

INPSYNC

Official Monthly Newsletter of InPsych Psychology



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InPsych *Psychology*

'InPsych with Wellbeing'

MEET SARA.. OUR NEW PSYCHOLOGIST!

WELCOME TO THE TEAM



Sara is a registered psychologist, who has completed a Masters in Counselling Psychology. She has a specific interest in working with young people, refugee communities and individuals experiencing a range of mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, grief and loss and trauma.

She has several years of experience in counselling and community development, previously working in primary, secondary and tertiary educational environments, in family therapeutic settings and in community activism related to refugee and ex-detainees.

She is a strong believer in implementing a compassionate care approach that places the individual at the centre of the therapeutic process and allows their unique voice to resonate and be heard. She utilises several therapeutic approaches to promote change which include Cognitive Behaviour therapy, Emotion Focused Therapy, Acceptance Commitment Therapy and Child and Family Therapeutic approaches. She also provides counselling support in both English and Arabic.

Sara is available for appointments and is working from our Brunswick office on Thursday's 12pm to 8pm and Glenroy on Friday's 9am to 6pm.



Sara Mussa- Psychologist

The Expectation Gap: When Do Toddlers Have Control Over their Behaviors?



Toddlers are wildly and wonderfully unpredictable. One minute, your little girl might be happily conversing with you, and the next, she's out of control, rolling on the floor in agony because she can't have that cupcake she just spotted on a TV commercial. For parents, this seemingly unpredictable lack of emotional control can be exasperating — unless, that is, you're expecting it.

One reason parents can feel so frustrated about toddler's behavior is the "expectation gap." Many parents assume that tots are capable — or should be capable — of doing things that their brains simply aren't ready to do yet.

A major survey by the Zero to Three Foundation, the world's largest organization dedicated to infant and toddler well-being, revealed that 56 percent of parents believe that children have the impulse control to resist the desire to do something forbidden before age 3. And 36 percent believe that children under age 2 can do so. The truth: toddlers don't start developing these abilities reliably until age 3-1/2 or 4 at the earliest.

The same survey found that 43 percent of parents think children can reliably share and take turns with other children before age 2. In reality, this skill develops between 3 to 4 years as well.

If you're skeptical of these results, you might wonder why your toddler can sometimes successfully manage a situation, but at other times behave poorly in identical circumstances. Doesn't this mean that the child is purposefully choosing to misbehave?

The short answer is no. Toddlers' behavior is so unpredictable because attaining the capacity to control one's emotions and actions depends on a mix of the child's brain development and her body's state at any given moment. All of these factors influence the child's ability to control behavior:

- * Rapid brain growth with neural circuits in flux
- * Sleep requirements not being met
- * Hunger, or fluctuating blood sugar levels (known as being "hangry")
- * One's subconscious sense of safety—which can depend on the environment and relationships
- * Body states, including pain from teething, an incubating virus, or overreactivity to sounds or other sensory input
- * The expected ups and downs of social and emotional growth

In other words, it's complex! So, the next time you're at wit's end over something your toddler did, remember that your child's abilities are still emerging. Being inconsistent is to be expected. One day your son might handle a disappointment or limit calmly, but the next day (or hour) the very same challenge will trigger a tantrum. It's all part of the way we develop as human beings.

So, what can you do as a parent when your toddler acts unpredictably and you're not sure how to react?

- Ask yourself if the child's ability to control his behavior is fully developed yet. If your child is younger than 4 years old, this ability will be inconsistent, so it's important to meet the behavior with compassion and loving limits.
- The best way to help an out-of-control toddler is for us to stay calm. This process of assisting a child in calming down by sharing our own calmness is known as emotional co-regulation.
- In order to give toddlers what they need, we need to take care of ourselves. That way, we're more likely to have the energy and presence to support our children successfully.

Remember, children feel growing pains only in more than just their bones and muscles. These discomforts also emerge from the way small human beings reconcile living in an unpredictable world.

By understanding that toddlers naturally have uneven coping abilities, we can narrow the expectation gap, and reduce our children's stress — and our own. In the process, we'll strengthen our precious, lifelong relationships with our children.

To reduce stress and anxiety, write your happy thoughts down



Writing about positive emotions may help to reduce stress and anxiety, according to our new study, published in the British Journal of Health Psychology.

Earlier research has also found that writing about negative emotions – getting things “off your chest” – can improve your mental health. And it seems to benefit physical health, too.

Stress affects your physical health, so it is thought that improvements in mental well-being might stop people becoming physically unwell. Research has shown that writing about negative emotions can lead to fewer visits to the doctor, fewer self-reported symptoms of ill health, and less time off work due to ill health.

