

**SUPPORTING THE NETWORK OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMMES**  
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**NOT NAUGHTY: 10 WAYS CHILDREN APPEAR TO BE ACTING BAD BUT  
AREN'T PLAYGROUND POLITICS - WHAT DRIVES PEER REJECTION?  
APPRAISING YOUR EXISTING CORE WORKERS - TO MEET THE  
REQUIREMENTS OF THE VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S ACT THE BRAIN  
SCIENCE BEHIND STUDENT TRAUMA UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL  
COMPETENCE MAGICAL PHOTOS OF CHILDREN PLAYING**







# 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'.

**THANK YOU** The OSCAR Network could not operate without the generous support of the following funding agencies: Ministry of Social Development; Christchurch City Council; Canterbury Community Trust; Lottery Grants Board; Community Organisation Grants Scheme; United Way.

Sharon Williams  
Liz Hawes  
Pam Hughes

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## Office Hours

Monday to Friday: 9am-1pm

Network staff are available for appointments outside these hours

25 Disraeli Street  
Christchurch 8240

Phone: 03 3793915  
e-mail: [admin@oscarnetwork.org.nz](mailto:admin@oscarnetwork.org.nz)

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

# 25 Ways to Ask Children ‘So How Was School Today?’ Without Asking Them ‘So How Was School Today?’

1. What was the best thing that happened at school today? (What was the worst thing that happened at school today?)
2. Tell me something that made you laugh today.
3. If you could choose, who would you like to sit by in class? (Who would you NOT want to sit by in class? Why?)
4. Where is the coolest place at the school?
5. Tell me a weird word that you heard today. (Or something weird that someone said.)
6. If I called your teacher tonight, what would she tell me about you?
7. How did you help somebody today?
8. How did somebody help you today?
9. Tell me one thing that you learned today.
10. When were you the happiest today?
11. When were you bored today?
12. If an alien spaceship came to your class and beamed someone up, who would you want them to take?
13. Who would you like to play with at recess that you’ve never played with before?
14. Tell me something good that happened today.
15. What word did your teacher say most today?
16. What do you think you should do/learn more of at school?
17. What do you think you should do/learn less of at school?
18. Who in your class do you think you could be nicer to?
19. Where do you play the most at recess?
20. Who is the funniest person in your class? Why is he/she so funny?
21. What was your favorite part of lunch?
22. If you got to be the teacher tomorrow, what would you do?
23. Is there anyone in your class who needs a time-out?
24. If you could switch seats with anyone in the class, who would you trade with? Why?
25. Tell me about three different times you used your pencil today at school.

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

# NOT NAUGHTY: 10 WAYS CHILDREN APPEAR TO BE ACTING BAD BUT AREN'T

Many of children's so-called "naughty" behaviours are developmental and human.

When we recognize children's tough behaviours as reactions to environmental conditions, developmental phases, or our own actions, it lets us respond proactively, and with way more compassion.

## 1. NOT CONTROLLING IMPULSES

Ever say to a child, "Don't throw that!" and they just throw it anyway? Research suggests that the brain regions involved in self-control are immature at birth and don't fully mature until the end of adolescence, which explains why developing self-control is a "long, slow process" (Tarullo, Obradovic, & Gunna, 2009, 31).

A recent survey revealed that many parents assume children can do things at earlier ages than child development experts know to be true. For example, 56% of parents felt that children under the age of 3 should be able to resist the desire to do something forbidden, whereas most children don't master this skill until age 3 ½ or 4. Reminding ourselves

that children can't always manage impulses (because their brains aren't fully developed) can inspire gentler reactions to their behaviour.

## 2. OVERSTIMULATION

We take our children to Target, the park, and their sister's play in a single morning, and inevitably see meltdowns, hyperactivity, or outright resistance. Jam-packed schedules, overstimulation, and exhaustion are hallmarks of modern family life. Research suggests that 28% of Americans "always feel rushed" and 45% report having "no excess time" (Robinson, 2013). Kim John Payne, author of *Simplicity Parenting*, argues that children experience a "cumulative stress reaction" from too much enrichment, activity, choice, and toys. He asserts that children need tons of "down time" to balance out "up time" (Payne, 2010). When we build in plenty of quiet time, play time, and rest time, children's behaviour often improves dramatically.

## 3. CORE CONDITIONS

Ever been "hangry" — angry because you're

hungry — or completely out of patience due to sleep deprivation? Little children are affected 10-fold by the "core conditions" of being tired, hungry, thirsty, over-sugared, or sick. Children's ability to manage emotions and behaviour is greatly diminished when they're tired.

