued on:

"SpongeBob knows how important it is to have friends and have fun with them."

I got the full on, five year old roll of the eyes:

"Gaawd, Mum! SpongeBob isn't REAL you know. It's just TV."

That's all folks!

Suggestions for appropriate television viewing for preschoolers

UNDER TWO'S: No television or strictly limited.

TIME: Limit quantity by assigning set time for viewing. An hour a day is more than enough for preschoolers. Over two hours could be damaging.

LIMIT TELEVISION: Allow television as an occasional pastime, rather than a given everyday occurrence.

WATCH TOGETHER: Try not to use television as a babysitter, but if you must, make sure you know what they are watching. At times when you do need to do something else, use a familiar DVD.

HELP INTERPRET: Just like in shared reading, discuss the programmes: the plot, the characters, the meanings.

PROVIDE LANGUAGE: Make sure children are benefiting from the language used in the programme. Clarify meanings, and use new words in different contexts later.

LINK TO REAL LIFE: Children learn best from anything relevant to their own life. Many children's programmes have an inbuilt moral compass which you may need to help them discover. E.g. how Simba stood up to the bully Scar in *The Lion King* might ring true for some; how *Bob the Builder* works as a team player might inspire how to 'get the job done.'

Culturally appropriate. Sadly, New Zealand has few locally made children's programmes. This may change with Weta Workshop branching into children's programmes. Children could also benefit from programmes in te reo.

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REAL AND FANTASY. Some of the messages in programmes can give children a skewed view of life, e.g. the beautiful girl always gets the prince. These Disneyesque versions of the world are no different to traditional fairytales and in that sense no more or less harmful, but it is good to discuss all the same.

AGE APPROPRIATE. Beware of inappropriate content in seemingly innocuous children's programmes. Studies show that children as young as one will copy behaviour and emotional reactions seen on television; in one study, babies avoided an object after they had seen an actress react negatively to it on the screen.

AVOID TOO MANY CARTOONS: Cartoons present too many frenetic images for young children to process. Try watching *Cartoon Network* for even ten minutes and your head will spin.

HIGH TECHNICAL AND ARTISTIC PRODUCTION. Just as we can distinguish a good book, it does matter how programmes are designed. Creative programmes like *In the Night Garden* and Weta Workshop's *Jane and the Dragon* outshine cheaper imports.

FORMATS THAT OFFER PARTICIPATION. Research shows that programmes that solicit young children to join in improve language, cognitive skills and problem solving more than others e.g. *Blue's Clues*; *Dora the Explorer*; *Little Einsteins*.

REPETITION. Young children enjoy repetition and learn more.

STRONG NARRATIVES. Good linear stories rather than over complex. E.g. *Clifford the Big Red Dog*; *Dragontales*.

NO TV IN BEDROOM. Make bedrooms the space for play, reading, music, and of course, sleeping!

SWITCH IT OFF. When their viewing time is up, switch off and avoid having television on as background noise. In the US, statistics show that over a third of children live in households where the television is always on, even if no one is watching. Continual background stimulus deters children from other activities even if they don't really want to watch, and is a conversation stopper at mealtimes.

MAKING MEAL TIMES



easier

By Valerie Davies

Meal times are sometimes opportunities to eat. But often when parents and children are sitting round the dining table, it stops being a table and becomes instead a battle ground.

Because eating is such a primal act, it has a huge significance in the life of a family, and around food and the dining table, battles of will are played out over tiny details like not eating vegetables, holding a knife the right way, or not kicking the table legs and swinging back on the chair!

These family dramas are the stuff of life, of course, but most people would rather just enjoy their meal! So how can we make sure that meals are hassle free, and every-one can eat in a calm atmosphere, thus ensuring every-one digests their food properly?

Many people are unaware of the fact that emotion can interfere with digestion, and that scientists have actually shown that when a person is angry or upset, the blood vessels swell around the stomach, interfering with the digestion of the food. Which is one good reason to avoid arguments or rows at mealtimes.

As with most parenting skills, the best way to get the results you want is to start early.

Once breast or bottle feeding and weaning is over (and as we know that is a subject in itself), at least one meal a day should become a family occasion, and for good eating habits, it's a good idea to gather round the table for a good breakfast, and the same in the evening.

If everyone is scattered during the day at work, school and childcare, then these times round the table are precious family-time, and worth making a pleasure.