Not many studies have investigated writing about positive emotions, but if writing about negative emotions helps people deal with their negative thoughts and feelings, then it's possible that focusing on positive emotions might have a positive effect on people's mental health.

Earlier research has shown that writing about positive experiences for 20 minutes a day, for three consecutive days, improved people's mood and led to fewer visits to the doctor. Even writing for as little as two minutes a day about a positive experience has been shown to reduce the number of health complaints that people report.

While earlier studies showed that writing about positive experiences can improve your mood, we didn't know what effect it might have on stress and anxiety.

Twenty minutes a day

For our study, we investigated whether writing about a positive experience – which could include anything from being moved by a good book, painting or piece of music, to falling in love – could reduce stress, anxiety and common health complaints, such as a headache, back pain or coughs and colds. We also wanted to know if it would be helpful for all people, regardless of their level of distress.

We recruited 71 healthy participants, aged 19 to 77, and randomly allocated them to one of two groups. We asked one group (37 participants) to write about the most wonderful experiences of their life for 20 minutes a day, for three consecutive days, and we asked the other group (34 participants) to write about a neutral topic, such as their plans for the rest of the day, over the same time frame.

We measured levels of anxiety, as reported by the participants, immediately before and after they completed their writing task. We found a significantly greater decrease in anxiety for those people who wrote about positive experiences, compared with those who wrote about neutral topics.

The participants also reported their levels of stress, anxiety and physical health complaints four weeks after they completed the writing tasks.

Stress and anxiety decreased to a significantly greater extent for those who wrote about positive experiences after four weeks, compared with the levels reported before they completed the writing tasks. However, writing didn't improve participants' physical health problems.

We also found that writing about happy moments was effective, regardless of the levels of distress that people reported at the start of the study.

Because we excluded people with a diagnosed psychological condition, we can't be sure that this technique would work in a clinical setting. It's also important to note that in order for them to engage with the task, it wasn't possible to blind participants to the treatment. Another limitation of our study was that we relied on self-report questionnaires, rather than using objective measures of mental and physical health.

Of course, emotional writing may not be for everyone. Personality traits, problems expressing emotions or a disinterest in writing might mean that for some people there are better ways to tackle negative emotions.

An advantage of writing about positive emotions to tackle stress and anxiety is its simplicity. Unlike many other strategies for improving psychological well-being, this task needs no training or time spent with a therapist. People can do it at a time and place that is convenient for them – and it's free.

Taken from theconversation.com

Why seeing a psychologist is not just for the mentally ill.



Almost half of us will experience some kind of mental struggle in our lives. Less than half of those will ever seek help, but it's not just when we're sick that we can use support.

This is the message of a new campaign by the Australian Psychological Society (APS), Believe in Change, launching on March 1 in Sydney.

Whether we seek to improve our relationships, our performance at work or in sport, whether we're looking to be a better parent or are hamstrung by depression or anxiety, all growth requires change and support can smooth the edges of those transitions and provide insight and wisdom.

"We know that change is possible," says APS president, Anthony Cichello, "and each time we incorporate the skills we learn from embarking on a process of change, our lives are enriched."

Three-time Olympic swimmer, Belinda Hocking agrees.

Hocking has been seeing psychologists since she was a 15-year-old, wide-eyed teen entering the Australian Institute of Sport on a scholarship.

Intimidated by the famous faces and high-achievers around her, she was encouraged to see a sports psychologist and says it initially helped her to gain confidence in her own abilities and "see that I had my own path to go down".

It also gave her a performance edge, equipping her with the skills to deal with nerves, how to get through training and races mentally, as well as dealing with peer pressure and pressures from being in the public eye.

Having the support of a psychologist helped her during tough times, like the 2012 Olympics. She had trained for it for 1406 days and entered ranked second, but failed to make the finals after a bout of tonsillitis. But, the support has also helped her, when life has been going swimmingly.

"Now, as I've grown up, especially over the last three or four years, 80 per cent of what I talk to my sport's psych about is personal," says the 26-year-old from country Victoria.

"I've realised that I've got some pretty good skills to handle the pressure and nerves, but as I've got older I've realised more that it's my personal life that influences my swimming life."

While Hocking, who will speak at the launch of the campaign, says she would never have considered seeing a psychologist if she hadn't been encouraged to by the AIS, she is now passionate about the difference they can make to all of us both personally and professionally, regardless of our situation.

"I think we need to move into this phase that it doesn't mean that you're crazy or that you're mentally inept, if you feel like you just need to talk to someone," Hocking says.

"I think there are so many people out there who would really benefit from talking with someone other than their close family members about things. But, there's so much fear about it, which I think is really sad... I hope we can start talking about it a bit more freely and for people to realise that sports people use them, mothers use them, people in the public eye use them."