Many parents also notice a sharp change in children's behaviour about an hour before mealtimes, if they woke up in the night, or if they are coming down with an illness. Children can't always communicate or "help themselves" to a snack, a Panadol, water, or a nap like adults can.

## 4. EXPRESSION OF BIG FEELINGS

As adults, we've been taught to tame and hide our big emotions, often by stuffing them, displacing them, or distracting from them. Children can't do that yet. Janet Lansbury, early childhood educator, has a great phrase for when children display powerful feelings such as screaming, yelling, or crying. She suggests that parents "let feelings be" by not reacting or punishing children when they express powerful emotions.



## 5. DEVELOPMENTAL NEED FOR TONS OF MOVEMENT

“Sit still,” “stop chasing your brother around the table,” “stop sword fighting with those pieces of cardboard” “stop jumping off the couch.” Children have a developmental need for tons of movement. They have a tremendous need to spend time outside, ride bikes and scooters, do rough and tumble play, crawl under things, swing from things, jump off things, and race around things.

Instead of calling a child “bad” when they’re acting energetic, it may be better to organize a quick trip to the playground or a stroll around the block.

## 6. DEVELOPMENTALLY-WIRED TO RESIST AND BECOME INDEPENDENT

Every 40- and 50-degree day resulted in an argument at one family’s home. A first-grader insisted that it was warm enough to wear shorts, while mom said that temperature called for long pants. Erik Erikson’s (1963) model posits that toddlers try to do things for themselves, and that preschoolers take initiative and carry out their own plans. Even

though it’s annoying when a child picks your tomatoes while they’re still green, cuts their own hair, or makes a fort with 8 of your freshly-washed sheets, they’re doing exactly what they are supposed to be doing—trying to carry out their own plans, separate, make their own decisions, and become their own little independent people.

## 7. CORE STRENGTHS THAT TRIP THEM UP TOO

We all have core strengths that trip us up too. Maybe we’re incredibly focused, but can’t transition very easily. Maybe we’re intuitive and sensitive, but take on other people’s negative moods like a sponge. Children are similar - they may be driven in school, but have difficulty coping when they mess up (e.g. yelling when they make a mistake). They may be cautious and safe, but resistant to new activities (e.g. refusing to go to baseball). They may live in the moment, but aren’t that organized (e.g. letting their bedroom floor become covered with toys).

Recognizing when a child’s hard behaviours are the flip side of their strengths—just

like ours—can help us react with more understanding.

## 8. FIERCE NEED FOR PLAY

Your child paints her face with yogurt, wants you to chase her and “catch her” when you’re trying to brush her teeth, or puts on daddy’s shoes instead of her own when you’re racing out the door. Some of children seemingly “bad” behaviours are (what John Gottman calls) “bids” for you to play with them. Children love to be silly and goofy. They delight in the connection that comes from shared laughter and love the elements of novelty, surprise, and excitement. Play often takes extra time and therefore gets in the way of parents’ own timelines and agendas, which may look like resistance and naughtiness even when it’s not. When parents build lots of play time into the day, children don’t need to beg for it so hard when you’re trying to get them out the door.

## 9. REACTION TO PARENTS’ MOODS

Multiple research studies on emotional contagion have found that it only takes milliseconds for emotions like enthusiasm and joy, as well as sadness, fear, and anger, to pass from person to person, and this often occurs without either person realizing it (Goleman, 1991, Hatfield et al., 2014). Children especially pick up on their parents’ moods. If we are stressed, distracted, down, or always-on-the-verge-of-frustrated, children emulate these moods. When we are peaceful and grounded, children model off that instead.

## 10. RESPONSE TO INCONSISTENT LIMITS

At one ball game, you buy your child M & Ms. At the next, you say, “No, it’ll ruin your dinner,” and your child screams and whines. One night you read your child five books, but the next you insist you only have time to read one, and they beg for more. When parents are inconsistent with limits, it naturally sets off children’s frustration and invites whining, crying, or yelling. Just like adults, children want (and need) to know what to expect. Any effort toward being 100% consistent with boundaries, limits, and routines will seriously improve children’s behaviour.