There are some simple ways to make sure the meal stays calm, and avoiding a battle of wills between mother insisting on the children eating everything on their plate, or despairing because the little darlings are turning up their nose at some dish she's cooked with loving care.

Apart from wanting mealtimes to be a pleasant family experience, you also want your children to learn good eating habits. This they won't do if they know mummy will get cross if they don't eat something, or if they are forced to eat more than they want to.

So, first rule of mealtimes: don't worry about your children's nutrition and don't hassle anyone to eat more than they choose. Children's appetites are notorious erratic. When they're in a growing phase they will eat voraciously. Other times they will only pick.

Second rule of mealtimes: don't show them you're anxious that they eat something. Remain neutral if possible, and keep your cool so they know there's no traction to be gained from arguing around food.

Remember, to ask yourself: do I want him to eat his supper, or do I want to win this argument? Step back, and if he doesn't want it, let him leave it.

Don't find something else instead. If he's not hungry, or doesn't want it, leave it at that. No recriminations or fuss. Just let it be. On the other hand, it's reasonable for children to have some dislikes. I couldn't bear skin on custard or broad beans. I allowed my children two or three hates, and never forced them to eat these things. With my son it was white of egg. They often grow out of these hates, and sometimes they don't...

And especially, try not to bribe. Don't trap yourself by saying if you eat your beans, you can have some ice cream. This subliminally teaches children that some foods are nicer than others, whereas you want them to eat nutritious food as willingly as treats.

Everyone eats at different rates. Some people eat faster than others. This was a truth I failed to grasp, and was always trying to get my slow, dawdling son to eat faster and keep up with the rest of us. The light dawned when he was much older, and I sat opposite his grandfather and saw him dawdling and finishing his

food long after everyone else. I felt ashamed for all the times I'd hassled my poor son.

Usually, children up to three only want to eat when they're hungry, after that, they become more interested in food, and the choices they're offered. So don't overload a child's plate. Small amounts, like a tablespoon of everything offered, are the best way to go, and then if they want some more they can ask. This way you are teaching them to listen to their needs, instead of eating more than they need a good life-time's lesson.

So a clean plate is not necessarily the aim. The aim is for the children to eat nutritious food and enjoy it in the amounts they need.

And we all know how difficult it is to tempt little appetites. When you want to introduce new foods into their diet,

do it with small amounts, and without drawing attention to it. Make eating new things seem ordinary, rather than an opportunity to argue.

Take a leaf out of Captain Cook's book. When he wanted his sailors to eat anti-scurvy remedy, and they refused, he gave it to his officers, and simply left it out without comment for the sailors. It didn't take long before they were gobbling up the horrid stuff.

The same thing has often happened in our family. The adults would keep a treat for themselves (in the days when avocado pears or camembert were hard to find) and the children would want it too. If we liked it and didn't want to share it, then they were sure it must be delicious. It's a psychological trick that could be used to advantage round the family dining table!

Children, and adults too, for that matter, need three good meals a day, and a small snack in between. Children, especially, become quite desperate when their sugar levels drop, and that's often when tantrums happen, when children are too drained to cope. The answer is plenty of drinking water, and healthy snacks like nuts, yoghurt, fruit, vegetable sticks, and healthy oatmeal or wholemeal biscuits or slices.

It's a good idea to keep a small jar of nuts and dried fruit handy for emergencies. These foods last longer in the system than crisps and sweets, and so children are less likely to have plummeting sugar and energy levels. And if you're cooking a meal, and running over time, give the children a raw carrot or piece of broccoli or other vegetable that was going to figure in the meal.

CHILDREN, AND ADULTS TOO, FOR THAT MATTER, NEED THREE GOOD MEALS A DAY, AND A SMALL SNACK IN BETWEEN.



Children need lots of milk for their growing bones, but not the messed around stuff, the real thing. If they're not altogether keen on milk alone, you can always add a little chocolate powder, or make a milk shake, including banana and egg and honey, when they get back from school or childcare. To make it go down even easier, some chocolate powder could help. For other drinks, there's nothing to beat water, and not chilled, either. Very cold water is not good for the stomach.

When you're sitting round that family table, don't let the children bring toys

or games to the table, and don't have television on. Anything which distracts from either the eating, or the family interaction, means you're not achieving that enjoyable hassle free occasion you're aiming for. And most importantly, make it the same time every day, so the routine is regular, and no-one is getting desperate, bad-tempered or badly behaved because they're hungry.

