



SUPPORTING THE NETWORK OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES  
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OSCAR Network  
Christchurch

BONDING AND  
ATTACHMENT  
IN MALTREATED  
CHILDREN  
ROUGH & TUMBLE  
CHILDREN'S  
PLACES OF  
SECRECY  
AND PLAY  
TECH TALK



ENHANCING CHILDREN'S PLAY : WHAKAREWA / TE TAAKAROA TAMARIKI





# THE OSCAR NETWORK IN CHRISTCHURCH INC.

We are a organisation dedicated to providing information to O.S.C.A.R. (Out of School Care And Recreation) programmes.

Our Aim is to support, promote and network safe quality, accessible OSCAR services which are professional and centre around the needs of the child and its whanau.

The OSCAR Network provides information on training, development, mentoring, funding & finances, research, advocacy, management and staff support, resources and the general running of an Out of School programme.

The OSCAR Network in Christchurch encourages OSCAR providers to operate quality services, however it is not a function

of the OSCAR Network to accredit or assess OSCAR services

The OSCAR Network in Christchurch has a well-earned reputation for working co-operatively alongside other groups and agencies.

We work as a team in an environment based on mutual respect and trust. It is the combination of skills, ideas and energy, which achieves results from the consensus decision-making process. We enjoy our work by 'thinking differently'.

**SEE THE CALENDAR ON THE BACK COVER FOR TIME AND PLACE DETAILS OF OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENTS.**

**Jan Waiti** - Network Manager  
**Sharon Williams** - Office Administrator  
**Liz Hawes** - Resource/Projects  
**Pam Hughes** - Professional Development

**Office Hours**  
Monday to Friday: 9am-1pm

Network Staff are available for appointments outside these hours

25 Disraeli Street  
PO Box 7101  
Sydenham  
Christchurch 8240

Phone: 03 3793915  
Fax: 03 3793918

e-mail: [admin@oscarnetwork.org.nz](mailto:admin@oscarnetwork.org.nz)

[www.oscarnetwork.org.nz](http://www.oscarnetwork.org.nz)

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- Christchurch City Council
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- Pub Charity
- Mainland Foundation
- Tertiary Education Commission
- Zeald.com



## INVENTIVE DENS & FORTS >SEE PAGE 8



# A WORD FROM THE NETWORK FOLLOWING THE CONSULTATION AROUND THE GOVERNMENT'S 'FUTURE FOCUS PAPER'

The Ministry of Social Development collated a consultation paper around improving (sic) the OSCAR sector. This paper created an opportunity to advise government on OSCAR provider's knowledge of improvements to the sector. Thank you to all providers who contacted the Minister Paula Bennett directly, or sent through their ideas to us and/or came to our open forum to feed in collectively to the Network's reply to the consultation document. On your behalf, Liz took this document to the consultation meeting that was held here in Christchurch.

It is very clear that we have a united sector, keen to keep existing standards as a base document and to maintain government funding to support the 'true' cost of OSCAR service delivery. The sector does not want to step backwards by losing what has taken several years to grow.

There is increasing awareness of home-based services and the impact this may have on formal OSCAR services especially around their meeting the existing standards. Providers felt the standards should not be watered down to meet the needs of home-based services. Existing services were firm that they would not compromise child and

staff safety by having only one staff member on site.

It was also clear that providers felt an external monitoring agency was necessary to ensure safety and transparency in the programmes. It has come across quite clearly that support services are needed such as the Network and The OSCAR Foundation.

There were questions around the fact that government did not focus on value for the sector including professional development which research indicates is key to quality service delivery.

There was a concern that the changes proposed showed a lack of awareness of the needs of children and the issues providers faced daily in the care and support of tamariki and whanau.

We will keep you informed with information through our website or enews.

The summary of the Christchurch consultation meeting has been collated by the Ministry of Social Development and a copy of it is available on our website: [www.oscarnetwork.org.nz](http://www.oscarnetwork.org.nz)

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**"DON'T UNDERESTIMATE THE VALUE OF DOING NOTHING, OF JUST GOING ALONG, LISTENING TO ALL THE THINGS YOU CAN'T HEAR, AND NOT BOTHERING."**  
PIGLET, POOH'S LITTLE INSTRUCTION BOOK, INSPIRED BY A. A. MILNE

# BONDING AND ATTACHMENT IN MALTREATED CHILDREN. HOW YOU CAN HELP.

The most important property of humankind is the capacity to form and maintain relationships. These relationships are absolutely necessary for any of us to survive, learn, work, love, and procreate. Human relationships take many forms but the most intense, most pleasurable and most painful are those relationships with family, friends and loved ones. Within this inner circle of intimate relationships, we are bonded to each other with “emotional glue” — bonded with love.

Each individual’s ability to form and maintain relationships using this “emotional glue” is different. Some people seem “naturally” capable of loving. They form numerous intimate and caring relationships and, in doing so, get pleasure. Others are not so lucky. They feel no “pull” to form intimate relationships, find little pleasure in being with or close to others. They have few, if any, friends, and more distant, less emotional glue with family. In extreme cases an individual may have no intact emotional bond to any other person. They are self-absorbed, aloof, or may even present with classic neuropsychiatric signs of being schizoid or autistic.

The capacity and desire to form emotional relationships is related to the organization and functioning of specific parts of the human brain. Just as the brain allows us to see, smell, taste, think, talk, and move, it is the organ that allows us to love — or not. The systems in the human brain that allow us to form and maintain emotional relationships develop during infancy and the first years of life.

Experiences during this early vulnerable

period of life are critical to shaping the capacity to form intimate and emotionally healthy relationships. Empathy, caring, sharing, inhibition of aggression, capacity to love, and a host of other characteristics of a healthy, happy, and productive person are related to the core attachment capabilities which are formed in infancy and early childhood.

## WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP MALTREATED CHILDREN?

Responsive adults, such as parents, teachers, and other caregivers make all the difference in the lives of maltreated children. This section suggests a few different ways to help.

## NURTURE THESE CHILDREN.

They need to be held, rocked, and cuddled. Be physical, caring, and loving to children with attachment problems. Be aware that for many of these children, touch in the past has been associated with pain, torture, or sexual abuse. In these cases, make sure you carefully monitor how they respond — be “attuned” to their responses to your nurturing and act accordingly. In many ways, you are providing replacement experiences that should have taken place

during their infancy — but you are doing this when their brains are harder to modify and change. Therefore, they will need even more bonding experiences to help them to develop attachments.

