

**VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACT CHILDREN'S WORKER SAFETY COULD YOU DARE NOT TO DISCIPLINE? THE POWER OF TALKING SIDWAYS TO CHILDREN PHEW! IT'S NORMAL. AN AGE BY AGE GUIDE FOR WHAT TO EXPECT FROM KIDS & TEENS RISK-TAKING TEENS' BRAINS SEEM TO DISREGARD PAST BAD OUTCOMES HOW ASSUMING INTENTIONS CAN CHANGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN**





Helping children put their feelings into words (affect labelling) can help them better navigate strong, negative emotional experiences. We tend to “keep it simple” when talking about feelings with young children and may often stick to the basics, such as mad, glad and sad. That is all well and good. Once our children have mastered that, we can move on to a bigger variety of emotionally descriptive words. We can increase our child’s understanding of a bigger expanse of feelings by broadening the terms we use.

Stumped about what feeling words to use beyond the three aforementioned? Try some of these on for size...

**Brave Cheerful Worried Joyful**  
**Frightened Calm Excited Confused**  
**Frustrated Curious Friendly Shy**  
**Ignored Lonely Interested Proud**  
**Embarrassed Jealous Angry Bored**  
**Surprised Silly Uncomfortable**  
**Stubborn Safe Relieved Peaceful**  
**Overwhelmed Loving Cranky**

#### Why it Matters:

We’ve long thought that naming our feelings could help us manage negative emotional states, but we weren’t quite sure how exactly this worked. Brain imaging in the past demonstrated a possible neural pathway for this process, but a definitive conclusion could not be made. By using a functional magnetic resonance imaging study, scientists were able to look a bit deeper. They found that affect labelling (naming emotions) reduced the

## Why Labeling Feelings is So Important!



**Beyond Mad, Sad & Glad**

*kidlutions.com*

response of the amygdala and other limbic regions {the emotional seat of the brain, if you will} to negative emotional images.

#### Here’s what the science says:

“... affect labelling produced increased activity in a single brain region, (the) right ventrolateral prefrontal cortex (RVLPFC). Finally, RVLPFC and amygdala activity during affect labelling were inversely

correlated, a relationship that was mediated by activity in medial prefrontal cortex (MPFC). These results suggest that affect labelling may diminish emotional reactivity along a pathway from RVLPFC to MPFC to the amygdala.” (Lieberman et al., 2007, p. 241).

#### Here’s What it Means to Us: The Brain’s Braking System

The activity that takes place in the RVLPFC when one labels an emotion acts as a “braking” system for the brain. It slows down the reaction of the limbic system (emotional seat) of the brain. We can literally help children start “putting on the brakes” to emotional reactions by helping them learn to label feelings. Identifying feelings one of the first parts of social-emotional literacy.

#### What’s Next?

Emotional labelling is just the first step. Once the feeling is identified, we need to help children acquire coping skills to manage the feeling.

*Lieberman, M. D., Eisenberger, N. I., Crockett, M. J., Tom, S. M., Pfeifer, J. H., & Way, B. M. (2007). Putting Feelings Into Words: Affect Labeling Disrupts Amygdala Activity in Response to Affective Stimuli. Psychological Science, 18(5), 421-428. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2007.01916.x*

<http://childlutions.blogspot.co.nz/2016/12/why-labeling-feelings-is-so-important.html>

## THE OSCAR NETWORK

We are an 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 their 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 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 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’.

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# TEACHING CHILDREN HOW TO MAKE AN APOLOGY

## TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes to read about how to make an effective apology. The amount of time the apology takes depends on the nature of the offense and the reparations you plan to make. Try to follow these guidelines anytime you feel you've done something that has harmed others.

## HOW TO DO IT

### 1. ACKNOWLEDGE THE OFFENSE.

Acknowledging the offense is an essential element of a good apology, but many apologies don't do this adequately. Apologies are most likely to be well-received if you show that you recognize who was responsible, who was harmed, and the nature of the offense. For example, saying "I made a mistake" is more effective than saying "Mistakes were made," which fails to allocate responsibility. Similarly, acknowledging that harm occurred is better than making vague statements that minimize the legitimacy of the offended person's grievances (e.g., "I'm sorry you feel hurt") or fail to acknowledge the specific offense (e.g., "I'm sorry for whatever I said yesterday" rather than "I'm sorry for making that insensitive joke").

### 2. PROVIDE AN EXPLANATION.

In some cases, it's helpful to explain an offense, especially to convey that it was not intentional and that it will not happen again. But explanations that sound like excuses or blame the victim (e.g., "You were

really getting on my nerves") tend to be counterproductive. It's better to say, "There's no excuse for my behaviour" than to offer a shallow defence.

### 3. EXPRESS REMORSE.

When you hurt someone, it's natural to feel shame, humiliation, or remorse. Expressing these feelings communicates that you recognize and regret the suffering you caused. Be careful of phrases like "That was uncharacteristic of me," which might convey that you aren't taking full ownership for what happened. Instead, acknowledge your disappointment in yourself and your commitment to improve.

### 4. MAKE AMENDS.

A good apology should include efforts to repair the damage done. Reparation for tangible offenses such as loss of property might involve compensation or replacement, whereas reparation for less tangible offenses such as a violation of trust might involve taking steps to improve your behaviour, such as attending marriage counselling. When considering how to best make amends, be sure to ask the offended person what would mean the most to them, rather than simply doing something to relieve your own feelings of guilt. Self-punishment, for example, might alleviate guilt without actually benefitting the victim.