Making the food child-friendly, cutting their bread and butter into fingers or squares, making tiny portions decorated with coloured vegetables, letting them have bite-sized pieces that smaller

ones can pick up with their fingers, all contribute to the children's enjoyment. Even small children love to feed themselves, and I can remember my six month old trying to grab the spoon to give herself the yoghurt.

The sooner they learn to feed themselves, the easier meal times are for the adults. And when it's a daily and regular occurrence, eating together, the children accept all the conventions that go with it, including the ritual washing of hands, saying grace perhaps, and learning to use good manners, holding their cutlery easily, passing the butter and the salt and pepper, and generally learning all the conventions of their culture around eating.

Remember, children do as their parents do, rather than what they are told, so if you eat convenience foods or junk snacks that's what they'll be wanting to do too. To avoid this, means planning. And when you're planning your children's food give them proteins first, when they are most hungry, and serve fatty and sweet foods last, in small amounts.

And since family meal times are meant to be fun, sometimes plan something completely different, a picnic under the tree in the garden, or setting up a table in a different area. Once during a storm, I laid a blanket over the dining room table and let the children picnic on sheets of newspaper instead of plates, underneath in their new tent. They loved it.

Making food fun, gathering regularly round the table to eat, is one of the easiest ways of taking parental anxiety out of family life. The children grow up eating good food without fuss, and everyone enjoys family time together in a crowded modern timetable.

For some wonderful ideas on actual menus, recipes and ideas for feeding children, Christelle Le Ru's book "Fresh Start" is invaluable.

www.christelle-leru.com

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REMEMBER, CHILDREN DO AS THEIR PARENTS DO, RATHER THAN WHAT THEY ARE TOLD, SO IF YOU EAT CONVENIENCE FOODS OR JUNK SNACKS THAT'S WHAT THEY'LL BE WANTING TO DO TOO.



WHAT IS MY CHILD LEARNING ALL DAY?

By Liz Fletcher

In previous issues we have explored the benefits of sand play and playing with blocks. This issue we look at other 'play' things your child does at their early child centre and explore the types of learning taking place. Manipulative play and 'messy' play are important activities at any childcare centre. As you will read below they have different outcomes and results that are part of a child's learning.

MANIPULATIVE PLAY

(Examples – puzzles, sorting and matching shapes, pegs in holes or pegs in patterns, threading and lacing, interlocking road and train sets, playing with blocks, construction sets like Mobilo and Duplo, scissor cutting, nuts and bolts).

Children can do this alone or alongside others. Often tired children will rest among manipulative materials because they can play on their own and it is a rest from the tensions sometimes of social play.

This kind of play allows children to use judgment and discrimination which helps develop logic, reasoning, systematic thinking, concentration and memory skills. It increases an understanding of shapes, colours, the size of things which all lead into mathematical skills.

It furthers recognition of sequences, positioning and rotation, and the



relationships of one size/thing to another. It develops fine motor skills, small muscle control of fingers, hands and wrists, nimble fingers and it refines hand-eye co-ordination.

Children develop patience, strategies to deal with frustration, self-reliance and self-discipline. Finally, completing a manipulative action is satisfying and confidence building.

MESSY PLAY

(Examples – rolling, kneading and moulding play dough and clay; drawing with pens, crayons, pencils, chalk and charcoal; painting (string painting, finger painting, blow painting, bubble painting, balloon painting); screen printing; tie dye batik; scratch art; stamp art; tapa making; weaving; gluing mosaics and collages; playing with containers of gloop, slime, bubble mixtures, shaving foam and water).

Messy play allows a child to have fun while making a mess. It is a wonderful release of

tension, it can be done individually or with others allowing for co-operative play.

Messy play develops imagination and creativity. It encourages children to express themselves in non verbal ways and enjoy the sense of touch.

It is therapeutic: a way to express feelings, both negative as well as happiness, joy, delight in living. It affirms individuality and self-esteem, as children engage in original and spontaneous play without preset ideas.

Children can develop an appreciation of and delight in colour, form, texture, design, rhythm. Messy play supports and encourages important cognitive processes – children often create what they know and feel, rather than what they see.

Messy play encourages relaxation and enjoyment of the process, rather than the end result. It develops skills with finger muscles and hands and allows an exploration of the textures of materials. It is often a sensory learning experience where children explore different sensations (wet/dry/cold/cool/warm), textures (rough/smooth/soft/hard/slippery), property values (bendy/breakable) which helps them describe what they feel.

Some messy play is scientific experimentation where children learn about the properties of substances as well as the interaction and mixing of substances and colours.