## TRY TO UNDERSTAND THE BEHAVIOURS BEFORE PUNISHMENT OR CONSEQUENCES.

The more you can learn about attachment problems, bonding, normal development, and abnormal development, the more you will be able to develop useful behavioural and social interventions. Information about these problems can prevent you from misunderstanding the child’s behaviours. When these children hoard food, for example, it should not be viewed as “stealing” but as a common and predictable result of being deprived of food during early childhood. A punitive approach to this problem (and many others) will not help the child mature. Instead, punishment may actually increase the child’s sense of insecurity, distress, and need to hoard food.

So many of these children’s behaviours are confusing and disturbing to adults. You can get help from professionals if you find

yourself struggling to create or implement a practical and useful approach to these problems.

## INTERACT WITH THESE CHILDREN BASED ON EMOTIONAL AGE.

Abused and neglected children will often be emotionally and socially delayed. And whenever they are frustrated or fearful, they will regress. This means that, at any given moment, a ten-year old child may emotionally be a two-year old. Despite our wishes that they would “act their age” and our insistence to do so, they are not capable of that. These are the times that we must interact with them at their emotional level. If they are tearful, frustrated, or overwhelmed (emotionally age two), treat them as if they were that age. Use soothing non-verbal interactions. Hold them. Rock them. Sing quietly. This is not the time to use complex verbal arguments about the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

## BE CONSISTENT, PREDICTABLE AND REPETITIVE.

Maltreated children with attachment problems are very sensitive to changes in schedule, transitions, surprises, chaotic social situations, and, in general, any new situation. Busy and unique social situations will overwhelm them, even if they are pleasant, they can be disorganizing for these children. Because of this, any efforts that can be made to be consistent, predictable, and repetitive will be very important in making maltreated children feel safe and secure.

When they feel safe, they can benefit from the nurturing and enriching emotional and social experiences you provide them. If they are anxious and fearful, they cannot benefit from your nurturing in the same ways.

## MODEL AND TEACH APPROPRIATE SOCIAL BEHAVIOURS.

Many abused and neglected children do not know how to interact with other people. One of the best ways to teach them is to model this in your own behaviours, and then narrate for the child what you are doing and why. Become a play-by-play announcer: “I am going to the sink to wash my hands before dinner because...” or “I take the soap and put it on my hands like this...” Children see, hear, and imitate.

In addition to modelling, you can “coach” maltreated children as they play with

other children. Use a similar play-by-play approach: “Well, when you take that from someone, they probably feel pretty upset; so if you want them to have fun when you play this game, then you should try...” By more effectively playing with other children, they will develop some improved self-esteem and confidence.

Over time, success with other children will make the child less socially awkward and aggressive. Maltreated children are often “a mess” because of their delayed socialization. If the child is teased because of their clothes or grooming, it would be helpful to have “cool” clothes and improved hygiene.

Maltreated children have problems with modulating appropriate physical contact. They don’t know when to hug, how close to stand, when to establish or break eye contact, what are appropriate contexts to wipe their nose, touch their genitals, or do other grooming behaviours.

Ironically, children with attachment problems will often initiate physical contact (hugs, holding hands, crawling into laps) with strangers. Adults misinterpret this as affectionate behaviour. It is not. It is best understood as “supplication” behaviour, and it is socially inappropriate.

How adults handle this inappropriate physical contact is very important. We should not refuse to hug the child and lecture them about “appropriate behaviour.” We can gently guide the child on how to interact differently with grownups and other children (“Why don’t you sit over here?”). It is important to make these lessons clear using as few words as possible. They do not have to be directive — rely on nonverbal cues. It is equally important to explain in a way that does not make the child feel bad or guilty.

## LISTEN TO AND TALK WITH THESE CHILDREN.

One of the most helpful things to do is just stop, sit, listen, and play with these children. When you are quiet and interactive with them, you will often find that they will begin to show you and tell you about what is really inside them. Yet as simple as this sounds, one of the most difficult things for adults to do is to stop, quit worrying about the time or your next task, and really relax into the moment with a child. Practice this. You will

be amazed at the results. These children will sense that you are there just for them, and they will feel how you care for them.

It is during these moments that you can best reach and teach these children. This is a great time to begin teaching children about their different “feelings.”

Regardless of the activity, the following principles are important to include:

- All feelings are okay to feel — sad, glad, or mad (more emotions for older children);
- Teach the child healthy ways to act when sad, glad, or mad;
- Begin to explore how other people may feel and how they show their feelings — “How do you think Bobby feels when you push him?”
- When you sense that the child is clearly happy, sad, or mad, ask them how they are feeling. Help them begin to put words and labels to these feelings.

## HAVE REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF THESE CHILDREN.

Abused and neglected children have so much to overcome. And, for some, they will not overcome all of their problems. For a Romanian orphan adopted at age five after spending her early years without any emotional nurturing, the expectations should be limited. She was robbed of some, but not all, of her potential.

We do not know how to predict potential in a vacuum, but we do know how to measure the emotional, behavioural, social, and physical strengths and weaknesses of a child. A comprehensive evaluation by skilled clinicians can be very helpful in beginning to define the skill areas of a child, as well as the areas where progress will be slower.

## BE PATIENT WITH THE CHILD’S PROGRESS AND WITH YOURSELF.

Progress will be slow. The slow progress can be frustrating, and many adults will feel inadequate because all of the love, time, and effort they spend with their child may not seem to be having any effect. But it does. Don’t be hard on yourself. Many loving, skilled, and competent parents and teachers have been swamped by the needs of a neglected and abused child.

*By Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.*



Children love nothing more than to charge around screaming, wrestling and play fighting. From an adult's perspective their behaviour may seem rough and aggressive, but to the young people themselves it is almost always harmless fun.

# ROUGH & TUMBLE

Here Jasmine Pasch, freelance movement practitioner and consultant, explores the reasons why children are driven to indulge in rough and tumble play.

## STEPS TO RESPECT

Research suggests that adults tend to confuse aggression and play fighting in children. In order to intervene effectively in bullying, and support play activities, adults need to be able to discriminate one from the other. Here are some guidelines taken from the Committee for Children website ([www.cfchildren.org](http://www.cfchildren.org)),

## STEPS TO RESPECT:

- Positive and neutral facial expressions are more typical of rough and tumble play, while negative facial expressions characterise aggression.
- Children are free to choose to participate in rough and tumble play, but they are often forced or challenged to participate in aggression.
- Children tend not to use full force in rough and tumble play whereas full force is seen in aggression.

- Children are more likely to alternate roles, for example chaser and chased, in rough and tumble play, whereas aggression generally involves unilateral roles.
- Children tend to stay together after a bout of play fighting, while they often separate following aggression.