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# Vulnerable Children Act – Checking New & Existing Employees

WHAT MUST BE DONE	IF YOU ARE EMPLOYING A NEW STAFF MEMBER	IF YOU ARE SAFETY CHECKING AN EXISTING STAFF MEMBER
<b>CONFIRM THEIR IDENTITY</b>	<p>The following will need to be checked as part of the candidate's application:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an original primary identity document e.g. passport <b>and</b></li> <li>• a secondary identity document e.g. driver's license</li> </ul> <p>If neither of these contain a photograph, use an identity referee. There is a requirement under the Act to check to make sure the identity has not been claimed by anyone else.</p>	<p>Ask the staff member to provide you with the following for checking:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an original primary identity document e.g. passport <b>and</b></li> <li>• a secondary identity document e.g. driver's license</li> </ul> <p>If neither of these contain a photograph, use an identity referee. There is a requirement under the Act to check to make sure the identity has not been claimed by anyone else.</p>
<b>DO AN INTERVIEW</b>	Interview the candidate and ask specific questions to allow them to talk about their own attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.	<b>NOT REQUIRED</b>
<b>ASK FOR A WORK HISTORY</b>	Ensure the candidate provides you with their work history ideally for the past 5 years. This should be contained in the candidate's CV, or on their application form.	<b>NOT REQUIRED</b>
<b>CHECK THE REFEREES</b>	A referee cannot be related to the candidate or part of their extended family. Confirm with the referee that the information in the candidate's CV is correct. Ask the referee if they have any concerns regarding the candidate's suitability to work with children.	<b>NOT REQUIRED</b>
<b>GET MORE INFORMATION</b>	Seek information from any relevant professional organisation, licensing authority, or registration authority to confirm if the member is a current member or registered by that authority. Check the internet.	
<b>DO A POLICE CHECK</b>	You need to police vet all staff and update the check every 3 years. Allow up to 20 working days for a police vet to be done. If the candidate has a conviction under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, schedule 2, Specified offences, then they can only be employed if they hold an exemption.	
<b>ASSESS THE RISK AND MAKE YOUR DECISION</b>	Evaluate all the information you have gathered to assess the risk the candidate would pose to the safety of children if employed or engaged, is the person safe to work with children? Will they actively contribute to a culture of child protection, make the safety of children a priority, support your child protection policy etc? Make a decision based on your assessment.	
<b>KEEP A RECORD</b>	Keep a record of the information you gathered, when you gathered it and the date when safety checks need to be carried out again in 3 years' time. Ensure you meet your obligations under the Privacy Act when retaining and disposing of employment records.	

# CHILDREN'S WORKER SAFETY CHECKING UNDER THE VULNERABLE CHILDREN ACT

2014

## CARRYING OUT INTERVIEWS

All new children's workers must be interviewed as part of the safety checking process.

The way someone responds to careful questioning can provide substantial insight into their attitudes towards children. An interview also provides the opportunity to confirm the information collected through the application process and to clarify information previously given.

Interviews should be face-to-face, but may be via telephone or other communications technology. Where face-to-face interviews are not done, specified organisations should be aware of the limitations of alternative methods.

Specified organisations should consider whether to:

- Conduct two interviews. This enables follow up and clarification on any issues you have identified. Reference and other checks can be carried out between the two interviews.
- Have a small panel of people for at least one of the interviews, allowing for multiple perspectives.

Interviewers should be chosen carefully for their experience, knowledge and skills, with at least one having broad child protection knowledge.

## CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW

An interview should have a definite structure and include planned, open questions that invite a descriptive response. Open questions

are ones that start with words like what, where, who or how. Consideration should be given to:

- A time and location for the interview that is likely to be comfortable for the children's worker.
- Ensuring that the people interviewing are confident and comfortable asking questions about child safety.

Interviewers should use a pre-planned question programme designed to get children's workers to describe their own past behaviours, beliefs and attitudes.

Interviewers should avoid using many closed questions. These are questions that invite a yes or no answer and generally start with words like did or have. Yes or no answers seldom provide useful insights into someone's safety.

While hypothetical questions can be useful to assess a person's attitudes, responses can be theoretical or idealised. Instead, ask them to describe a specific example from their own experiences.

## EXAMPLE QUESTIONS

The following example questions may be considered as a guide to the types of questions that are helpful to ask during an interview.

Questions that provide information about the children's worker themselves:

- Whether complaints have ever been made about their professional practice and how they have responded to them.
- Whether they have ever been convicted of

an offence.

- Whether they have ever been the subject of a complaints procedure during their employment.
- Reasons for leaving previous jobs.

Questions that explore the children's worker's attitudes:

- Whether there has ever been a time when they have had to deal with the following situations, including the process and outcome.

If that situation has not arisen, what they would do if:

- A child or young person disclosed abuse.
- A child or young person was cheeky.
- A child or young person hit them.
- They discovered two children fighting or engaged in sexual play or who had stolen property.
- A child or young person invited them to become involved in intimate or touching behaviour.
- A child or young person threatened to make a false allegation of abuse about them.

Questions that indicate the children's worker's views on child safe practice:

- How they believe children should be disciplined.
- Their thoughts on being alone on the job with children and young people.
- The chances of abuse allegations being made about them, if they were accepted for the job.

Questions that describe the children's worker's experiences and relationships in working with children:

- What rewarding experiences they have had working with children.
- What they think constitutes professional practice when working with children.
- Other relationships they have with children outside the working or volunteer environment.
- The reason they think they get along with children or why children like them.
- The kind of relationships they hope to develop with the children and families in this organisation.

Children's Worker Safety Checking under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014.

The full resource is available on our website.



# COULD YOU DARE NOT TO DISCIPLINE?

Discipline is a murky word, so maybe we should define our terms. In the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, Discipline is defined as:

1. Punishment
2. Instruction
3. Field of study
4. Training that corrects, moulds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character.
5. Control gained by enforcing obedience or order.

So, the word Discipline originally meant **Instruction** (teaching or guidance) and derives from the same Latin root as the word **Disciple**. Nowadays, however, that meaning is considered obsolete, and the word has come to mean **Punishment**.

The dictionary defines **Punishment** as an “action with intent to hurt,” either physically or psychologically, in order to teach a lesson. So there is no such thing as “loving discipline,” because the child will never experience something designed to cause him pain as loving. As Jane Nelsen says, “How did we ever get the idea that in order to help children do better, we have to make them feel worse?”

If the child doesn’t experience the discipline as painful, then it’s just teaching. In that case, why confuse the issue by calling it discipline, which has such negative connotations? Why not just call it teaching, or loving guidance?