Messy play allows spacial awareness. Children learn more about safety and hygiene practices. Finally they learn relationship skills and strategies for the fair sharing of space and equipment.

Nutrition



By Maureen Hawke

Good strategies are important when it comes to food. You control what your toddler eats. The toddler controls how much is eaten. Don't use food as a reward or start a nutrition war with your toddler.

MAKE IT BRAIN FOOD

Remember, fresh is best; organic food is better. Make your child's food yourself. Avoid processed foods as these may contain artificial colour, flavours and preservatives that can affect health and behaviour.

Cook babies' food using only fresh ingredients and introduce only one new food at a time and watch for babies' reactions – like a change in bowel motion, sleeping or irritability.

You can tell quickly if a food disagrees. If it does, wait a week before re-introducing and then offer in small quantities. If baby shows a reaction again, avoid the food.

Try to avoid gluten grains, like wheat, oats, rye and barley until baby is older. Some children find it hard to break down and absorb the whole protein fraction of the gluten in wheat and barley or the milk protein from the casein in cows' milk.

Food can be a factor in your baby's crying, screaming, colic, stomach pain, nappy and skin rashes, loose or constipated stools, ear infections or failure to thrive. Milk intolerance can trigger many of these symptoms for example.

Remember if your baby is unhappy it won't generally move and explore, which means it is learning less. Every day a child is sick is a day of full development missed.

ONE YEAR OLD

By around one year old a baby is able to eat almost any food. The pre-school years may be the last time you will have almost complete control over your child's diet.

So use this time to develop taste for fresh foods that are low in fat, sugar and salt.

With better nourishment and few highly processed and refined foods, the better the conditions you are creating to build your child's immune system and grow connections within your child's brain.

When the brain is well nourished, learning and remembering things is easier and improved sleeping and behaviour can result.

If the brain and body are not being well nourished the child will more likely be sick, behave badly and show signs of developmental immaturity.

WHY CHEWING'S GOOD

Having a few teeth makes chewing possible. Children with oral motor problems will often prefer to drink their calories rather than eat them because they may have low muscle tone in the mouth and face and don't like chewing.

- They need to be given foods that require chewing and also
- encouraged with blowing and sucking activities.

Cutting up food can make it easier for them to manage.

Chewing foods helps open and close the Eustachian tube (the one that connects nose and ear). Blocking of this tube can be involved in glue ear and ear infections.

Modern diets of refined, processed foods give fewer opportunities to chew.

Chewing foods like raw vegetables and fruits also helps develop our jaws and may prevent overcrowding of teeth.

ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS

Essential Fatty Acids (EFA's) are a very important in a child's diet.

Over the past 50 years traditional sources of omega-3 fatty acids have disappeared.

Our grandparents knew that cod-liver oil was a good thing to give children in winter, as cold increases the body's needs for EFA's.

VITAL STRATEGIES FOR YOUR CHILD'S BRAIN GROWTH

Fresh cold water fish such as salmon, tuna, herrings, mackerel and sardines are also important sources of omega 3 fatty acids, as are nuts and seeds.

The omega-6 family of EFAs is found mainly in seeds such as safflower, sunflower and corn oils as well as evening primrose oil. Many children get sufficient quantities of these oils in their diet. However EFA's are fragile and easily damaged by high temperatures, such as when cooking, food processing and even by air.

NUTRIENTS NEEDED TO USE THESE OILS

Both of these EFA's must be converted into other chemical forms to be used by the body. To do this a child needs certain nutrients in their diet. These nutrients can be provided by a non-processed diet containing proteins and non-

refined carbohydrates made up of fresh vegetables, fish, meats, fruits, and whole grains and not the highly refined white flours that make up the breads, pastas, cakes and pastries of modern day living.

MENU TALK

Sitting the growing baby in a high chair at the table with the rest of the family teaches them that meals are social occasions. They see what their family eats and learn that different foods are on the menu every night.

Tell your youngster what is on the menu.

Saying there will be no desert unless all vegetables are eaten gives the impression that desert is very, very important and that eating vegetables is a punishment.

Sometimes desert will be on the menu even though all the vegies haven't been eaten.

Other nights it won't be and all the vegies have been eaten up.

BECOME A NUTRITION DETECTIVE

Common health and behaviour problems may start with food intolerances, sensitivities, food allergies or nutritional insufficiencies.