So what might the benefits be? The experience seems to serve multiple developmental needs.

## 10 GOOD REASONS FOR INCLUDING ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG CHILDREN

1. On an immediate level it helps children to become physically strong, and develop motor skill and mastery, as well as providing aerobic exercise.
2. It teaches the rules of social behaviour, and where youngsters fit into the hierarchy.
3. It helps form social bonds and friendships.
4. It helps children to learn limits, what is right or wrong, and what is acceptable behaviour, for example if something is too rough, or too hard, and helps them learn to resolve conflict.
5. It helps prepare for the unexpected, and for flexible, adaptable thinking through continuous improvisation.

6. It helps children to regulate emotions and read social cues. They will reach an emotional edge, run to an adult in tears and soon be back for more!

7. Through taking risks children learn about success, which raises self-esteem and pride in achievement. Failure teaches how to do things differently next time.

8. At a sensory and motor level it brings together the tactile, vestibular and proprioceptive senses, together with whole body movement. These are the hidden senses of touch, balance, and the dynamics and mechanics of movement, pushing and pulling. This is a sensory feast, a 'neuro tonic' that may have anti-stress, health promoting effects according to Jaak Panksepp<sup>1</sup>.

9. It supports brain maturation in the frontal lobe. The work of Panksepp suggests that there is a connection between rough and tumble play and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Play regulates impulsivity and helps self control to develop, and so more of it, not less, is indicated to help such children. Could it be that they are driven to seek out what they need to develop fully? I can think of examples of such children who are regulars in my sessions.

10. It is a source of joy, fun and laughter. This supports brain growth, secure attachment and the development of empathy.

We perhaps need to have a closer look at rough and tumble play, and make opportunities for it at home and at school,



particularly with the longer school days as it might get missed out and some important developmental work not done.

## ROUGH AND TUMBLE PLAY MAY BE A UNIVERSAL HUMAN EXPERIENCE WHICH CHILDREN AND ADULTS SHARE.

Here are some words for it from other cultures around the world: Capering (*Scotland*), Gen baba shuai jido (*Mandarin Chinese*), Ramping (*Caribbean*), Los juegos bruscos (*Spanish*), Siyatatazela (*Zulu*), Hancurozni (*Hungarian*), Rollenbollen (*Flemish*), Rough housing, Play fighting and Romping (*UK*).

## KEEPING SAFE

Of course, we need to set some clear boundaries to keep children safe and not hurt anyone else. In my view, keeping youngsters safe is not about stopping them from enjoying rough and tumble play. It is just the opposite, given the benefits described above. We may need to step in and sort out conflict, be clear about the rules and behavioural issues, and encourage children to share in developing, applying and negotiating these rules.

Tim Gill suggests that play fighting helps children to understand the norms and conventions that shape much of social activity. He calls it 'an everyday morality': "It is crucial, though not always easy, to distinguish between - on the one hand - play fighting and other low-level skirmishes amongst children, or between children and adults and - on the other - more serious thoughtless or deliberate antisocial acts.

The former are, like minor accidents, formative childhood experiences; they do not presage a life of crime or antisocial behaviour. They help children to understand the norms and conventions that shape much of social activity.

This system of rules, which could be called an everyday morality, comes into play when deciding, amongst other things: whether or not to help someone we do not know; how to respond to a joke at our expense; when to stand up for ourselves and argue with someone we disagree with, and when it is better to back off; how to deal with the abuse of power; how far loyalty can justify actions that might harm those outside our circle; how to respond to, and where appropriate resist, peer pressure; whom we can trust and how far we can trust them.

*Mastering everyday codes of behaviour is no mean feat."*<sup>2</sup>.

1 J Panksepp (1998) *Rough and tumble play: the brain sources of joy, Affective Neuroscience, Human and animal emotions*, Oxford University Press: New York.

2 T Gill (2007) *No Fear: Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society*, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

*London Play News - Spring 2010 - towards a capital where all children can play - [www.londonplay.org.uk](http://www.londonplay.org.uk)*

## GETTING DIRTY = STAYING HEALTHY

If any more reasons were needed for persuading parents to get their children playing outdoors a further incentive is to be found in new research which reveals dirt is actually good for our health. Researchers from the School of Medicine at the University of California have found that being too clean could impair the skin's ability to heal. Findings from the study published in the online edition of *Nature Medicine* show that normal bacteria that live on the skin trigger a pathway that helps prevent inflammation when we get hurt. Margaret Morrissey from pressure group Parents Outloud, said: "Hopefully research like this will help parents realise that it's natural and healthy for children to get outdoors and get mucky and that it doesn't do their health any harm."

## THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVENTURE

New research by sticking plaster manufacturer Elastoplast reveals that while 85 per cent of parents think adventure is an important part of their children's lives, many do not allow their children to enjoy new experiences. The research also reveals just under half of the parents surveyed say their children would not be very capable of finding their way home if lost and 69 per cent think their children lack the skills to perform very basic first aid for cuts and burns.

Check out their website it has some great activities ideas especially around educating children on first aid.

<http://www.elastoplast.co.uk/activities/kid-escapades.html>

TREE CLIMBING: CHECK OUT THIS COOL WEBSITE ON TREE CLIMBING: [HTTP://WWW.MONKEY-DO.NET](http://WWW.MONKEY-DO.NET)

# CHILDREN'S PLACES OF SECRECY AND PLAY: A PLAYWORKER'S GUIDE TO DENS AND FORTS

Den-building requires very little in the way of materials. A blanket and a tree, or some cardboard boxes will make a wonderful start. Far more important is space and time.

## WHY IS CONSTRUCTIVE PLAY SO IMPORTANT?

Dens and forts provide opportunities for a range of play and social functions. The names I have chosen here are a bit misleading, because children can construct teepees, homes, shops, police stations, outlaw hide-outs - the list is endless. Some people talk about 'play buildings' to get this diversity across, but I tend to use the terms 'dens' and 'forts' because I think they are a particularly important form of play building, both very common and highly endangered. If you can support children's construction of fort-like spaces on site then you'll see lots of other play buildings growing and collapsing all over the site, like mushrooms in the night.

Dens and forts speak to a deeply-held human need for privacy and security. We can see the roots of those words shared in 'fortress' and in 'hidden', and may well remember some of our own impromptu childhood spaces. A table and long tablecloth, a stack of leafy branches leaning against a tree, cardboard boxes with holes cut in, even small spaces that children can crawl into like those found under hedges and behind furniture.

Some of these places are ready-made and taken advantage of, some are purpose-built by and through play activities. These are places of secrecy in childhood, places to sit and observe the world or places to escape it entirely.