What would that change? Well, to start, it would change our understanding of our children. Instead of seeing kids as in need of punishment to convince them to stop willfully misbehaving, we’d use an entirely different lens. We’d see them as in need of guidance, and teaching, and support. We’d realize that:

1. All misbehaviour is a cry for help

or connection. Respond to the need and the behaviour will change. Much of what we consider “misbehaviour” is normal childishness and can be “corrected” simply through loving guidance.

## 2. Children learn what they live through repeated experience.

Every interaction with your child models how to manage oneself and relate to others.

## 3. If a child isn’t meeting our expectations, she needs more support to do so whether that’s teaching, connection, empathic limits, or help in working through the emotions that are getting in her way.

4. Once children can regulate their emotions, they can regulate their behaviour. If your child feels connected to you, he wants to follow your lead—but sometimes he can’t, because his big emotions overwhelm his still-developing frontal cortex. Help with the emotions, and he can manage his behaviour.

Are you wondering if some misbehaviour is simply the child doing what she wants? Of course it is! But in that case, it’s a red flag, a symptom that the child considers her connection to you less important than doing what she wants. So the relationship needs strengthening, or the child needs help with the emotions that are keeping her from connecting with you. If you ignore the red flag and punish, you’re treating the symptom, not the cause. And you’re treating it in a way that guarantees more problems later, because you’re eroding the relationship.

When a child trusts that we’re really on her side, and she can manage her big emotions, then she’s willing to give up doing what she wants, to do something she wants more—which is to stay positively connected to us.

If you think about it, that’s the definition of self-discipline—giving up something you want (that piece of cake) for something you want more (your health and fitness). So every time your child chooses not to hit her sister, because what she wants more is your warm respect, she’s building the neural pathways to become more self-disciplined. And that self-discipline will last for the rest of her life.

If you’re still with me, you’re probably thinking “But children need limits!” I agree. Setting limits is part of guiding kids. It’s part of the child’s job description to test the limits, so they learn what’s allowed, where the boundaries are. Most parents need to set limits all day, every day. Limits that work are firm so the child can stop testing, but also empathic, so the child doesn’t feel she’s a bad person.

Setting limits does not mean **discipline**, as in “something unpleasant to teach a lesson.”

Are you thinking “*But kids need punishment to learn!*” Actually, if learning is the goal, then the child needs teaching. Learning shuts down when a human is under threat, and punishment is a threat to a child.

When you feel defensive, are you open to learning and growing? Limits are much more effective in developing your child’s self-discipline when they’re set with empathy, because the child doesn’t resist as much.

To change our thinking, we need to change our words, so let’s just agree to move beyond “discipline.” Instead, let’s guide our children with loving guidance, or empathic limits.

[https://ahaparentingnew01.worldsecuresystems.com/blog/Dare\\_NOT\\_To\\_Discipline](https://ahaparentingnew01.worldsecuresystems.com/blog/Dare_NOT_To_Discipline)

# THE POWER OF TALKING SIDEWAYS TO CHILDREN.

Children need opportunities to talk solo to adults. The best moments happen in 'sideways listening' – when out running, walking, driving, or baking or making

***'It's important not to take over a conversation, especially if a child is sharing difficulties or worries'***

Good communication is the key to successful relationships at all stages, but it's not always easy. We all know the advice about getting down to a toddler's tantrumming level, offering a stropky six-year-old a non-judgmental ear and giving a tired teenager peace to think and a cup of tea after a tough exam, but constant low-level approachability is hard to get right. There's also a temptation to believe it's about getting children to listen to you, when in reality it's just as important for you to listen to them. It's not about getting children to listen to you, it's just as important for you to listen to them

Making connection a habit gives children of all ages the confidence of knowing that they will always have an opportunity to talk without having to engineer the situation. There are some situations that make confiding seem much easier, such as "sideways listening". This has proved particularly successful in all sorts of professional as well as personal situations, as the family psychologist Dr Rachel Andrew explains. "This has been around in a therapeutic context for years," she says. "In that situation, it's about positioning your chairs slightly at an angle so people feel more relaxed, and it's much more helpful in getting them to talk more freely. You can apply that to younger children through playing with them and letting the conversation flow naturally, not just about what you're playing with but to include other areas of life as well."

The possible benefits of this approach seem to far outweigh the amount of time she recommends putting in. "Generally, I would recommend 10 minutes of child-led activity every day," she says. "There are all sorts of

enjoyable activities that lend themselves to sideways listening, such as arts and crafts, baking, running and other physical activities you can do together. The aim is make this into a habit as the children will know that they can rely on this time with you and that it's all about them and how important they are to you."

This air of peaceful routine lends itself well to the suggestion that adults should listen to their children, especially as psychological models advise letting the children lead the conversation, with adults then commenting rather than questioning. "You're setting up a long-term background with this approach," says Andrew. "This is actively nurturing the relationship and giving the child confidence to come to you and talk about anything, from all the little things that make up their day to the possibility of more worrying situations."

She is keen to emphasise the importance of not taking over a conversation, especially if a child is sharing difficulties or worries. "You might be shocked by something they tell you, but you must talk it through calmly, especially as sideways listening does make it easier for them to pluck up courage to simply drop things into the conversation. This is not the time to act shocked or horrified, even on their behalf, especially if they are already fearful of what you might do with the information they're giving you. A common example of this is bullying, where adults want to act immediately rather than listening to what the children actually think might be helpful. Validate their feelings with comments such as: "I understand how you feel about going into school" or, "No wonder you feel anxious", but let them retain ownership of that information and what they want done with it.

You can discuss options – "Maybe we could go into school together" or, "You could write down the details of what you want me to say to the head teacher" – but do not make the decisions for them. You want them to trust you and talk to you, but if you betray that trust it will be very difficult to get

them to start talking again as you're clearly not listening. This can become even more tricky with teenagers, especially if you either don't have such listening habits in place or the child is doing the standard teenage withdrawal.

Dr Arthur Cassidy, a social media psychologist, suggests reassuring teenagers that you care about them and are interested in them, but don't want to invade their privacy. This in itself is a bit of a mixed message, where adults can be trying desperately to give teenagers space while, with the contrariness of that age group, teenagers may feel their adults simply aren't interested.

