

INPSYNC

Official Monthly Newsletter of InPsync Psychology



THIS ISSUE INCLUDES:

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FIGHTING**

**HOW TO LIVE PEACEFULLY
WITH REPETITIVE NEGATIVE
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WHAT'S ON THIS MONTH?



InPsync *Psychology*

'InPsync with Wellbeing'

Nine steps to curb sibling fighting



Fights between children serve an important purpose, writes Dr Lyn O'Grady MAPS. It's one way that children learn to resolve problems, and negotiating conflicts with each other also helps them to work out their place in the family.

Some siblings get along more easily than others. This can depend on factors such as temperament and the way the family manages incidents of fighting. Fighting is often more common when children are younger and haven't developed language or social skills to communicate more effectively.

When children's needs are met, they feel that they are treated equally by parents and they feel respected and heard within the family the conflicts between siblings can reduce. But striking a balance between the competing needs of family members is difficult.

Parents and carers can find fighting between siblings exhausting, particularly over holiday periods when children spend a lot of time with each other. How can families reduce the fighting so they can enjoy each other's company?

1. Welcome input

Set clear family rules and expectations, ensuring each child has a chance to have input and understand why the rules are important.

A family meeting is one way to give everyone a chance to identify what rules will be important for everyone to get along. The Raising Children Network has lists of example family rules which might be helpful.

2. Be organised

Establish family routines. Routines can help family members know what to expect and this can reduce conflicts.

Although holidays can be a time to enjoy a break from routines, there may be some routines that are helpful to maintain. For example, bedtime routines are still important to ensure that children's sleep patterns are maintained. There might be a little flexibility if children don't need to get up so early in the holidays but changing the routine too much is likely to affect sleep and also make it much harder to return to the school routine when the time comes.

Routines also help children feel safe and secure. This might be more important for some children than others. Finding ways to include children in deciding what routines are necessary to help the family to function well, and which ones might be able to change during holidays, can be a good way to help children understand change and learn how to deal with it.

3. Focus on the positive

Notice when children have done something to help others or followed the family rules. Let them know clearly and specifically what they did well.

Children like to please their parents and also like to be recognised when they have tried hard to do something well. If their positive actions are noticed they feel affirmed and valued and will be more likely to see themselves in a positive light. Children like to be noticed within the family. If parents focus on negatives rather than positive behaviours, children are not given the opportunity to learn how to do things better and their negative behaviours can become reinforced through getting attention only in that way.

4. Show how it's done

Model effective ways to resolve conflicts. This helps children to learn how to resolve differences without a fight needing to break out.

There are many different ways to resolve conflict and sometimes parents use styles of conflict resolution that they learned from their own family. These may or may not be the most helpful ways. KidsMatter has a resource to help identify the most effective ways to resolve conflict, aiming for a win-win approach.

5. Encourage listening

Be a coach rather than an umpire. Where ever possible help your children learn to talk with each other. Prompt them to listen to the other person and together work out a solution. You may be able to offer suggestions but the more input children have the better.

6. Watch for triggers

Make changes to the environment where possible. You may notice that there are some spaces or times (such as in the car or when shopping) where fighting is more likely to occur. By making some changes to the environment and planning ahead you may be able to prevent fights. For example, you might set up rules beforehand about taking turns to sit in the front seat or to push the shopping trolley. Timers can be helpful to introduce as a way for the children to self-monitor when to take turns.

7. Step back sometimes

Let children work it out sometimes. If it is safe, it can be helpful to monitor rather than intervene when children argue. This can provide them with the chance to work out the problem for themselves.

Deciding when to let children resolve the issue themselves or when to step in will depend on the age of the children, the risk of physical or emotional harm occurring if the conflict is allowed to escalate and the parents' own tolerance levels. The younger the children the more it may be necessary for the parents to step after a few minutes. Even when parents decide to step in to help resolve the conflict, don't be tempted to come in with a solution. Even young children can often come up with great solutions if given the opportunity. It will be most helpful to try to keep the children involved in the resolution of the conflict and to see your role as the facilitator of finding a solution that works for everyone.