Children use dens and forts to be alone, and to be alone with one another. This means alone without you the adult part of this play. People of all ages need privacy for a range of reasons, both immediate and developmental. Privacy provides children with opportunities to:

- Contemplate and imagine
- Discover their sense of autonomy
- Rest and rejuvenate
- Confide in one another
- Experience anonymity
- Experiment with language, behaviours and objects that are 'disapproved' of elsewhere or forbidden.

## PLAY AND THE EMERGING SELF

"Privacy contributes to the kind of inner growth that is associated with independence, personal power, and positive autonomy." (*Children's Secrets: Intimacy, Privacy and the Self Reconsidered. Max van Manen and Bas Levering. New York: Teachers College Press, 1996. 181 pp.*)

Opportunities for solitude in childhood are vital for the development of self-esteem, the chance to pause and reflect on an often busy and stress-filled life, and to discover and maintain the boundaries of self that are key to current and future social interactions.

Carl Jung, the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, considered the child's private space a 'fortress of the self' - essential to the child's learning to listen to the quiet internal voice, and development of a full interior world.

Children need to gather the skills of solitude, so that being alone for them is not being lonely. They need the chance to learn self-reliance, and to develop a secure understanding of who they are, and who they might yet be.

## EVERY CHILD HAS SPECIAL NEEDS, AND SPECIAL ABILITIES.

Many playgrounds create opportunities for gross motor skills, with large fixed climbing equipment, swings and room for a kick-about.

Are other needs as well provided for? What chances do children have on site for places to be quiet, to watch the clouds and imagine? To observe small insects, build miniature worlds of fascination and create lengthy and evolving play narratives?

When we provide a play environment that holds the potential for a range of play we enable children to discover their particular abilities and interests, and to share them with others. That's when we know that our play spaces offer all children what they need the most opportunities for free, rich and varied play.

## PRIVACY AND PUBLICITY

Play spaces can be highly secret or very public. They can be one person's space or a 'clubhouse'-style location where groups meet. They can be modest or notorious among the children on site. One thing is rare - for their location, nature and use to

be well-understood by adults on site. How these places are understood by the children who use them, as well as the children who know about them but do not go there, is difficult for adults to discover.

When conducting research on dens I found that most children, even those who had happily led me around the whole site, explaining how everything worked, would not take me to certain den locations.

They would say "I don't go there" or "It's a place, but it's not my place" or simply "I don't know where you mean." But judging by the number of crisp packets I had found in these specific locations, and the daily changes I had noted there it was clear that many children did go to, and use, these sites. It seemed that one of the most important aspects of these dens and forts was their separateness from the rest of the site, and from adults.

## WHAT ARE DENS FOR?

A child might, with materials or imagination, build a representation of a familiar location such as a shop so that they can practice symbolic play. They might create a place that echoes another place but offers a different relationship, such as a house in which they are the adults. They might create a place unlike any they have ever visited, such as a jungle tree house, a pirate's tropical hideout, or a space station.

Researchers such as David Sobel have often discussed children's play buildings

as either creating order out of chaos or, arguably, chaos out of order. A distinction is often made between a den that is like a 'little house', where the child enjoys games of cleaning, tidying and ordering of small treasures, and a 'wild' den, or bush house, where play will often reference the hunting or evasion of wild animals. Preparation and consumption of food (real or symbolic) is often found in both.

## WHEN IS A FORT NOT A FORT?

Sometimes a fort is not a fort. Sometimes it is a tree stump, or a spot painted onto a pole, or simply a rise in the turf. Sometimes a fort is invisible, known by its social, rather than material construction.

## HOW CAN WE FACILITATE THIS PROCESS?

Even though adults have a limited role in the construction and use of these places, they have a very important part to play in providing the ways and means for children to enjoy building. A thoughtful walk around the site, bearing in mind the size difference between you and the children, is an excellent place to start. When you've identified some half-hidden places, you can then start assembling some materials. Ideally access to woodlands is enough, providing all the sticks for construction and branches for camouflage that children might require. When these are provided, children will often become dismissive of the 'man-made' elements such as tarpaulin, that other sites rely upon.

For playgrounds with a limited number of

trees, however, there are other options. For most playgrounds, common den-building objects include:

- Big pieces of fabric, such as bed sheets
- Tall sticks and wooden poles
- Sheets of cardboard
- Leafy branches
- Rolls of tape
- Lengths of string
- Safety scissors.
- Hammers and nails.

Generally speaking, it is enough to provide opportunities for den-building, but if there is currently no culture of building onsite you may want to consider "seeding" play construction by setting out some elements of dens - such as pieces of fabric tied between trees - and leaving other materials out nearby. Children new to den building are likely to investigate these changes and adapt them.

One common practice that can severely limit play construction is the habit of 'tidying up' play spaces at the end of the day. This means that children cannot enjoy play construction on a long-term basis, cannot slowly adapt or decorate their places, cannot establish complex narratives between their locations and others on site.

By dismantling play buildings at the end of the day, playworkers are invalidating children's material changes to the site and effectively saying that they have no permanent place and no value. Adults 'tidying up' the space indicates their preference for 'neatness' - not the children's. This practice 'resets' the site every day so that play construction needs to begin anew every time, with the knowledge that its survival is not determined by the child.

When materials are left out, children regain control of them. Children learn that their buildings can stand, that their locations are of importance and that their destruction or abandonment is also part of the play cycle.

## WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR BEST PRACTICE? HOW DO WE ENSURE WE ARE NOT NEGLIGENT?

As with risk, children may be clumsy at first when it comes to managing privacy. Additionally, many parents and workers may have concerns around issues of violence and sexuality that may come up when discussing provision for den-building.





As a playworker, this is for you to address.

It is possible to offer ‘spots’ of privacy, or places of semi-privacy on site. Places that are hidden from view can still be monitored audibly, and playworkers who don’t wish to invade private places of play can still walk the site, making lots of noise.

The point is not to ‘catch children out’ but to remind them that you are there as a refuge and a resource, should their games get out of hand.

Ultimately, children need to learn how to negotiate difficult situations. The vast majority of these situations will happen outside of adult view, but at least on a playground there are sympathetic and trained playworkers whose help can be sought, should the child wish.