"This is the advantage of sideways listening," says Cassidy. "It's unobtrusive and provides the reassurance to offspring that adults are still actively listening to their joys as well as their sorrows. When teenagers or children try to shock, react calmly and be consistent. The golden rule is to give them reassurance that you fully understand their problem irrespective of its content and will help them resolve it. Show them love, empathy and acceptance unconditionally, and it does work." He also points out that some children have been raised with expectations of face-to-face dialogue to reward positive behaviours and also highlight or punish wrongdoing. "If a teenager brought up this way has to disclose a misdemeanour, they might prefer face-to-face contact," he says. "That may be because they're used to that approach and see it as illustrating the adults' empathy and understanding besides trust and confidence."

Sideways listening as a communication strategy produces great results, and just needs a little planning and 10 minutes a day to start with. Once it becomes a habit, it seems to expand naturally to suit individual needs and its impact lies in listening to the child or teenager, rather than that classic adult approach of passing on knowledge and expertise. At some point in the conversation that experience might be useful, but always starting from the premise of letting the small voice be heard is what makes sideways listening a success.

*Adapted from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2017/jan/14/children-adults-talk-opportunities-sideways-listening-chats>*

# Phew! It's Normal. An Age by Age Guide for What to Expect From Kids & Teens – And What They Need From Us

Karen - Hey Sigmund

Being a kid or a teen is not for lightweights – it's tough out there! There are important things that need to be done, that only they can do. The nature of these jobs depends on the developmental stage they are at. Knowing what is normal behaviour for children and teens can help to smooth the path for everyone involved. Even as adults, we can be prone to tantrums, tears and wanting to give the world (or particular people in it) an almighty spray sometimes. For the most part, we can hang to the dramatics and anything that might land us in trouble, but even with all of our experience, our fully developed brains, and our capacity to see around corners, it's hard some days. Imagine what it's like for our kids.

Understanding what our kids are wrestling with and the developmental goals they are working towards will make their more 'frustrating' behaviours easier to deal with. Things will run smoother if we can give them the space and support they need to do whatever it is they need to. Of course, none of this means the total surrendering of boundaries around what's okay and what isn't in terms of behaviour. What it means is responding with greater wisdom, clarity and with more appropriate consequences. Life just gets easier for everyone when we are able to take things less personally.

Here are some important developmental stages and the difficult behaviour that might come with them. You'll often find that their behaviour, though unruly and baffling at times, is completely normal and a sign that your child is flourishing and making his or her way through childhood or adolescence exactly as they are meant to.

The ages of the stages are just a guide. When checking to see whether your kids are on track, read the stages around the actual age of your child. The progression through the stages is more important than the age

at which this happens. As long as kids are moving through the stages, it doesn't matter if they get there slower than other kids.

## Five years old.

- Will understand the importance of rules but might divert from the rules when playing. Rules tend to be 'flexible' – for them at least.
- May accuse others of cheating if they don't win a game.
- Will start to show empathy and an understanding that other people might have points of view that are different to their own.
- Will be able to share but might still find it difficult, especially when it comes to their special things.
- Might be afraid of failure, criticism and spooky things like ghosts or monsters.
- Attention span will start to increase which will impact on the type of discussions you are able to have with them.
- Might come across as being an 'expert' on everything.
- Will enjoy joking around and will start to develop 'potty' humour.
- Will be looking to make their own decisions, particularly around what to wear and what to eat.
- If starting at school, might be moodier, more sensitive or more tired than usual. It's exhausting having to sit still and concentrate for long periods.

## The support they need.

- Encourage anything that will get your child moving, particularly if it is in a group or a team with others. This will help your child to develop important skills like taking turns, getting along with others, working together, negotiating, compromising, and winning or losing graciously.
- Set aside time each day to play with your child or spend one on one time together. This will give your child the opportunity to let you into their world, which will always

be one of the best places to be. From here you can get a feel for what is going on in their beautifully flourishing minds.

- Start to expand your child's emotional literacy by naming and discussing feelings.
- Connect rewards to responsibilities. 'How about you help me clear the table and then you can have dessert?'
- Continue to keep rules simple and try not to have too many.

## Six years old.

- It's pretty likely that they will know a lot more than you. Just ask them.
- May start tantruming again.
- Can start to test the limits but will still want to please you and help out.
- Will seek praise for their school work and for the good things they do.
- Will seek to master new skills and to feel competent.
- Might worry about being away from you.

## The support they need.

- Encourage their efforts and acknowledge when they have worked hard.
- Encourage effort over outcome to help them develop a growth mindset and a strong self-belief in their capacity to achieve.
- Ensure they get the support they need if they are struggling at school.
- Avoid overpraise or meaningless praise and let them know that they are special, but so are other people.

## Seven years old.

- Might tend towards complaining, usually about their parents or the rules, but also about friends and other kids.
- Will feel misunderstood by many.
- Can be dramatic about school, friends or life in general.
- Will try to use words to talk about how they are feeling but may become frustrated and angry when they are upset.
- Will be becoming more aware of what other people think.

## The support they need.

- Listen and validate what they are feeling and know that you don't need to fix their problems.
- Discuss how they might solve the things that are causing them trouble. Give them space and encouragement to come up with their own ideas.
- Don't be drawn into the dramatics.
- Don't immediately think that things are a



mess because they are saying they are.

- Jump on the positive.

### **Eight years old.**

- Will want you to think the way they do and will have little tolerance for your difference of opinion.
- Will be very sensitive to what you think of them.
- Will often fight with the mother.
- There won't be a lot of grey. Things will be black or white, right or wrong, good or bad.
- This tendency to think in absolutes might cause a little trouble with friendships. Take comfort in knowing that yours won't be the only small person struggling with this. They'll be okay – this is the part where they learn about friendships and how to get along with people.

### **The support they need.**

- When you're praising their good behaviour, be clear about what it is they have done.
- Avoid arguing whenever you can. With their black and white thinking, an argument will just mean that someone is right (them) and someone is wrong (you). Instead, ask them to explain their point of view and encourage them to see things from different angles.
- Spend plenty of time together to cement the relationship for the pull away that is coming at adolescence.