*Erin Leyba, PhD ~ [www.psychologytoday.com/blog/joyful-parenting/201705/not-naughty-10-ways-children-appear-be-acting-bad-arent](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/joyful-parenting/201705/not-naughty-10-ways-children-appear-be-acting-bad-arent)*



# PLAYGROUND POLITICS - WHAT DRIVES PEER REJECTION?

## BY KAREN YOUNG

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PEER RELATIONSHIPS ARE SO IMPORTANT, BUT THEY DON'T ALWAYS GLISTEN. THROUGH THEIR RELATIONSHIPS - THE GOOD AND THE NOT SO GOOD - CHILDREN WILL LEARN MANY THINGS. IT'S WHERE THEY'LL START TO BUILD THEIR EXPECTATIONS ABOUT HOW THE WORLD WILL RECEIVE THEM, WHAT THE WORLD WILL THINK OF THEM, WHETHER THE WORLD IS SAFE, WHETHER PEOPLE ARE SAFE, AND HOW MUCH POWER THEY HAVE. IT'S ALSO WHERE THEY WILL LEARN THAT 'MEAN FOR NO REASON' IS A THING, THAT SOMETIMES PEOPLE DO THINGS THAT DON'T MAKE SENSE, THAT THE PEOPLE WHO TREAT THEM LIKE ROCK STARS ARE WORTH HOLDING ONTO, AND THAT SOME PEOPLE DON'T DESERVE TO GET ANYWHERE NEAR THEM.

Kids can be gorgeous and compassionate and kind and cruel – and all children will come across plenty of both. Understandably, the playground can feel like the beginning and end of their world. When they are rejected, it can feel as though the world outside their family is made up of people who don't understand them at all.

It's so important for our kids to know that for every child who is nasty, there will be plenty more who will adore them for everything they are. It's a matter of finding their tribe – and they'll all have one. Sometimes though, finding friends can be harder than it should ever be – through absolutely no fault of their own.

It's completely understandable that for many children, rejection feels personal. All

rejection has the potential to hurt, but when it feels personal it feels especially painful. We can explain, as many parents would, that the reasons they might be excluded will have absolutely nothing to do with them, but kids are curious and clever and their beautifully open minds are looking to understand the world as much as they can. The question then is likely to become, 'well if they aren't rejecting me because of me, why are they rejecting me?'

Any information we can give them will help to strengthen them. Thankfully, when it comes to explaining peer rejection, there is recent research that can help.

### LET'S TALK ABOUT THE RESEARCH. SO YOU CAN TALK TO THEM.

Traditionally, research has focussed on the

rejected child, and explored why children believe they might be rejected, or why others believe those children are rejected. In a recent study, researchers switched their focus from the rejected child, and asked the rejecters themselves why they didn't accept some of their peers.

The study involved 853 students, aged 5-7, with a fairly equal inclusion of girls and boys. The children were asked who in their class they like the least, and why. Only 4.5% of children did not name any other children negatively.

The study found three broad reasons that children reject other children. Two of these reasons, as expected, don't have anything to do with the behaviour or personality of the rejected child. In fact, the researchers note

that in other peer groups, the reasons given for rejection could very easily be reasons for acceptance and friendship.

### 1. PREFERENCES AND CHOICES.

The first broad reason for rejection is 'preference' and it's about the way the rejecting child perceives the preferences and choices of the child being rejected. Basically, this involves a child rejecting another child as 'in' or 'out' based on what that rejected child likes and the things they like to do.

This type of rejection seems to be driven partly by how much the rejected child represents the norms of the group. It has nothing to do with anything inherently unlikeable about the rejected child, just that they are different to the group or to the child who is excluding them, ('he's always singing'). In another friendship group, the same behaviour that is rejected might be seen as something wanted or wonderful or charming – something worth embracing.

It's not surprising that rejection can come down to personal likes and dislikes. We were all born liking different things and that's a great thing. Otherwise, we'd all be playing the same sport, eating the same food, and driving yellow cars. Diversity is a great thing, unless you're the only shimmery, glittery one in a world full of matte – then it can feel lonely and isolating – but only until you find other glitterbugs who have been waiting to find someone just like you.

Personal likes and dislikes can be a healthy way to strengthen personal identity, (I'm a dog lover'.) They can also tighten group solidarity, ('we like hip-hop and magic things'). The downside though, is that when prejudices are shared within a group, it can drive rejection of others outside the group, ('you're not a soccer player like us,' or, if you're dealing with the non-shiners, 'you're a shiny thing and we don't like shiny things'.) What this means is that sometimes, children might be driven to reject for no other reason than to strengthen their own sense of belonging within a group. Children consider other children to be 'in' or 'out' based on that child's choices or what he or she enjoys ('he likes cricket'), which in turn consolidates group identity ('we like playing football').

When there are no specific likes or preferences that can justify rejection or

tighten group belonging, children might base their rejection on social groups ('she's a girl') or on the rejected child doing things that are typical of certain groups ('he eats Asian stuff'). These are an expression of the stereotypes and prejudices against those who are not like me or us, or who belong to another group, ('she's Romanian', and 'he's new').