#### THINGS TO CONSIDER

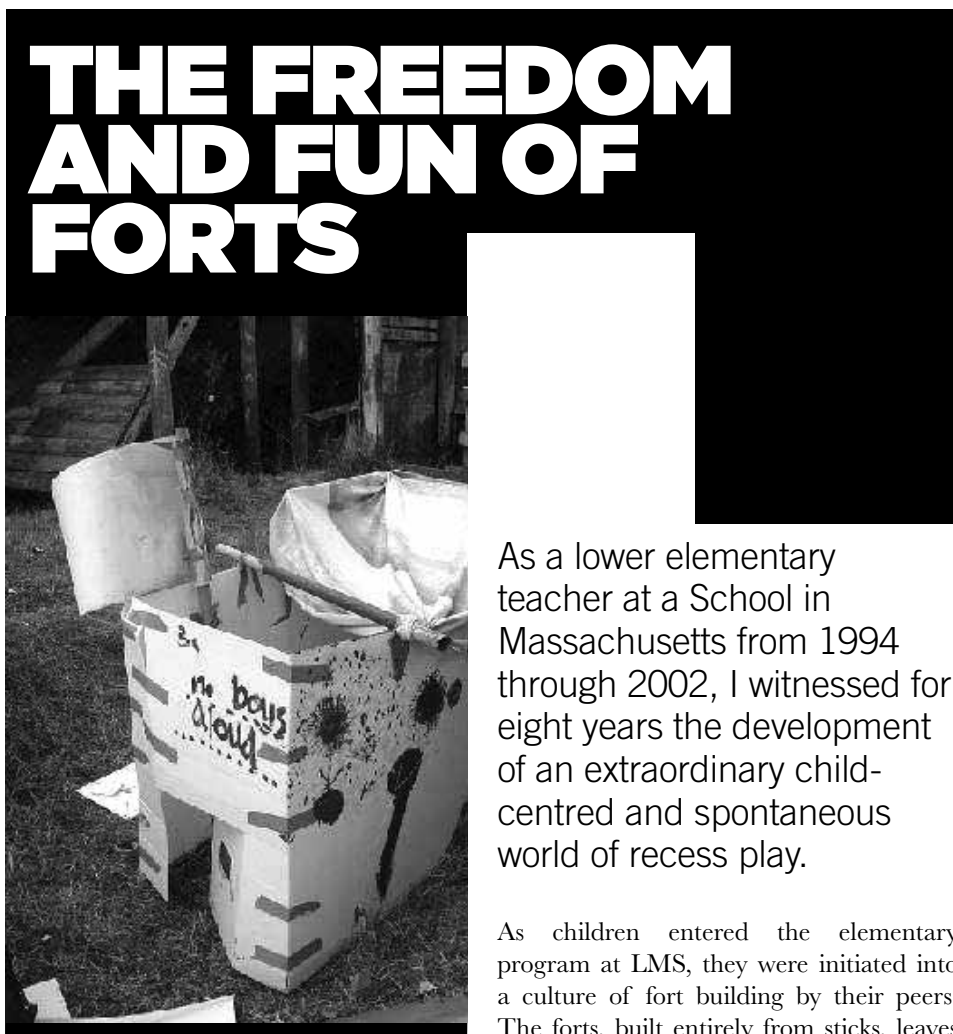
Do you currently offer:

- Sub-spaces suitable for den-building
- Materials with which environments can be adapted and built
- Materials and spaces in combinations accessible for all children, including those who are particularly young, particularly adept or with issues of physical mobility?
- Support regarding material concerns, e.g. help in construction if approached
- A spontaneous and flexible site where materials can be left out to allow buildings to survive the whole of the play cycle
- A non- or low-intervention playwork style, waiting to be asked to join, rather than interrupting?
- A clear and collective agreement between all playworkers on den-building and possible issues that may arise.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Whatever the structure, layout and population of your site there is potential there for den-building. An inventive approach to collection of loose-parts and a recognition of the importance of play construction is all you need to start.

When children of all ages and abilities have access to play building opportunities you will see the development of new kinds of play on site, the enrichment of children’s culture that can be passed from child-to-child. Individuals will benefit from the varied play opportunities provided by autonomous sub-spaces, the quiet and the



As a lower elementary teacher at a School in Massachusetts from 1994 through 2002, I witnessed for eight years the development of an extraordinary child-centred and spontaneous world of recess play.

As children entered the elementary program at LMS, they were initiated into a culture of fort building by their peers. The forts, built entirely from sticks, leaves and found objects from the surrounding woods, were the site of considerable experimentation with different forms and rules of social organization and various styles of construction.

They were also the vehicle for much of the conflict which occurred at the school. Children negotiated and clashed over ownership of land and resources, and argued about the rules and roles of fort play and about whether the rights of those already identified with a structure outweighed the rights of outsiders to be included. In doing so, they developed and influenced each other’s reasoning about such moral principles as benevolence, justice and reciprocity.

Fort play was unpredictable, immediate, exciting and fun, a brief window of opportunity among hours of mostly adult-inspired activities and expectations in which these children were free to manage their own lives and interact with each other on their own terms.

The building of forts at LMS was made possible by its location adjoining a three-acre, undulating woodland property. But for many adults it was the open field created by the school was seen as the optimal play area for children at recess because it offered the opportunity for cooperative and competitive sports and games, and for easy supervision of large numbers of children.

From the moment the field was available to the children, however, many of them were drawn away from its large open spaces and the organized games and into the woods still surrounding it on all sides. By all accounts, fort play began almost immediately with sticks piled up from the clearing process—despite the best intentions of those who had sought to plan the children’s free play activities.

The forts were constructed either as open spaces with boundaries marked out with stones or sticks or as enclosed structures that were generally limited by the lack of binding materials to “teepee,” lean-to,” and “pile fort” designs. The open forts tended to be used more intensively after construction as a focus for social gatherings or for the practice of domestic skills like sweeping or making “food”.

For enclosed huts - usually, though not always, constructed by boys - the act of building itself was often the important thing. Once these structures were complete, there was often little room and few sticks for further expansion, which meant that the only way to keep the excitement of construction alive was to demolish and rebuild either in the same place or in a new location.

#### FROWNING AND FIGHTING: THE LAWS OF FORT PLAY

Fort play was tolerated by LMS teachers for the most part with a mixture of fascination, confusion and frustration. Fort conflicts and issues requiring mediation and arbitration by teachers seemed to fill staff meetings and dominate classroom discussions. One teacher recalled a period in the mid-1990s “where recess was one long stream of crying children saying ‘Someone stole my stick!’” At one point the faculty came very close to banning forts altogether, but most understood how important fort culture was to the children who engaged in it, and so were prepared to allow it even while secretly

wishing it would disappear.

Despite the ambivalence of many teachers, the students I interviewed were clear about the benefits of fort play. Fort play was unpredictable, immediate, exciting and fun. Many continued this form of play through sixth grade as their main recess activity, citing multiple reasons for their interest.