### **Nine years old.**

- Friends will start to be more important than parents, and this will continue through adolescence.
- What their friends think will start to become more and more important.
- Will narrow the friendship field by having closer friendships, but less of them.
- Will share jokes and secrets with friends.
- Will push against rules and directions and may disrespect you.
- Will be able to be loving and silly but will also develop the capacity to be selfish, argumentative and abrasive.

### **What to do.**

- Provide them with opportunities for independence and to make their own decisions.
- Avoid being too bossy or directive.
- Encourage them to start thinking about things from another point of view, 'What would so-and-so say about that?' 'How do you think she felt when that happened?'

### **Ten to eleven years old.**

- The tantrums of childhood will be calming down by now. Enjoy it because adolescence has heard that you're relaxing and it's on its way.
- Might still argue about rules and the necessity and detail of them.
- Will try to explain away misbehaviour through excuses and justifications. They will fight hard to find the loophole in the rule.
- Promises become important and they will remember EVERYTHING – except when it's their turn to take out the rubbish.

### **What to do.**

- Don't make promises you won't be able to keep. Once they have something on you, they have you.
- Avoid arguing with them whenever you can. They will often have an argument for everything. Hear what they have to say, make your decision, and then pull out.
- Let them push against you in safe ways – let them try different things, express their own opinions, and make their own decisions when appropriate.
- Know where your boundaries are and be ready to implement consequences when they make a bad decision. Make the consequence about their behaviour, not about who they are.

### **Adolescence**

- Friends will be more important than family. You're still important, but there's something they have to do – find who they will be when they step into the world as a healthy, independent adult. Just like you had to do at their age.
- What their peers think of them will be a source of stress to them for a while, peaking for girls at age 13 and for boys at age 15. They might go to extra lengths to try to fit in with their peers. This might involve making silly decisions or putting themselves in risky situations. Breathe. It will end.
- They will become more argumentative and will push against you more. This is perfectly in keeping with their adolescent adventure and their experimentation with independence.
- May become more emotionally distant from you (don't worry – they'll come back but maybe not until they leave their teens).
- Might not want to be seen in public with you – however cool you are.
- Will experiment with their image, their identity, and the way they are in the world.

- They may become sexually active.
- They might be impulsive and they might start taking risks.
- They will be more creative and will start to think about the world in really interesting, different ways.
- They will act like your opinion of them doesn't matter but it does – as much as ever.
- They will often misread your emotional expressions – reading anger, hostility or disappointment when you feel nothing like any of that. Their sleep cycle will change. Their circadian rhythm will move them about three hours past where they were as kids. This means that they will fall asleep three hours past the time they used to and unless they are completely exhausted, it will be biologically very difficult for them to fall asleep earlier. They will need about 9-10 hours sleep so will need to sleep in for later.
- Will want to make their own decisions about the things that affect them.

### **What to do.**

- Don't be judgemental or critical – they need your love and connection more than ever.
- Understand that they need to find their independence from you. Give them the space to do this. Over time, their values will be likely to align with yours.
- Know that your teen isn't rejecting you, but is finding their own way in the world – it's an important, healthy part of being an independent adult – even if it feels bad.
- Let go of control and go for influence. The harder you fight to control them, the harder they will push against you. The truth is that when it comes to adolescence, we have no control – they will decide how much they involve you in their lives, how much they tell you, and how much influence you have. Make it easy for them to come to you when something happens or when they need guidance.
- Give them information, but don't lecture.
- Don't buy into arguments – ask them to state their case and talk to you about the pros and cons of what they want. By nature, teens will overstate the positives and underestimate the negatives. Encourage them to tell you some of the cons – nothing is ever black or white.
- Be the calming force – breathe and wait for the wave to pass over you. It takes 90 seconds for an emotion to be triggered, to peak and to start to fade, provided you don't do anything to give it oxygen.
- Help them to plan ahead and see around corners, but without judgement.

- Encourage their social connections and give them space to strengthen their relationships. An important part of their development is to decrease their independence on the family tribe and to do this. To do this, they will feel an increased need to strengthen their affiliation with a friendship tribe. Encourage and support this wherever you can.
- Help them find safe ways to take risks such as sports – competitive and non-competitive.
- Let them know you will always do whatever you can to collect them from any situation when they want to come home – regardless of the circumstances and how late or far away it might be.
- Let nothing be off limits when it comes to what they can talk to you about.
- Wherever possible, let them sleep in to catch up on sleep deficits.
- Listen more than you talk.

### And finally ...

Know that along the way from infant to adult, there are some important things that need to be done. There are things to learn, mistakes to be made, boundaries to be pushed, independence to be found. It will be a beautiful, exhausting, baffling, sometimes terrifying, sometimes overwhelming, sometimes traumatic adventure for everyone.

Be patient and don't take their opportunities to learn and grow away from them by taking their mistakes and their less than ideal behaviour personally. Their greatest growth will come from the mistakes they make and the boundaries that they push up against.

Even with the strongest supports in place, they are going to make mistakes – sometimes spectacular ones! Provided they have the support they need, their mistakes will be about their growth, not your parenting.

For our part, it is important that we are there with love, nurturing and a steady hand to guide them and with boundaries for them to feel the edges of themselves against. Understanding what is normal behaviour for children and teens will make this easier. Growing up is a journey of learning, exploring and experimenting – for them and for us.

[www.heytsigmund.com/developmental-stage](http://www.heytsigmund.com/developmental-stage)

# RISK-TAKING TEENS' BRAINS SEEM TO DISREGARD PAST BAD OUTCOMES

## LUCY FOULKES

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Adolescents take more risks than adults: they are more likely to binge drink, have casual sex, commit crimes and have serious car accidents. In fact, adolescence is a paradox because it is a time of peak physical fitness, but also the time when people are most likely to be injured or killed in an accident.

For this reason, it's critical to understand what drives teenagers to take more risks. To date, many explanations of teenage risk taking have focused on the positive side of these behaviours: the rewarding "kick" that comes from taking a risk that ends well. Some studies have shown that teenagers experience more of this rewarding feeling, and this contributes to the increased risk taking seen at this age.