You might find it helps to provide some suggestions for the children to choose from. If the children are becoming upset, you might suggest a break for everyone to calm down and take some time to think about it before returning to talk about it again together.

8. Set some safety rules

Be clear about boundaries when fighting or arguments go too far. Children can be hurt emotionally and physically through fights with their siblings. Having clear rules about non-negotiables such as hurtful insults or physical injuries will help children to feel safe and avoid long-term impacts of conflicts within the family.

The APS tipsheet has helpful suggestions for managing conflict between children, including discipline strategies. Positive approaches to discipline include logical consequences and time to calm down. The approaches need to take into account the age of the children and ideally followed up later with a chat about what happened and reinforcing what the parent hopes will happen in the future.

9. Have a cool discussion

When everyone's emotions are running high it's best to take some time to calm down. Parents can also benefit from taking some time to reflect on what happened and possible reasons why a fight occurred or got out of hand. It may be something obvious like everyone feeling tired and easily annoyed. This can be common during busy periods and changes of routine over the holiday periods.

If conflicts are continuing to occur without obvious reasons it could be a sign of a concern with one or more children.

For example if one child is particularly aggressive or agitated it could be the sign of an emerging mental health difficulty which might need to be explored further. Sometimes patterns develop over time in family relationships where conflict arises because this has become a habit or the way that children interact. Noticing this and looking at what happens before the conflict arises can give parents a clue about what they might be able to change in the environment or intervene at an earlier stage to reduce the likelihood of the conflict occurring or escalating.

10. Consider help

If efforts to resolve sibling conflict don't work and you are concerned about the extent of sibling conflict and the impact it is having on family members, seek professional help. This might in the first instance involve the parents seeking some assistance with their approach to parenting and skill development. Parenting groups or parent education sessions can be helpful, particularly hearing from other parents about what works for them. If this support is not enough, more intensive family support may be useful such as family therapy where family dynamics and underlying tensions can be recognised and addressed together in a safe and respectful environment with the support of a trained practitioner.

Taken from Psychlopaedia.org

How to Live Peacefully With Repetitive Negative Thoughts



Do you have repetitive negative thoughts? If so, the diagnosis is confirmed: You're human. The Laboratory of Neuro-Imaging reports that the average person experiences 70,000 thoughts per day. As a psychotherapist, I can say with certainty that a large percentage of the 70,000 are about what can go wrong, what did go wrong, what will go wrong, what you've done wrong, and what everyone else is doing wrong.

What makes negative repetitive thoughts so challenging is that they often stem from core self-beliefs, like I'm not good enough, I won't get what I want, or the world is not trustworthy. Because they're built out of these deeply held beliefs, repetitive thought loops are powerful and sticky; we believe our repetitive thoughts, as if their persistence is somehow evidence of their truth. As a result, we are compulsively compelled to attach and engage with their content.

Further, we learn early in life that we need to do something with and about our negative thoughts: Either prove them wrong, convince them (and ourselves) that they're false, or actively replace them with positive thoughts that feel less threatening. Either way, we're taught, we need to put up a fight.

There is nothing inherently wrong with these strategies: Arguing with and disproving negative thoughts is sometimes helpful, as is actively replacing the negative with positive thoughts. But the most effective approach I have found (personally and professionally) for working with repetitive negative thoughts is actually the least intuitive:

- Stop trying to change negative thoughts.
- Don't do anything about them.
- Leave negative thoughts alone.
- Stop fighting with what's actually happening.
- Look elsewhere.

How can we be okay when what's happening in our mind is not okay? How do we leave our thoughts alone and not get involved in their content?