In the early years of fort culture at LMS, rules were not explicitly discussed among students, and many former students believed that there were no commonly accepted rules of fort play—aside from the general school rules that teachers imposed. Those in leadership positions sometimes saw a benefit in the lack of common rules of fort play and the lack of direct teacher involvement. Many leaders hinted at the importance of not getting caught stealing sticks and of limiting conflict so that teachers would not be called to arbitrate.

However, when asked to describe the worst thing about playing in forts, most children complained about the seemingly lawless social dynamics of fort play. Arguments within and between forts over property or rank, stick stealing, exclusion, being “fired” or “bossed around” by leaders who expected younger or newer fort members to spend recess gathering sticks or sweeping out the fort, and fort “wars”—these were all cited by both girls and boys as the most unpleasant aspects of fort play.

As the competitive nature of many forts escalated already existing tensions both on and off the recess field, parents and teachers were becoming increasingly concerned and frustrated. By 1994 the new interim Head of School had begun facilitating weekly lunchtime community meetings for any interested students on issues of their choosing. These voluntary meetings soon came to be dominated by fort disputes, and rules decided at community meetings were supposed to be binding on all elementary students. However these meetings were generally avoided by those fort leaders whose competitive interests were often driving the conflicts. Several scoffed at what they perhaps saw as attempts by less powerful children to use these teacher-sanctioned meetings to challenge their authority.

In December 1995, after many long,

voluntary community meetings, The Ultimate, Absolute Fort Rules were agreed upon by those children who attended, and then presented to the rest of the community. These rules governed ownership and boundary rights, stick trading rights, and under what circumstances members could be “fired.” Conditions and exceptions, however, left plenty of room for manoeuvre by distorting and misrepresenting the intentions of others. Although negotiated by students themselves with facilitation and sanction by the Head of School, all former students surveyed unanimously reported feeling that these rules were subtle impositions by teachers that did not help their situation.

Although it held the promise of making life easier on the recess field, the formal regulation of fort play was actively or passively resisted by most children because it reduced the individual control they exercised over their play.

Perhaps the most lasting effect of these community-wide discussions, however, was an emerging awareness among students that there were different points of view to be heard and that the rules of fort play were not natural law but were in fact open for negotiation. By the fall of 2000, fort membership was becoming increasingly fluid, with larger numbers of children involved in more than one fort simultaneously. The structure of forts also showed greater diversity in many respects, including race, class, gender and inter-classroom membership. Trade in found natural objects had also become more important, with a currency emerging among various groups.

One group had even started offering their fort “condo” for rent! Open clashes between forts settled down as children realized that, no matter how things may have been portrayed at first by the older fort leaders, nothing was written in stone.

*Describes the incredible fort play phenomenon he observed while working at Lexington Montessori School in Massachusetts. Edited extracts from Mark Powell’s thesis “The Hidden Curriculum of Recess”.*

*Available on the OSCAR Network website: [www.oscarnetwork.org.nz](http://www.oscarnetwork.org.nz) [http://berkeley.playborhood.com/site/article/recess\\_the\\_final\\_frontier/](http://berkeley.playborhood.com/site/article/recess_the_final_frontier/)*

## AFFILIATION: THE THIRD CORE STRENGTH

### *Being part of a group*

**WHAT IT IS:** The capacity to join others and contribute to a group. This strength springs from our ability to form attachments. Affiliation is the glue that healthy human functioning; it allows us to form and maintain relationships with others to create something stronger, more adaptive, and more creative than the individual.

**WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:** Human beings are social creatures. We are biologically designed to live, play, grow, and work in groups. A family is a child's first and most important group, glued together by the strong emotional bonds of attachment. In other groups, such as those in school, children will have thousands of brief emotional, social, and cognitive experiences that can help shape their development. It is in these groups that children make their first friendships. Affiliation helps children feel included, connected and valued.

**SIGNS OF STRUGGLE:** A child who is afraid or otherwise unable to affiliate may suffer a self-fulfilling prophecy: she is likelier to be excluded and may feel socially isolated.

Healthy development of the core strengths of attachment and self-regulation make affiliation much easier. But a distant, disengaged, or impulsive child—one who is also weak in these other core strengths—won't be easily welcomed in a group. And in fact, if he is part of a group, he may act in ways that lead others to tease or actively avoid him.

The excluded, marginalized child can take this pain and turn it on herself, becoming sad or self-loathing. Or she can direct the pain outward, becoming aggressive and even violent. Later in life, without intervention, these children are more likely to seek out other marginalized children and affiliate with

them. Unfortunately, the glue that holds these groups together can be beliefs and values that are self-destructive or hateful to those who have excluded them.

#### RED FLAGS

A child who is afraid or unable to affiliate well may:

- be likelier to be excluded and may feel socially isolated
- often have a problem with self-regulation or attachment
- appear distant or disengaged and won't be easily welcomed into a group
- in a group, act in ways that lead others to tease or avoid him
- turn the pain of feeling marginalized on herself, becoming sad or self-loathing
- seek out other marginalized children and unite around negative attitudes towards the other groups.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

- Find quiet time to spend alone with this child, to get to know better his/her interests
- Actively facilitate this child's participation in programmes groups
- Enlist this child's help in an area of interest (for instance, have him read to a younger child, or show an other child how to do something he is good at).
- Establish clear guidelines with your programme that emphasize and reward acts of kindness and inclusion, and provide consequences for unkindness.
- Rearrange seating occasionally so that children can get to know and work with others.

*Adapted from Six Core Strengths for Healthy Child Development.*

*Overview: Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.*

*Full version available on Oscar Networks website:  
www.oscarnetwork.org.nz*

Social Media sites such as Facebook have been in the news a lot lately with revelations of privacy breaches and the tragic death of a teenage girl, murdered by someone she communicated with on Facebook.

Social media applications such as Facebook, Twitter, You Tube and Flickr are a great way to keep up with your friend's lives and have social interaction opportunities. Many people who work from home or stay home or look after children find it keeps them sane and allows them to feel connected to their friends even if they can't be together. People separated by distance can also feel a close connection.

Using Social media sites has now become mainstream and most children and young people use at least some of them. As they become part of our everyday life, it's easy to forget about the possible problems, until a shocking story reveals how things can go horribly wrong.

There is nothing inherently wrong with social media – it's just a new way to communicate with others like mobile phones, emails and good old fashioned letters.

Just as young people in the past may have had pen pals who they had never met in person, young people today have friends on Facebook who are strangers. It's a great way to meet like-minded people, with similar interests to you, who you would never have had the opportunity to meet in normal life. The problem lies in how easy it is to gather together large amounts of information about a person, how simple it is to pretend to be someone you're not and how quickly you can reach thousands of people around the world.