Fewer studies have considered how teenagers respond when risks turn out badly. This is important because all our previous experiences, both good and bad, affect our subsequent behaviour. If we make a risky decision like gambling money, and it pays off, it's more likely we'll decide to gamble again in the near future. Equally, if we take a gamble and it turns out badly, we'll probably be a bit more reserved next time. But it turns out that some teenagers don't respond like this: according to a new study in *NeuroImage*, some of them do not adjust their behavior so readily when things go wrong, and this may be linked to a distinct pattern of activation in their brains.

Ethan McCormick and Eva Telzer at North Carolina University asked 58 adolescents (aged 13 to 17) to play a game that involved risks. The researchers scanned

the participants' brains while they played, and also monitored how losing the game in one round (taking a risk that didn't pay off) affected their behaviour in the subsequent round.

The game involved blowing up 24 virtual balloons shown on a computer screen. Each balloon started small, and the more that participants pumped it up (by pressing a keyboard key), the more points they earned.

However, there was a catch: as the balloon got bigger, there was always a chance that it would pop, causing a loud explosion on the screen and losing the participant all the points they had obtained on that round. So the teenagers had to make a series of risky decisions: should they cash out and save the points they had accumulated so far, or risk the balloon popping for the chance of even more points?

On average, the outcome from one balloon affected the teens' behaviour on the next one. After an explosion outcome (a risk that turned out badly), they tended to pump fewer times on the subsequent balloon before cashing out. Conversely, when they successfully cashed out the points before the balloon popped, the teens tended to risk more pumps the next time round. Importantly, though, this wasn't the same for all of them: some of the teenagers continued to pump a lot even after their last balloon had just exploded.

McCormick and Telzer found that this behaviour was linked to a distinctive pattern of neural activation. Specifically, teens who

were less sensitive to past explosions (i.e. less likely to change their behaviour on subsequent rounds) had reduced activity in the medial prefrontal cortex. This part of the brain is involved in decision making processes, like judging how risky we think a decision is, and how good we consider the result. These same teens also said they engaged in more real-life risk-taking, like drinking alcohol or taking drugs.

The current findings suggest that – for some teenagers at least – it's not just about remembering the good times, it's about forgetting the bad times, too: some teenagers are not using past outcomes to change their current behavior. It's not clear from the brain activity differences whether this is a conscious decision, or whether this insensitivity to the past is happening outside of the person's awareness.

It's also important to note that the study focused on teenagers only, and didn't include a group of children or adults, so we don't know whether the findings reported here are unique to this age group, or common to big risk-takers of all ages.

Could we use this information to reduce risk taking in teenagers? Might it be beneficial to encourage those who take risks to consider their past behavior, to remember when things turned out badly, and suggest they use this to guide their behaviour? From the present data, it's not clear whether this is a skill that could be taught. It's also important to consider just how much we want to reduce risk taking.

Adolescence is a time of potential vulnerability, and we need to educate young people to protect them from harming themselves. But risk taking is not inherently bad. Within limits, taking risks allows us to become independent and to learn about the world around us. It's a fundamental part of growing up.

We need to walk the fine line between encouraging our young people to stay safe, whilst also allowing them to navigate the world for themselves – even when this means taking risks.

<https://digest.bps.org.uk/2017/03/07/risk-taking-teens-brains-seem-to-disregard-past-bad-outcomes/>

# HOW ASSUMING INTENTIONS CAN CHANGE RELATIONSHIPS WITH CHILDREN

## LARISSA DANN

Do we react to children's behaviour, or what we think their intention is behind the behaviour? Do we have a preconceived notion of what drives children, and could this be impacting upon the way we respond to them? The way we think about children can affect our relationship with them.

### OUR BELIEF ABOUT THE NATURE OF CHILDREN

If we think that children:

- are naughty by nature
- deliberately want to press our buttons
- can't be trusted
- always try to 'win' over us
- when given an inch, will take a mile
- deliberately manipulate us
- then we will be likely to react defensively – even aggressively, to their behaviour.

How can we respond as we might wish, with respect and concern, if we have an underlying view that children cannot be trusted?

### OUR ATTRIBUTION OF INTENT

When we 'attribute intent', we make assumptions about the reasons for our children's behaviour. Problems occur when we assign a deliberate negative intent (or 'hostile' intention) to our children's behaviour.

Let's take the example of Liam, a 6-year-old boy who is playing in the sand pit and does not come into the house when called. His carer says "Stop ignoring me!" This implies that Liam is intentionally not responding to her request. Her assumptions about the reason for him not responding might include:

- "he just wants to make me angry", or
- "he's just trying to press my buttons"

In all of these presumptions, the carer has taken Liam's actions . If she acts on any of these assumptions, she may blame Liam, and say or do something that will impact badly on their relationship.

### OUR UNDERSTANDING OF BEHAVIOUR AS MEETING A NEED

Alternatively, imagine how differently we would respond if we were led by the principle that children do not misbehave. Imagine we were guided by the understanding that children behave simply to meet their needs.

We would stop blaming. We would not take their behaviour personally. We would know they were innocent and competent. We would recognise that our disagreements with our children were a result of our needs conflicting with theirs.

Our relationship would be one of respect and warmth. We would be more likely to put into practice problem-solving skills, rather than reach for punitive solutions.

Liam may have been so engrossed in his game that he simply did not hear his carer. Alternatively, his needs might include:

- He is enjoying building the best sandcastle he has ever built.
- He has only been home for half an hour, and after a busy day he needs to regroup.

He did not 'ignore' his carer. He simply behaved in accordance with his need at the time. If his carer understands that there is no negative intention, their relationship will be enhanced.

### UNDERSTANDING US

Understanding ourselves – how we think of children; what we think their intentions are; and whether we could simply believe they behave to meet a need – will influence our relationship with our children.

To do this, we may need to look deeper. What has shaped our values, our beliefs, the way we react to our children's behaviour? We may be influenced by the way we were parented, by our friends, our culture, or our partner. Our quest to understand ourselves will surely help us understand our children.





# EXERCISE IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

**STUDY SHOWS EXERCISE IMPROVES QUALITY OF LIFE FOR CHILDREN WITH AUTISM**

New research has found that regular exercise improves communication behaviours among children with autism.