We assume that by agreeing to not change our thoughts, we are also agreeing to believe and engage with them — that if we allow the thoughts to happen, we also have to pay attention to them and invest them with meaning. But what if that weren't true? What if negative thoughts could appear in your inner world, and you could see and hear them, comprehend their content, but not have to do anything with or about them — not have to make them go away, invest energy in them, get involved in their stories, award them with a sense of importance, or even believe them to be true? What if the negative thoughts could mean nothing about who you are? Before we can practice this, however, we have to know it's possible. And I can tell you with certainty, it is.

We are a culture of doers, and the instruction to not do, for some, can feel like not enough. It can be helpful, therefore, to reframe the not doing into a doing, or in this case, the not changing into a changing. Specifically, instead of focusing on not changing your thoughts, practice turning your attention away from the contents of the thoughts and placing it on who or what is actually hearing the thoughts. Ask yourself, who are these thoughts talking to? For whose attention are they vying?

As soon as thoughts appear, particularly negative ones, we tend to narrow our attention down onto the thoughts with the focus of a laser beam, thereby darkening anything else that might exist in our awareness. And yet, what if, when thoughts appear, we were to look beyond them, and contemplate what else is here? What is behind and under the thoughts? In so doing, we leave the thoughts alone, and direct our attention to the spaciousness within which the thoughts are appearing. If thoughts are like birds appearing in our sky, we shift our attention from the birds to the sky.

An important aspect of the practice of not changing negative thoughts involves another not — not judging the fact that you have negative thoughts. In truth, thoughts happen, with or without our consent. The fact that negative thoughts may come back again and again, in almost or entirely the same form, is just how it is — it's a byproduct of our mind's operating system. It is not a failing on our part; it does not make us less spiritual, or more troubled or tortured. The sooner we can accept this truth, the sooner we can get on with the business of living. Getting rid of negative thoughts is by no means a necessity for well-being.

Try it out for a day or an hour: Don't change your thoughts, no matter what they contain — just leave them alone, and let them happen. Turn your attention away from the thoughts and toward the one who's listening, the one whose attention the thoughts are beckoning. Sense the space in which the thoughts are appearing, the silence behind the noise, the stillness under the movement of thoughts. Notice your own awareness, that presence which is aware of these thoughts.

When we shift our attention in this way, something very curious happens: The thoughts start losing their power. They may still be there, but they contain less oomph. Simultaneously, the volume of the thoughts shifts from a shout to a whisper. And sometimes, as the thoughts figure out that they're not that seductive to us anymore, or that their appearance no longer sends us into a tailspin, they start to fade altogether. But then sometimes they don't fade. And while we would prefer that the negative thoughts subside rather than continue, neither is evidence of the success or failure of our process.

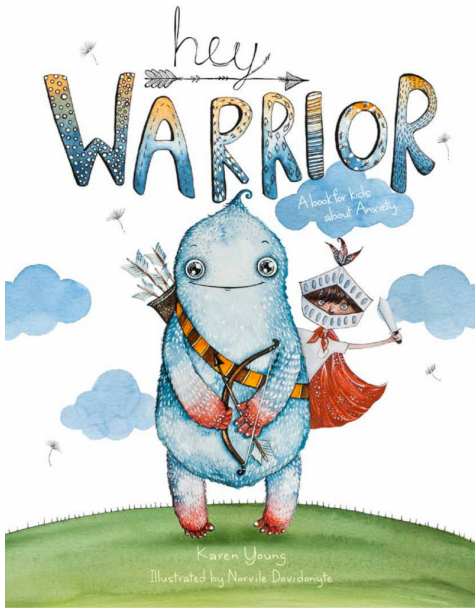
Repetitive negative thoughts are part of the human journey; we cannot stop them. We can, however, stop trying to stop the unstoppable, or to change the unchangeable. What matters is how we relate to the thoughts, what we tell ourselves we must do or not do about them, and the self-attack we propagate as a result of having such thoughts. We generate internal peace when we give up the fight with the inevitable and direct our attention towards new frontiers. Ultimately, the relationship we build with our thoughts and the agency we take with our attention is what creates our experience. And, as is always the case, life resolves itself in contradiction: When we stop trying to change reality, reality changes.