#### ANONYMITY AND ACCESS

The main worry for parents and carers is that their children will meet predators online pretending to be other children or teenagers.

# “TECH TALK”

It is very easy to set up a Facebook account, blog, Twitter feed or website pretending to be someone you are not. Children don't have the same judgment as adults and may not notice some clues that they are speaking to an adult and not a child, particularly if the adult claims to be a couple of years older and therefore more sophisticated. A predator cannot do much harm online, beyond sending explicit images (of requesting the child to do so), but many teenage girls have been lured into meetings by predators.

#### DATA MINING

By gathering bits and pieces of information you have made available on various sites, someone can build up a pretty detailed picture of your life and activities. Particularly if your Facebook account is left open. Teenagers are particularly at risk of causing themselves problems with privacy. At the moment, most of this information is simply used to generate targeted advertising. For example, if you say you like “cats” on Facebook, you might suddenly see a lot of advertisements about cat products on the side of your page. This may seem harmless, but there are already other uses for your private information. For example, employers now regularly use social media sites to scour for information about people they are interviewing for a position. Employers have reported that seeing a photo of someone acting drunk at a party is enough to prevent them from offering them the job.

There have also been several reports in the media of young people losing their jobs because of inappropriate comments posted on social media sites (some of them weren't even publically available, but the employer was their FB friend!)

#### CYBER-BULLING

Cyber-bullying is an area of growing problem for young people. While children have always bullied each other at school, at least they could get some peace at home. Now that we are all accessible at all hours of the day, children can be harassed through text messages, facebook posts and on anonymous blogs set up by their peers.

For children and young people, social media is a reflection of real life. You can't just say to them – “well stop using Facebook then” as if it is social death to be offline. You might as well say – stop talking to all your friends.

#### SOME TIPS FOR OSCAR STAFF

It is important to know how to control the privacy settings on your account. That way you can decide who can see what.

If you have child-inappropriate material, don't become facebook friends with children in your care or even your work colleagues

If you really want to be friends with your OSCAR children, you may need to consider editing your account or setting the privacy options much higher. Or have a separate account that you use to communicate with children. Remember, you may be able to control what you say and do on facebook but you can't stop other people posting pictures of you or writing things on your wall - and they may not always be appropriate for children.

Never post anything on a public website that you would be embarrassed for your employer or mother to see.

Never agree to go alone to meet anyone you

have only previously met through Facebook.

#### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

**App** – program (application) you can install on a computer or iPhone.

**Blog** – short for weblog, an online diary that is regularly updated by the author with contents arranged in date order.

**Feed/RSS feed** - allows you to subscribe to website and get a message when some new content has been added.

**Linkedln** – Often called Facebook for grown-ups, it's more of a business networking site where you can post your resume and link up with others in your field.

**LOL** – laugh out loud – used when something is slightly amusing or said as a joke.

**Lurker** – someone who reads the content of a social media site but doesn't contribute, 90% of users of any service are lurkers.

**Podcast** - a downloadable radio program or video for playback on an iPod or iPhone.

**Post** – an entry on a blog or social media site. Can be text, a picture or a link to a site or You Tube clip. Others can then respond by posting comments which form a “Thread”, (see below)

**ROFL** – stands for “rolling on the floor laughing” – more funny than LOL

**Tweet** - a single entry on Twitter (see below)

**Twitter** - a micro-blog website allowing users to post 140 character updates letting others know what they are doing at that moment.

**Tagstaggering** – descriptive words that explain the content of a particular post. Allows readers to click on a topic and see all the posts with that tag.

**Threads** – responses to a post

**User generated content** - Most social media sites are made up of posts and comments from the users - there is no actual “author” of the site. This means that the content is generated by the users themselves.

**Webinar** - an online seminar which can include Powerpoint slides and audio. Usually presented in real-time over the internet and speaker phone

If children are using a word or acronym you don't know – try finding it on: [www.urbandictionary.com](http://www.urbandictionary.com) (Beware – some of them are quite rude!)

*Challenges of Social Media*

*By Margaret Redestowicz*

*Australian Network News – June 2010*



## WHAT IS NATURE DEFICIT DISORDER?

A lack of routine contact with nature may result in stunted academic and developmental growth. This unwanted side-effect of the electronic age is called Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD).

The term was coined by author Richard Louv in his book *Last Child in the Woods* in order to explain how our societal disconnect with nature is affecting today's children.

Louv says we have entered a new era of suburban sprawl that restricts outdoor play, in conjunction with a plugged-in culture that draws kids indoors. But, as Louv presents in his book, the agrarian, nature-oriented existence hard-wired into human brains isn't quite ready for the overstimulating environment we've carved out for ourselves. Some children adapt. Those who don't develop the symptoms of NDD, which include attention problems, obesity, anxiety, and depression.

Nature-deficit disorder is not a medical condition; it is a description of the human costs of alienation from nature. This alienation damages children and shapes adults, families, and communities. There are solutions, though, and they're right in our own backyards.

Source: Johanna Sorrentino "Nature Deficit Disorder: What You Need to Know"; Richard Louv "Nature Deficit Disorder"

## EVEN FAKE LAUGHTER IS GOOD MEDICINE



Psychologists say a minute of forced laughter can help the blues, writes Richard Morin in Washington.

The news is grim these days, so we all could use a good laugh, even a fake one, says a psychologist who claims that a minute of forced laughter can chase away the blues. "Forced laughter is a powerful, readily available and cost-free way for many adults to regularly boost their mood and psychological wellbeing," said Charles Schaefer, psychology professor at Fairleigh Dickinson University in Teaneck, New Jersey.

Professor Schaefer also found that self-imposed smiling is a mood enhancer. But howling like a wolf for a minute didn't do anything - except make a racket, Professor Schaefer and his research colleagues reported in two separate studies in Psychological Reports.

His findings come from two experiments he conducted on 39 college students and Teaneck residents. While additional studies with larger samples are needed to bolster his conclusions, Professor Schaefer said, these initial results are important enough to warrant attention.

Professor Schaefer said he uncovered the salubrious effect of artificial laughter in a study of 17 Fairleigh Dickinson students. He first asked them questions that measured their mood. Then he directed them to laugh heartily for a minute, and tested them

again. On average, test subjects reported feeling significantly better after 60 seconds of fake merriment.

Why would phony laughter work? Because your body doesn't know it's fake, even though your brain might, Professor Schaefer said. "Once the brain signals the body to laugh, the body doesn't care why. It's going to release endorphins, it's going to relieve stress as a natural physiological response to the physical act of laughing."