The findings are the result of a four-month collaborative study between researchers from Achilles International and the New York Medical College, funded by the Cigna Foundation in America.

The study measured the effect of the Achilles Kids running programme, with 94 students with autism across five schools taking part. It assessed restrictive and repetitive behaviours, social interaction and communication, emotional response and cognitive style. The research found that regular exercise helped improve the students overall quality of life – helping them engage in everyday social situations, reducing their anxiety and in turn improving their peers acceptance and inclusion.

“The results are extremely encouraging as millions of parents, caregivers and medical professionals grapple with how to best support children on the autism spectrum,” says Jo Walker, Chair of Achilles New Zealand.

Wellington mother Elizabeth Abbey can further validates the findings. Her son Ethan, who has Asperger’s syndrome, runs with Achilles.

“Exercise has been an integral part of Ethan’s life. We were adamant that his disability wouldn’t impact on his quality of

life and from a young age we made sure he was very active, regularly running, swimming and hiking.

“As he got older we noticed that after a run he was calmer, less anxious and more lucid in his conversation. He even said he felt better,” says Elizabeth.

Following the death of Ethan’s father last year Elizabeth knew she needed to keep him running. Alongside other networks Ethan is involved with Achilles seemed tailor made for their needs. “The fortnightly runs fulfil much of the role his father did – the guides are young, active and like-minded and offer a community and support network that enables Ethan to run longer distances regularly which really help him.”

The support offered by Achilles meant that Ethan was able to take part in this year’s Cigna Round the Bays – an event he has taken part in every year since he first ran it with his father in 1991.

Dane Dougan, Chief Executive Autism New Zealand, says it is interesting to see the positive results of the research. “What works for one person with autism may not necessarily work for another. However, these findings show the benefit of building exercise into a daily routine and how it can positively help people with autism live to their full potential.

“As an evidence based organisation it is great to see this type of research being undertaken.

With autism affecting roughly 1 in 70 New Zealanders there is a lot that we can learn from these findings to help create change in a positive way.”

In America the Achilles Kids school-based running curriculum helps adaptive physical education teachers—whose students include children with autism—implement a running-based program in their schools. The students are given the goal of running 26.2 miles—the marathon distance—in a school year.

The school-based study was funded by World of Difference grants given to Achilles in 2014 and 2015 by long-time partner Cigna Foundation. Existing literature on this topic often examined small sample sizes or community-based programs, and so the Achilles and NYMC teams sought to quantifying extensive anecdotal evidence observed by Achilles showing physical, social, emotional and academic improvement in children with autism spectrum disorder who regularly ran with their program as part of their school day.

For more information about Achilles New Zealand visit <http://www.achillesnewzealand.org/> and watch a video showing the Achilles team at Cigna Round the Bays and what it meant for them to be part of the event.

<http://www.scoop.co.nz/stories/GE1703/S00011/exercise-improves-quality-of-life-for-children-with-autism.htm>

# Constitutional Matters

Had a look at your constitution lately? This is the document that lays down how your organisation has to be run, especially how officers get elected, whether or not you have an AGM and what happens there, what happens when you wind up etc. You may know it under the name 'Rules' or it is part of your 'Trust Deed'.

Often it contains a lot of jargon and people are tempted to put it in the 'too hard' box. However, a constitution is binding on the organisation, and breaching it is illegal. Anecdotal evidence from our clients and the participants of my not-for-profit class at Hagley suggests that a large number of organisation, perhaps most, do not follow their constitution in all respects.

Legally speaking, the officers of an organisation, whether it is for-profit or not-for-profit, have a fiduciary duty to run the organisation as it is laid down in the constitution or described in law. Failing this fiduciary duty is an offense, and potentially a disgruntled member or ex-member (or

investor in a business environment) could take you to Court over it. This happens only very rarely, if at all, in a not-for-profit context, but this doesn't make it acceptable.

Constitutions, especially old ones, often contain some fairly tedious clauses that a committee or Board may disregard for various reasons. This is problematic for a number of reasons, one of them being the difficulty of who gets to decide which rules can be disregarded and which can't. Once you suspend one rule without the authority to do so, all others are fair game too. Where the procedures and rules laid down in the constitution are not followed, the organisation is wide open to a 'hostile' takeover, i.e. a group of people, perhaps even just a single individual, wanting to run the organisation with a different agenda in mind. This happens quite a lot – this kind of conflict is quite common in not-for-profit groups (and also in businesses, although often for different reasons).

The founders of an organisation write a

constitution to ensure that the organisation is run according to the purpose for which it was founded, especially after they themselves have left. The procedures around appointment of committee or Board members, or their removal, AGMs and all the other aspects of a constitution are the safeguards to ensure that this happens. Committees or Boards have wide powers, but they can only use those powers within the limits set by the constitution, and especially to further the purpose laid down in it. They do not have free rein.

Sometimes an organisation outgrows its constitution or even its purpose. However, who gets to decide whether an organisation should follow a different path to the one originally laid down? This can only be legally achieved by following the procedure laid down in the constitution for changing its own rules. These are usually, for good reason, quite strict and require the approval of generally significant majorities of the membership or stakeholders.

In general, it is the president's (or chair's) role to ensure that the organisation operates within its constitution, and the secretary's role to implement procedures such as notifications of meetings, minute-taking etc.