### 2. UNFAMILIARITY.

The second category of rejection is based on unfamiliarity between the rejecting child and the rejected child. It's driven by a reluctance of the rejecting child to establish new friendships or to discover common ground, ('she plays the violin, but I don't play the violin', or 'I don't want to play in the sandpit'.) With this type of rejection, there is a tendency to prefer what is already being done. Again, the rejection has nothing to do with the behaviour of the rejected child.

### 3. AND THEN THERE'S THE REJECTION THAT MAKES A LITTLE MORE SENSE.

This type of rejection is tied to the behaviour of the rejected child. It doesn't necessarily mean that the rejected child has behaved in an antisocial way, but it might. What it often means is that that his or her behaviour has been interpreted as a potential threat to the rejecting child or the friendship group. Rejecting children base this type of rejection on the degree to which the behaviour deviates from his or her own social group. Like many adults, it seems that some children tend to base a person's 'likeability' or safety, on the level of similarity between themselves and the other.

The behaviours that seem to bring on rejection, according to the research, include:

- behaviours that were perceived as breaching social or school norms, ('she takes things away,' or 'he's bad at reading').
- behaviours that interfered with or threatened personal to group well-being, ('she speaks when we're working'). They are the behaviours that tend to unsettle others, contribute to them feeling angry, uncomfortable or interfere with them getting what they want, ('he says silly things', 'she's always interrupting').
- bossy behaviours that are seen as attempts to control what's done, how it's done ('he bosses people about,' 'she pushes me around', 'he acts cocky with me'). They

are also the behaviours that are seen by the rejecting child as an attempt to influence others for the 'bossy' child's own advantage, or to strengthen his or her own position or ego at the expense of others.

- aggressive behaviours that cause harm or insecurity. They can be verbal or physical, and are seen as being driven by a number of unfriendly intentions:
- to humiliate others or hurt their reputation, ('she makes fun of everybody'),
- physical aggression to cause physical damage, ('he hits', 'she spits'),
- intimidation through threats or abuse, ('she treats me badly', 'he threatens').
- behaviours which breach social norms and school rules, ('she steals things,' 'he makes the teacher angry').
- behaviours that lack the social skills needed for healthy relationships, ('he doesn't leave me anything', 'she takes my stuff without asking').

It's understandable that kids would not want to be around people who feel bad to be with. They need to be kind, empathic and compassionate, but none of that means embracing bad behaviour. Part of teaching our kids to live with strength and self-respect involves teaching them to recognise when a behaviour feels bad, and supporting them when they make the decision to move themselves out of the way of that bad behaviour. The challenge comes in doing this with kindness and grace, and minimising any further breakage that could spill from this.

### WHAT KIDS NEED TO KNOW. FOR THE REJECTED CHILD.

Sometimes children might reject other children because of fear – fear of losing their position in a group, fear of having to compete for 'likeability' in the friendship or group, and fear of the things that makes them different. This has nothing to do with who the rejected child is. The things that might lead other people to (confusingly) reject a child, will be the reasons other kids think that same child is a little bit of magic with sunshine thrown in. It's just a matter of finding those people who are their kind of people – and there will be plenty of those. If those people are hard to find in one playground, keep looking, because those people are probably looking for them too.

Acknowledge that it can be frightening

to keep reaching out to people, but it's important not to let the behaviour of one frightened person, or one small-minded group, trick them into believing that there's anything wrong with them.

The truth is, they're wonderful. They're interesting, fun, kind and brave. Not everyone will get them, but not everyone has to. There will be so many people who think the things about them that make them different to the pack – or a particular pack – are the very best things about them.

If the rejection has been brought on because of their behaviour, or because they're still building their toolbox for how to be a good friend, it's a great opportunity to build their social and emotional intelligence. This is something that builds at different times in different kids, but it can always be nurtured along.

#### **FOR THE CHILD WHO IS REJECTING. BRING THEIR FEARS INTO THE OPEN**

Sometimes even the wildest and most baffling behaviour has a really good reason for being there. It's understandable that a newbie to the friendship group might feel a little threatening. If this is the case, bring the fear into the open.

Fears can be fierce little punks that sit in the dark like they aren't there at all, and direct behaviour in ways that cause breakage. It happens in all of us. When the fear is brought out into the open, it loses much of its power to drive poor behaviour and poor choices.

This might have to be done gently. It can be tricky to admit vulnerability. Try, 'what might happen if you become friends with Maggie?' or, 'Are you worried that the other kids might like Maggie more than you? I get that. It can be scary can't it. I've felt like that before. You know the crazy thing is, you're so wonderful to know, and the people who know you really – really – like you, so it's what's more likely to happen is that Maggie would realise how great you are to be friends with and you might become each other's favourite people,' ... or something like that.