Mia Freedman, co-founder and publisher of the Mamamia Women's Network, will also be speaking at the campaign launch about how psychological support has helped her, while Cichello says that there are as many different types of psychologists as there are people who see them.

"I see successful business people, who might be well-known in the community, who have good families and successful jobs who don't feel like they're happy but are not sure why," he explains.

"I see people who keep finding themselves in unsuccessful, abusive relationships even though they're very successful and they can't figure out why it's happening... People who have lost someone and are struggling..."

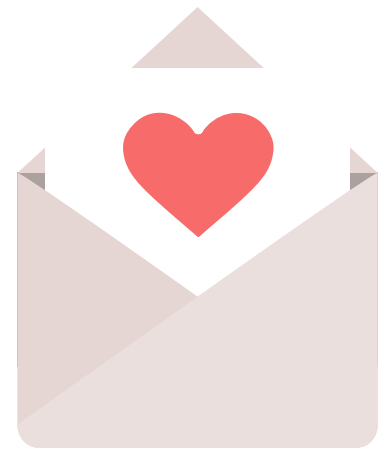
"We all find ourselves, at times, being challenged with circumstances that we haven't had to deal with before... and when we grow through them we do end up being stronger."

Hocking, who is in the process of retiring from swimming as she finishes a degree in education and embarks on a new phase of her life, agrees.

"I hope people can just be comfortable to speak up when they need help and everybody needs help at some points in their life," she says, "no matter who they are."

Taken from The Sydney Morning Herald

RELATIONSHIP CORNER



Is love a choice?

Some think that love is (or is not) meant to be. And when we are in the thrill of new love, it often feels like you're going along for the ride, like it's happening to you and not the other way around. But what about making a choice to love someone?

Every time you turn toward your partner instead of away, that is a choice.

Every time you listen empathetically to understand your partner's perspective—even if you disagree—that is a choice.

Every time you express a positive need to your partner, and listen and respond to their needs, that is a choice.

Being intentional, attentive, mindful, and appreciative in your relationship are choices.

In which ways do you choose to love your partner?

Rise and shine!

We all have our preferences for waking up in the morning. Some of us love it. Others hate it. Some of us take one look at the clock and go back to sleep. Others go for a run. In any case, most of us need caffeine. If you wake up with your partner every morning, why not start your day with a few positive interactions?

Like these:

- Get up at the same time
- Smile at each other and cuddle for a few minutes
- Have coffee or tea together, or breakfast
- Do some morning chores together
- Kiss each other goodbye

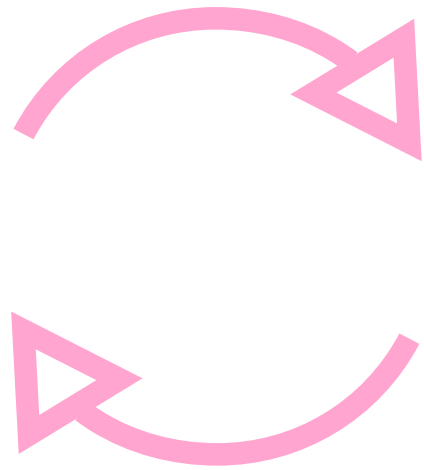
We know that with busy jobs and hectic lives, those ideas aren't possible for everyone.

What's important is that sticking to shared routines can become a reliable way to connect every day. Try something that works for both of you.

Taken from Marriage Minute- The Gottman Institute

If you or someone you know is currently having relationship troubles or would like to get some more tips for improving a relationship please contact us today on 1300 019 230 to organise an appointment with one of our psychologists.

WHATS ON IN AUGUST?



JEANS FOR GENES DAY 3/8/18

Jeans for Genes was established in 1994 by Children's Medical Research Institute to fund revolutionary research that helps diagnose, understand, and find cures or treatments for conditions affecting kids, including genetic diseases, cancer, and epilepsy.

1 in 20 kids is born with a genetic disease or birth defect. You likely know and care about someone affected.

Genetic diseases are one of the leading causes of death in kids under four and the main cause of ongoing hospitalisation. To fight this epidemic, we need more research.

NATIONAL ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN'S DAY 4/8/18

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day is held on 4 August each year and is coordinated by the Secretariat for National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care.

It is a time for early childhood services and schools to celebrate the strengths and culture of Koorie children, as well as learn about the important role that community, culture and family play in the life of every Koorie child.

SPEECH PATHOLOGY WEEK 19-25/8/18

Speech Pathology Week seeks to promote the speech pathology profession and the work done by speech pathologists with the more than 1.1 million Australians who have a communication or swallowing disorder that impacts on their daily life.