<http://commaccounting.co.nz/newsletters>



## Helping School-Age Children with Traumatic Grief: Tips for Caregivers

**After an important person dies, children grieve in different ways. When the death was sudden or frightening, some children develop traumatic grief responses, making it hard for them to cope with their grief. Below are ways to recognize and help your child with traumatic grief.**

I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT:	YOU CAN HELP ME WHEN YOU:
1. My feelings about the death are confusing. Sometimes I feel okay, and other times I feel sad, scared, or just empty or numb. It's really hard to make the scary and sad feelings go away.	1. Talk about your feelings and encourage me to talk about mine as long as I feel comfortable.
2. Sometimes my upset feelings come out as bad behavior.	2. Help me do things to feel calm, get back to my routine, and have fun again. Be patient until I feel O.K.
3. I have trouble concentrating, paying attention, and sleeping sometimes, because what happened is on my mind.	3. Understand that thoughts about what happened get stuck in my mind. Help me relax at bedtime by reading stories or listening to music and reminding me that you keep me safe.
4. I might have physical reactions like stomach aches, headaches, feeling my heart pounding, and breathing too fast.	4. Help me do things that make me feel calm, take my mind off things, or slow down my breathing.
5. Sometimes I wonder if the death was my fault.	5. Reassure me that it was not my fault.
6. I sometimes think the same thing will happen to me or other people I love.	6. Remind me about the things we do to stay safe and take care of ourselves. Help me remember all the people who take care of me.
7. I keep thinking about what happened over and over in my head.	7. Listen to what is on my mind. Tell me honestly what happened, using words I can understand. Do not let me see it on TV or other media if the story is in the news.
8. Sometimes I don't like to think or talk about the person who died, because it's too hard. I may not tell you everything because I don't want to upset you.	8. Don't make me talk about what happened. Don't get mad if I don't want to talk it or about the person.
9. I don't like to go to some places or do some things that remind me of the person who died, or of how my life has changed since the person died, because I get upset.	9. Don't make me go places if it still makes me too upset or scared.
10. I have trouble remembering good things about the person because I remember other things that make me too mad, sad, or scared, and they get in the way.	10. Understand that I am still too scared and sad to think about the happy times right now. Help me to feel better.

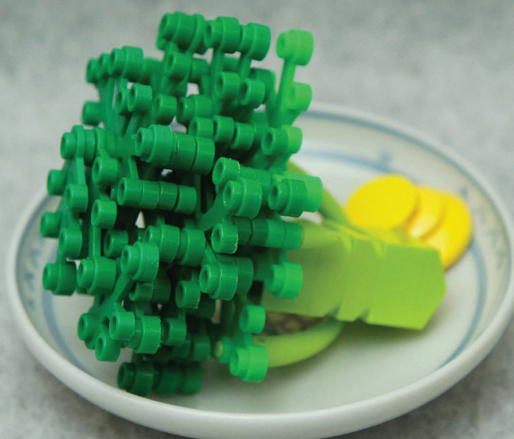
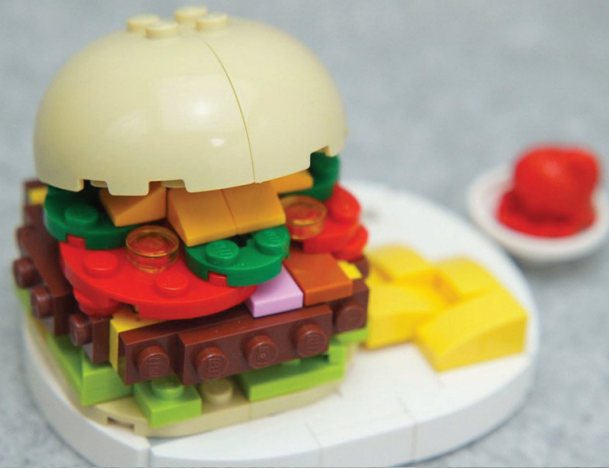
**If any of these problems get in the way of your child having fun, going to school, being with friends, or doing other activities, you can make an appointment with your child to see a mental health professional with expertise in treating traumatized children.**



## JAPANESE LEGO MASTER BUILDS DELICIOUS-LOOKING CREATIONS FROM BLOCKS

I don't think I've ever felt so hungry looking at Lego blocks! A Japanese Lego creator who goes by the nickname Tary has sculpted one of the most delicious-looking collections of food made entirely from Lego blocks. From fruit and vegetables to bento boxes, junk food and even desserts, Tary has almost all major food groups covered!

[www.thisiscolossal.com/2016/05/japanese-lego-master-builds-delicious-looking-creations-from-blocks/](http://www.thisiscolossal.com/2016/05/japanese-lego-master-builds-delicious-looking-creations-from-blocks/)





# OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENT CALENDAR TERM 2 2017

EVENT/TRAINING	DATE	TIME & PLACE	COST (GST INCLUDED)
Child Protection	Tuesday 16 May	10:30am – 12 noon St Marks Cnr Vincent Place & Opawa Rd	\$50 per person
Dealing with challenging behaviour	Tuesday 23 May	10:30am – 12 noon St Marks Cnr Vincent Place & Opawa Rd	\$50 members \$100 non-members
Full & Refresher First Aid MediTrain <i>MSDCYF approved</i>	Saturday 27 May	Full: 8:30am – 4:30pm Refresher 8:30am – 12:30pm Hei Hei Broomfield Community Development Centre 126 Hei Hei Rd, Christchurch	Full: \$175 Refresher: \$98
Nelson Training Dealing with challenging behaviour	Tuesday 30 May	6:30pm – 8:30pm To be advised	\$50 per person Light refreshment
Nelson Training Health & Safety	Wednesday 31 May	9:30am – 11:30am To be advised	\$50 per person
Employing OSCAR staff	Tuesday 13 June	6:30pm – 8:30pm OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli St, Addington	\$50 members \$100 non-members
Blenheim Training Dealing with challenging behaviour & Child Protection	Wednesday 14 June	9 - 11.30am Bread of Life Centre 134 Stephenson St, Blenheim 12 noon – 2pm	\$50 per person
New to OSCAR	Tuesday 20 June	6:30pm – 8:30pm OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli St, Addington	\$50 members \$100 non-members
Networking Meeting	Wednesday 28 June	10am – 12 noon Belfast Community Trust 710 Main North Rd, Belfast	Free
Full & Refresher First Aid MediTrain <i>MSDCYF approved</i>	Saturday 26 August OR 25 November	Full: 8:30am – 4:30pm Refresher 8:30am – 12:30pm Hei Hei Broomfield Community Development Centre 126 Hei Hei Rd, Christchurch	Full: \$175 Refresher: \$98

FOR TRAINING UPDATES CHECK OUT [WWW.OSCARNETWORK.ORG.NZ/TRAININEVENTS.HTML](http://WWW.OSCARNETWORK.ORG.NZ/TRAININEVENTS.HTML)