INPSYNC BOOK CLUB:

Introducing our very own book club where we recommend some great reads to compliment your work in sessions.



FOR THE KIDDIES



Hey Warrior by Karen Young (Little Steps Publishing 2016)

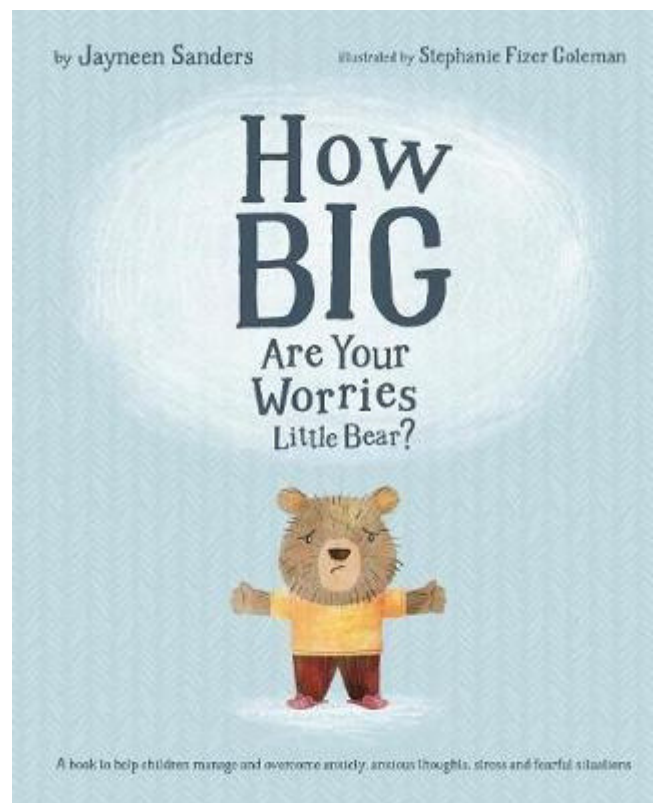
Kids can do amazing things with the right information.

Understanding why anxiety feels the way it does and where the physical symptoms come from is a powerful step in turning anxiety around.

Anxiety explained, kids empowered.

How Big are your Worries Little Bear? By Jayneen Sanders (Educate2empower Publishing 2017)

A book to help children manage and overcome anxiety, anxious thoughts, stress and fearful situations.



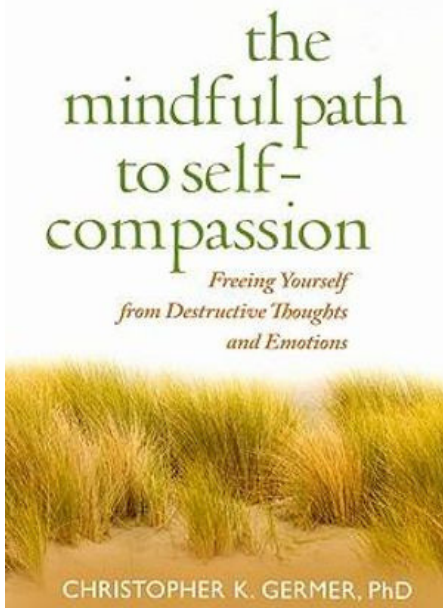
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FOR THE ADULTS

"Self-compassion is the ground of all emotional healing, and Dr. Germer has produced an incredible guide. Writers with great clarity, psychological wisdom, and warmth, this book will serve anyone seeking practical and powerful tools that live the heart." —Tara Brach, PhD, author of *Radical Openness*