Intrigued, Professor Schaefer designed a second study to compare the effects of forced laughter with continuous smiling or howling. He directed 22 study participants to smile broadly for 60 seconds, laugh heartily for 60 seconds and howl for 60 seconds. Laughing and smiling both helped boost their spirits, but howling didn't, he found. Forced laughter was the best medicine. "One minute of forced laughing showed a significantly greater improvement than one minute of smiling," Professor Schaefer said.

How did test subjects know exactly what to do? "My research assistant and I would demonstrate," Professor Schaefer said. "We stood before them and laughed hysterically and then howled. I instructed them to imagine a wolf howling at the moon. When they saw a senior professor howling, it took away some of their natural self-consciousness."

April 1 2003 - Washington Post

## ACCOUNTING FOR ALLOWANCES AND BENEFITS FOR STAFF: SPECIAL BENEFITS

## TAXING PAYMENTS TO VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers may be either:

- reimbursed for any expenses they have from their voluntary activities, or
- receive an honorarium for their services.

### DEFINITION OF VOLUNTEER

For these payments, a volunteer is defined as a person who freely undertakes an activity in New Zealand:

- that is chosen either by themselves or by a group they are a member of, and
- that provides a benefit to a community or another person, and
- there is no purpose or intention of private financial profit for the person.

### REIMBURSING EXPENSES

Volunteers often incur expenditure associated with their voluntary activities. This could be from the activity itself or their travel to or from the activity. Reimbursement payments are treated as tax-exempt income for the individual if they are based on:

- actual expenditure, or
- a reasonable estimate of the likely cost, where an organisation:
- reimburses for the expense before the activity, or
- when the actual expenditure can't be

determined and the reimbursement is based on a reasonable estimate of the likely cost.

### HONORARIA

Honoraria are payments made for services provided where no fixed payment would normally be made. They are treated as schedular payments for tax purposes.

### TAXING HONORARIA

If you are paying honoraria to:

- an employee, use the PAYE calculator to work out the amount of tax.
- someone who is not an employee, the payment is taxed at a flat rate. Find out more about taxing activities called schedular payments on the Inland Revenue website.

### PART-REIMBURSEMENT AND PART-HONORARIA PAYMENTS

If the payment is partly honoraria and partly reimbursement of expenses, providing the portions of the payment can be clearly identified and recorded, the honoraria will be taxable and the reimbursement will be tax-exempt income. If there is no distinction between the honoraria and the reimbursement the entire payment is treated as honoraria and taxed as a schedular payment.



The OSCAR Foundation office is now located in the Papanui Youth Development Trust building, 1A Harewood Road.

T: 0800 466 7227

Amanda Murray: 03 374 9075 ext 750  
021 636 838  
amanda@oscar.org.nz

Ariana: 03 374 9075 ext 751  
021 607 427  
ariana@oscar.org.nz

We provide advice and support to Establishing and Existing Programme Providers in the Canterbury/West Coast/Buller Region.

We are available to provide one on one advice and support around development and information on the Development and Assistance Grants through the Ministry of Social Development (MSD). We are here to help with Child Youth and Family Approvals and Re-approvals. Once you are MSD Funded we will also come out and visit your programme.

The OSCAR Foundation website is [www.oscar.org.nz](http://www.oscar.org.nz) where valuable information can be found regarding Funding, the term Newsletters, and general information for Providers.

We are available for any in house or team training, Regional Training and Professional Development. We also run Networking Meetings through out the region. Our next Training/Networking Meeting will be held at the Papanui Youth Development Trust main lounge on 18 November 10.30am to 12.30pm, morning tea will be provided. This will include an interactive Craft Workshop.

Please email [amanda@oscar.org.nz](mailto:amanda@oscar.org.nz) if you would like to attend.

Junior Golf Coaching at Waitikiri



**Held on Sundays throughout September 2010**

9am – 10am	12 – 18 year olds, Intermediate level
10am – 11am	5 – 13 year olds, Junior girls coaching
12pm – 1pm	5 – 13 year olds, Beginner golfers

**Priced from only \$5.00 per child per session**

Contact Nigel Davis NZPGA on Phone 03 3830 729  
[nigel@nzgolfworld.com](mailto:nigel@nzgolfworld.com) or [www.nzgolfworld.com](http://www.nzgolfworld.com)

## TE REO RESOURCE

<http://kupu.maori.nz>

Log on to this website and have a word or phrase a day sent through to your programme - keep te reo alive.

Āpōpō, ka haere au ki te kura.  
Tomorrow, I will go to school.

[kaitiaki@kupu.maori.nz](mailto:kaitiaki@kupu.maori.nz)



# OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENT CALENDAR TERM 4 2010

EVENT	BRIEF RUN-DOWN	DATE	TIME & PLACE	COST (GST INCLUSIVE)
Core Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Behaviour 3</li> <li>• Staff Induction &amp; Appraisal</li> </ul>	Tuesday 19th October	10am - 12.30pm Knox Centre, 28 Bealey Ave	\$30 members \$75 non-members
Evening Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Programme Planning</li> <li>• Management Forum (free)</li> </ul> <p>Topic: Team Building with Steve Kennedy</p>	Thursday 28th October	7pm - 9pm Knox Centre, 28 Bealey Ave	\$30 members \$75 non-members
West Coast Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New to OSCAR</li> <li>• Older Children</li> <li>• PLAY – hands-on session</li> </ul>	Weekend 5th – 7th November	TO BE CONFIRMED Karoro Learning Centre 180 Tainui St, Greymouth	\$30 members \$75 non-members
Code of Ethics	Suitable for all staff and Management	Tuesday 9th November	10am - 12.30pm OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli Street Addington	Free
Establishment Evening	Suitable to all new or potential OSCAR providers	Tuesday 9th November	7pm - 9pm OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli Street Addington	Free
Training Day	Suitable for all staff and Management – Brochure out nearer the time.	Saturday 20th November	9am - 3pm Knox Centre, 28 Bealey Ave	\$50 members \$150 non-members
Open Polytechnic Certificate in OSCAR	This is suitable for all staff – you do not have to be enrolled for the certificate	Tuesday 23rd November	9.30am - 10.15am Intro to course 10.15am - 12.30pm <b>Modules 5:</b> <b>Working in a safe environment</b> OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli Street Addington	Free tutoring support and overview of these modules
Combined - City, Selwyn & Nth Canterbury Cluster	Suitable for all staff and Management	Wednesday 1st December	10am - 12 noon OR 7pm - 9pm Knox Centre, 28 Bealey Ave	Free