Once a fear is validated, it stops having as much power over behaviour. Feeling like you might be replaced is a very valid fear, and one that deserves to be acknowledged and

treated with love and gentle words.

#### **TAKE THIS AS A GIFT - A BRILLIANT OPPORTUNITY TO NURTURE THEIR EMPATHY.**

Empathy is one of the cornerstones of emotional intelligence, which is critical to success in work, love and life. Mean behaviour (when it's unprovoked) generally means a lack of empathy. If you've discovered your little person is being a mean person, take it as a gift. It's a prime opportunity to nurture their emotional intelligence.

None of us were born with empathy. It's something that develops over time. Some kids will be naturally more empathic than others, but all kids have different strengths.

Empathy is something that can be built and strengthened. It's about seeing things through someone else's eyes – and from time to time we'll all have trouble with that. We're only human. The best way for empathy to be nurtured is through conversation. 'How do you think Maggie might have felt when you said that?' 'What would it be like for you if nobody played with you?' 'If you could give Maggie some advice, what would it be?'

#### **'LET'S SAY YOU WERE WATCHING A MOVIE ...'**

A less direct, and perhaps less threatening way is to ask them to describe the situation to you as though they were watching a movie. 'Tell me about the conversation you had with Maggie as though you were watching someone else have it. Let's use different names.' This will open the way for you to start positioning them in a way for them to start taking on a different view. 'What do you think that felt like for (both people)?' 'Might there be a better way to do that?' 'They both probably had a really good reason for doing what they did – what do you think it was.'

#### **HIGHLIGHT THE SIMILARITIES.**

It seems clear from the research that a lot of rejection is based on perceived differences between the rejecting child and the child they are excluding. Ask them to chat to you about the similarities. It might also be worth exploring the meaning, if any, that is being put on those differences. 'It sounds like it's important to you that Maggie doesn't play soccer/ eats Asian food/ plays the violin'. Can you help me understand that a little better?'

#### **BUT THE MOST IMPORTANT THING ...**

As with any sensitive conversation we have with our kiddos, it's really important that they feel safe enough to be honest and open, and that's they'll be free from judgement or criticism. It doesn't mean you won't have words of judgement or criticism springing to life inside you, just that you won't let them see it. When they feel safe, they're more likely open their hearts and their minds to your influence. The truth is, as baffling and as upsetting as their behaviour might seem to you, to them it makes sense. That doesn't mean there's anything broken, just that there are some pieces that need adding, reworking or gentle shaping. 'You're not in trouble at all. I can see it makes sense to you not to be her friend and I just want to understand it through your eyes.'

#### **AND FINALLY ...**

It's very likely that during childhood, if a child doesn't feel the sting or heartache of rejection first-hand, it will happen to someone they care about. What this research tells us is that even though rejection feels personal, it's often not. For many children, the decision to exclude a playmate from their circle happens when they consider a mismatch between their choices or likes and those of the other child. It can also be done in an attempt to keep their own friendships safe and secure and free from 'outsiders'.

Whatever the reason, for the child who is rejected, it's likely to feel personal, confusing and heart-breaking. The more information we can give them to help them make sense of their experience the better. The truth is that rejection is often not personal, but a decision made without thought or consideration, and sometimes in fear. The playground is just a very small part of their world, and outside of that world, there are children – plenty of them – who are waiting to know someone exactly like them. By giving them the information they need to make some sort of sense of their experience, we can help to strengthen them and move them towards the tribe that will love them because of their differences, not despite them.

*<http://www.heysigmund.com/playground-politics-peer-rejection>*



# APPRAISING YOUR EXISTING CORE WORKERS - TO MEET THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE VULNERABLE CHILDREN'S ACT

It is a good idea to incorporate the safety checking of existing core workers along with an appraisal of their work practice. MSD assessors are looking for clear records that you have undertaken a safety check of any new core and non-core workers.

While there is no legal obligation to check all existing core and non-core workers yet (see timeline below), the OSCAR sector prides itself on leading from the front when it comes to child protection.

**The process for safety checking is fairly straight forward.**

***Workers need to have their identity confirmed by:***

- Use of an electronic identity credential (RealMe verification)
  - Photo identification (Passport, driver's licence) AND
- Another secondary identification document (birth certificate) to ensure that the initial document belongs to the existing worker AND
  - A police vetting check every three years BUT

***Programme workers must inform their employer if:***

- They have changed their name, or address
  - They have been charged with a crime
- There are any workplace threats to their health & safety
- They have a close relationship with a child who attends the programme

The appraisal process comes into its own when writing the report about each existing worker. Principles that should be followed are looking for patterns concerning attitudes or behaviours, and following up of potential indicators that may arise. The bottom line is that a children's worker should pose no undue risk to the safety of the children.