To find out if food is a cause of your child's problem you may need to do some nutritional detective work. If you have concerns check with your Doctor or see a nutritionist and start to eliminate some things from your baby's diet to see if the allergy or behaviour changes.

If you aren't breast feeding check whether it is formula that may be upsetting baby. If changing formula doesn't change symptoms:

- use a safe food diet of rice cereal, lamb, choko, beans, and chickpeas for five days and
- when symptoms stop, start introducing new foods very carefully, say one every 2-3 days.
- Feed each new food 2 –3 times a day for 2 days and watch very carefully for any return of symptoms.

Stop all vitamin mixtures when removing or trialing foods.

Follow this formula when introducing new grains into the child's diet.

You may wish to start adding oats to the diet for 2-3 days, you may then add rye for 2-3 days, wheat for 2-3 days, followed by rye 2-3 days. Stop feeding the grain immediately if reactions occur. Wait for reactions to subside before testing another grain. Feed the baby a variety of grains, not just wheat.

About the author. Maureen Hawke has been directly involved in child development work for the past 25 years. A mother of three and grandmother of one, Maureen travels extensively, training teachers on ways to promote child development. Born in New Zealand, moving to Australia in 1967, Maureen now lives with her family in Brisbane, Queensland.

See www.brightstart.com.au for more information.



Kidicorp Auckland Early Childhood Centres



South Auckland

Beachlands Community Kindy	49 Third View Avenue, Beachlands	09 536 5313
Coastal Kids	97 Third View Rd, Beachlands,	09 838 6737
Edukids - Brand new Centre	561 Great South Road, Manukau	09 250 2658
Everglade Early Learning Centres	66 Everglade Drive, Manukau	09 263 6070
Everglade Early Learning Centres	2 Keri-Anne Place, Manukau	09 263 6074
Everglade Early Learning Centres	42 Tironui Road, Takanini	09 296 6991
Excel Learning Centres	66 King Street, Waiuku	09 235 0375
Excel Learning Centres	68 King Street, Waiuku	09 235 0375
First Steps	472 Great South Road, Papatoetoe	09 279 2922
First Steps	2 Puni Road, Pukekohe	09 238 1633
First Steps	44 Puni Road, Pukekohe	09 238 1634
First Steps	3 Iona Place, Wiri	09 262 1606
Genesis	44 Weymouth Road, Manurewa	09 266 5771
House at Pooh Corner	25 Onslow Road, Papakura	09 298 3669
The Honey Pot	25 Onslow Road, Papakura	09 298 4181
Great Expectations	35 Marne Road, Papakura	09 299 6696
Montessori	101 Victoria Street, Pukekohe	09 238 4401
Top Kids	14 Manuroa Road, Takanini	09 296 1441
Top Kids	16 Manuroa Road, Takanini	09 296 7932
Top Kids	18 Manuroa Road, Takanini	09 296 5348
Wattle Downs Community Kindy	17 Clayton Road, Manurewa	09 267 3763
Wattle Downs ELC	134 Coxhead Road, Manurewa	09 267 9955

Central Auckland

First Steps	7 Ngaoho Place, Parnell	09 373 3477
Edukids - Brand new Centre	64 Stoddard Road, Mt Roskill	09 629 5140
Mainly Kids	62 Vermont Street, Ponsonby	09 376 2410
Mainly Kids	68 Vermont Street, Ponsonby	09 376 1406
Mainly Kids	97 Remuera Road, Remuera	09 523 0300
Montessori	44 Shelley Beach Road, Ponsonby	09 378 8056
Topkids	13-17 Virginia Avenue, Eden Terrace	09 302 3700
Topkids	2 Wagner Place, St Lukes	09 815 4090
Toptots	136 Richmond Road, Ponsonby	09 376 6643

East Auckland

Edukids - Brand new Centre	119 Apirana Avenue, Glen Innes	09 521 0275
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North Auckland

Edukids - Brand new Centre	Shop 109 Westfield Mall, Civic Cres, Albany	09 441 6382
Topkids	15-17 Saturn Place, North Harbour	09 414 6433

West Auckland

Edukids - Brand new Centre	End of Montel Avenue, Henderson	09 836 2647
First Steps	74 Seymour Road, Henderson	09 813 0964
First Steps	635 Te Atatu Road, Te Atatu North	09 834 3749
First Steps	633 Te Atatu Road, Te Atatu	09 834 3749
Natural Learning	19 Delta Avenue, New Lynn	09 826 0866
The Childrens House	1 Clover Drive, Henderson	09 833 7119

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