**When do the requirements come into force?**

- All new core workers must have been safety checked before commencing employment from 1 July 2015
- All new non-core workers (e.g. management members) must have been safety checked from 1 July 2016
- By 1 July 2018 all existing core workers must have been safety checked (not just police vetted)
  - By 1 July 2019 all existing non-core workers must have been safety checked

# ***The Brain Science Behind Student Trauma***

## ***Stress and trauma inhibit students' ability to learn***

**By Bruce D. Perry**

The most remarkable feature of humankind is the flexibility of our brains. This neuroplasticity—or the brain's ability to adjust its activities in response to new situations—is what has allowed our species to make dramatic changes from generation to generation. Humans have evolved from small hunter-gatherer clans to urban, digitally connected, international communities. The most malleable part of our brain is the neocortex, which can absorb and store more bits of information than the brains of any other species. This capacity for cognitive thinking allowed us to create language, democracy, and thousands of other inventions.

In fact, our most remarkable invention is public education: a structured system to provide the social and cognitive stimulation children need to take advantage of their brain's malleability and develop knowledge and skills in mathematics, science, and history. By providing structured cognitive and social experiences, the U.S. public education system has expressed the potential of millions of children, which has, in turn, led to invention, creativity, and productivity that has transformed the world.

The key to the success of any educational

experience is the capacity to “get to the cortex.” Yet, each year, nearly one-third of all children attending U.S. public schools will have significantly impaired cortical functioning due to abuse, neglect, domestic violence, poverty, and other adversities. Understanding the effects of trauma on a child's brain and how these effects alter the ability to learn is essential to improving our public education system.

The brain has a set of crucial neural networks that mediate stress response. When children have attentive caregiving at home and supported emotional, motor, social, and cognitive experiences throughout their early years, they develop a well-regulated stress-response system. This leads to experiences in learning and growth that shape a child in positive ways.

When trauma or unpredictable stress brought on by poverty alters these systems, the neural networks involved in the stress response stop working properly, which can lead to emotional, behavioural, and learning problems. Trauma-related alterations to these systems can shut down areas of the brain that would normally control impulses of the neocortex. This makes it much more difficult for children to learn traditional

cognitive content in school, including the ability to learn to read.

Children who have experienced trauma will be in a persistent state of alarm and less capable of concentrating when they enter classrooms. Because of this, they will pay more attention to the nonverbal cues of a teacher, such as tone of voice, body posture, and facial expressions. Unless teachers adopt some regulating practices for those students, such as meditative breathing or rhythmic motor activity, children will remain in the alarm state, impairing cognitive learning.

### **HOW THE BRAIN RESPONDS TO STRESS**

Alarm	Fear	Terror
Limbic Midbrain	Midbrain Brainstem	Brainstem Autonomic
Emotional	Reactive	Reflexive
Freeze	Flight	Fight

*Source: Bruce D. Perry, The Child Trauma Academy*

The effects of trauma on student learning have implications for understanding the



achievement gap. Even without overt experiences of trauma, children who live in stressful environments of poverty don't internalize new information at the same rate as children who enter the classroom in a calm state. Year after year, traumatized students learn at a slower rate, disengage, and ultimately fall behind—a vicious cycle that all too often leads them to drop out of school.

Fortunately, there are proven practices, programs, and policies that can help prevent and heal stress and trauma-related problems within a school community and in the

classroom. When teachers understand the effects of trauma, they can begin to better understand the children who experience it and effectively address behavioural problems. The integration of relationally based disciplinary models and self-care for students, as well as secondary-stress-reduction practices for teachers and trauma-sensitive policies within a school can all make a difference.

Successful neuroscience- and trauma-informed education practices, programs, and policies show that when children feel safe and connected, our greatest invention—

public education—can be more effective in helping express the potential in all students.

Bruce D. Perry is the founder and senior fellow of The ChildTrauma Academy in Houston and an adjunct professor of psychiatry at the Feinberg School of Medicine at Northwestern University.

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2016/12/14/the-brain-science-behind-student-trauma.html>



# understanding cultural competence

*Catharine Hydon*

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***Unpacking cultural competence... much more than awareness of cultural differences. It is the ability to understand, communicate with and effectively interact with people across cultures.***

Cultural competence encompasses:

- being aware of one's own world view
- developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gaining knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- developing skills for communication and interaction across cultures.

Culture is the fundamental building block of identity and the development of a strong cultural identity is essential to children's healthy sense of who they are and where they belong. Cultural competence needs to be applied on three levels:

- At the individual level—where it will be

evident in the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours of each worker in their relations with children, families and colleagues.

- At the organisation level—where it will be evident in the policies, procedures, expectations and practices of the Programme and the way in which the views of children, families and the community influence decisions.
- At the systems level—where it will be evident in the way organisations relate to local community people and agencies and respect local protocols.

Workers need to talk about 'culture' with colleagues and to ask questions such as:

- How might our views of culture affect our relationships with children and families?
- Might we sometimes advantage some children and families and disadvantage others?
- Do our interactions with families show that we respect and value them as they are,

or 'as we would like them to be'?

- Does our environment reflect a genuine knowledge about the cultures of the children in our care?
- Are our representations of cultures in books, images and artefacts contemporary and inclusive, or do they fall into stereotypes?

***Becoming culturally competent— Ideas that support practice***

*"There is never in the world two opinions alike, any more than two hairs or two grains. Their most universal quality is diversity"*

Michel De Montaigne 1533-1592

Becoming culturally competent is about building respectful relationships. It occurs over time, by our connection with others and through our daily experiences with children and families. It is as much about what we do every day, the little decisions we make and



the words we use, as it is about what we think, what we understand and what we believe. Knowing about and putting the ideas of cultural competency into practice can seem like a daunting task. Cultural competence is a term that is used widely to describe the ways in which individuals and services work more effectively to support, promote and embrace cultural difference.

Cultural competence has been defined as 'the ability to understand, communicate with, and effectively interact with people across cultures and explains that cultural competence is our capacity to:

- be aware of our own world view
- develop positive attitudes towards cultural differences
- gain knowledge of different cultural practices and world views
- develop skills for communication and interaction across cultures.

they become stronger and more embedded in our everyday thinking and acting. It is about continually improving and learning, through reflection, from our successes and mistakes.

Cultural competence is a big idea; it's bigger than ethnicity, more than celebrations, larger than food—it's about all that we are, what shapes our beliefs and how we understand the world.

For example, my cultural background is more than my Anglo Irish heritage. It is also about my Grandmother's (and I assume her mother's before her) beliefs in manners and punctuality. These beliefs were a feature of my childhood and shape the person I am today. It is something that I grappled with when I worked in a community that viewed time as much more flexible and relaxed than my grandmother's strict way of life.

My growing cultural competence invites me

to be aware of my own background and how it affects my relationships with children and their families and the decisions I make. By knowing more about and respecting our varied cultural ways of being, we create children's services that welcome everyone, build a sense of belonging for all, and equip all children to live well with diversity.

Taking practical steps towards cultural competency doesn't have to be complicated.

The following ideas come from a range of service types in various communities across Australia. As you read them, reflect on whether these ideas might be something to try in your service.

### ***Understanding ourselves***

Knowing about our own cultural identity is an important first step in the process of becoming culturally competent.

When we understand the beliefs and values

As we practise these capacities over time,

that are important to us and the way that our own cultural background has shaped our own life we become more able to acknowledge how these factors impact on others.

A small rural service decided to start talking about cultural competency by updating the information they shared with families throughout the centre. Each staff member created a document that was displayed in the foyer and in the children's portfolios.

Rather than prescribing the information to be included they invited the staff to share something important in their own family and cultural life. What happened surprised everyone. Conversations were sparked that built connections between and across the centre. People noticed similarities and revelled in the differences.

The simple act of sharing information supported stronger connections and families started to reciprocate with their own pages.

### ***Questions for reflection***

- Where are the opportunities for workers to discuss their understanding of cultural competence and their own cultural identity?
- How can these understandings be shared ... with each other? with families?

### ***Start local, with families and communities***

Cultural competency need not be about the exotic or far away, it can start with your local community. Increasing our knowledge and developing positive attitudes towards cultural differences can be as simple as being more and more aware of what is happening locally and what is important to the people of your community.

Communities change and develop; things happen and priorities shift. Families bring with them a vast array of cultural perspectives and values. Services that respond to local events and neighbourhood cultural features make cultural competency a relevant and meaningful experience.

A Family Day Care (FDC) scheme, in response to the growing number of families settling in the local community from Africa (mostly Somalia), began a process of working with local agencies and the community Elders to make connection and

build relationships. This getting to know you process happened over a year or so. Conversations about expectations, child rearing practices etc. lead to social events and invitations to join cultural celebrations.

Recruitment of workers to the scheme from the community increased, and the confidence of local families in the scheme's service strengthened. Sometimes cultural competency is a long process that invites us to look beyond our own walls to seek relationships with our community.

### ***Questions for reflection***

- What's going on in your community?
- What changes or shifts do you need to be aware of?
- How do you know about the cultural perspectives and values
- of the families you work with?
- What do you do with this information?
- Where can you go to find out more?

### ***Celebrate***

Celebrations seem to be an easy way for us all—children, families and workers—to learn more about each other and become culturally competent. But what we know is that celebrations of all descriptions are an important part of our cultural life and that they take many forms.

There are religious celebrations like Eid at the end of Ramadan, or those that connect us to place like national days of celebration, or connect us to ancient cycles like the Luna New Year. Or of course they can include the everyday celebrations that honour birthdays and other rites of passage.

Celebrating birthdays can be an important cultural event and an important way to recognise children's identity and their family connections.

It doesn't really matter which events we celebrate with children in our services as long as they are relevant and meaningful to the community that our service is a part of; as long as we seek guidance and connection with the families and involve the children.

### ***Questions for reflection***

- Do you know about the celebrations that are important to the
- children and families that you work with?
- How will this information be included in the program?

- Which celebrations are relevant in your broader community?
- How can you involve children in the planning and preparation of the celebration?

Becoming culturally competent is about connections and relationships. Firstly, as workers, connecting to our own cultural identity, knowing what's important to us and where these ideas come from.

From there, our efforts to recognise and celebrate the cultural identity of the children and families we work with can be as small as learning a greeting in a child's home language, or asking a family about how they plan to celebrate their version of New Year.

As we become more confident we can look for bigger projects that intentionally invite children to think and learn about their own and others' cultural identity, challenge prejudice when we encounter it, and explore new ways of knowing and being.

Cultural competency is ultimately about respect, learning to respect our own and each other's identity, standing up to actions that erode these rights and exploring ways to demonstrate this commitment every day.

This is a challenge that cannot be ignored or reduced to a token event or someone else's problem. It requires each of us to decide how we will live and more importantly what message we send to children about how they will live.

It is through our commitment and our daily action to truly value difference that we become a community in which all can belong and flourish.

*Adapted from*

[http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EYLFPLP\\_E-Newsletter\\_No7.pdf](http://www.earlychildhoodaustralia.org.au/nqsplp/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/EYLFPLP_E-Newsletter_No7.pdf)

<http://www.echr.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/nqs-plp-e-newsletters/nqs-plp-e-newsletter-no-65-2013-becoming-culturally-competent---ideas-that-support-practice.pdf>



## MAGICAL PHOTOS OF CHILDREN PLAYING AROUND THE WORLD

No matter their cultural background, no matter their economic situation, kids will always find imaginative ways to have fun. Their wild imaginations and magical childhood moments, when captured on camera by talented photographers, can make for truly wonderful photos.

Many in the Western world fear that technology is making today's children lose touch with nature and with their own creativity, and while there are arguments to be made for the intellectual stimulation that apps and programs for children can bring, there's also something to be said for simply playing with a stick in the mud or chasing dandelion seeds though an open meadow.

For better or worse, the children in these photos seem entirely content making their own fun.

<http://www.boredpanda.com/happy-children-playing/>





# OSCAR NETWORK TRAINING AND EVENT CALENDAR TERM 3 2017

EVENT/TRAINING	DATE	TIME & PLACE	COST (GST INCLUDED)
Safe Food Handling	Tuesday 15 August	10:00am – 12 noon St Marks Cnr Vincent Place & Opawa Rd	\$50 members \$100 non-members
Children with Autism	Monday 21 August	10:00am – 12 noon St Marks Cnr Vincent Place & Opawa Rd	\$50 members \$100 non-members
Child Protection	Tuesday 22 August	10:00am – 12 noon St Marks Cnr Vincent Place & Opawa Rd	\$50 per person
Full & Refresher First Aid MediTrain <i>MSDCYF approved</i>	Saturday 26 August	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
Southland Training • Health & Safety • Challenging Behaviours	Tuesday 29 August	Health & Safety: 9:30 am – 11:30 am Challenging Behaviours: 12:00pm – 2:00 pm The Esk Room, Kelvin Hotel 16 Kelvin St, Invercargill	\$50 per person per session Light refreshment
OSCAR Providers Networking Meeting	Wednesday 6 September	10:00 am – 12 noon Dallington OSCAR Room 2 Bramwell St, Dallington	Free
Preparing your Emergency Plan	Tuesday 19 September	6:30pm – 8:30pm OSCAR Network 25 Disraeli St, Addington	\$50 members \$100 non-members

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