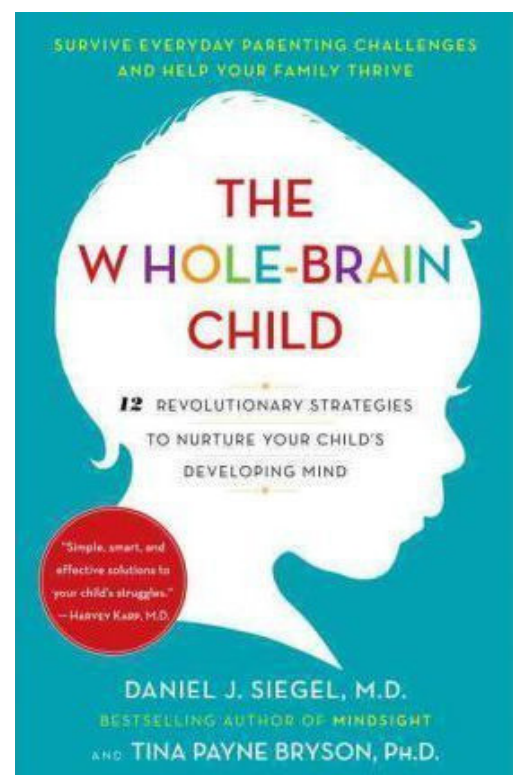


The Mindful Path to Self-Compassion by Christopher K Germer(Guilford Publications 2009)

Over his decades of experience as a therapist and mindfulness meditation practitioner, Dr. Christopher Germer has learned a paradoxical lesson: We all want to avoid pain, but letting it in--and responding compassionately to our own imperfections, without judgment or self-blame--are essential steps on the path to healing. This wise and eloquent book illuminates the power of self-compassion and offers creative, scientifically grounded strategies for putting it into action.

The Whole-Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture your Child's Developing Mind by Daniel Siegal and Tina Payne Bryson (Random House USA Inc 2012)

In this pioneering, practical book, Daniel J. Siegel, neuropsychiatrist and author of the bestselling *Mindsight*, and parenting expert Tina Payne Bryson offer a revolutionary approach to child rearing with twelve key strategies that foster healthy brain development, leading to calmer, happier children.



RELATIONSHIP CORNER



The story of Alice in Wonderland

As the story goes, Alice sees a very unusual rabbit go down a hole, and she jumps in with two feet. She has no idea what this journey is going to be and Wonderland isn't really all that great of a place. There's scary things, challenging things, and things that are also interesting and fascinating. It's an adventure, and Alice doesn't know what's in store for her, but she jumps in anyway. Alice doesn't hesitate or think maybe a better rabbit will come along tomorrow. She doesn't look back and doesn't question the adventure she's chosen. That's commitment.

Let's break the ice, ice, baby! All right stop.

Collaborate and listen.

No, this isn't really an email about the one-time hip hop superstar known as Vanilla Ice. But it is about how to break the ice in your marriage. We all get bogged down in the day-to-day responsibilities of our lives and forget to make time for intimate conversations with our partner. Sometimes, we don't even know where to begin. The secret is to ask open-ended questions, which are questions without a "yes" or "no" answer. "Did you pay the electric bill?" is not an open-ended question.

Here are some examples:

- What adventures do you want to have before you die?
- If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be, and why?
- How do you think we could have more fun in our life together?
- What are your biggest worries about the future?
- What do you find exciting in your life right now?

Ask your partner a few questions from the list above, or download our free app and pick a couple from the open-ended questions deck.

You may be surprised by what you learn.

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 OCTOBER?



MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

Mental Health Month is recognised and celebrated throughout the month of October in NSW. The aim of the campaign is to promote the importance of early intervention practices for positive mental health and wellbeing and reduce the stigma associated with mental health. The awareness campaign is held annually in October to coincide with the World Health Organisation's recognition of World Mental Health Day which is celebrated on the 10th of October.

SOCK IT TO SUICIDE WEEK

During "Sock It To Suicide Week" we encourage everyone to wear bright coloured Socks/Stockings to their workplace, school etc and raise funds in support of White Wreath Association to help us combat our high suicide rate.

The White Wreath Association creates awareness about the misunderstandings relating to mental illness and provides community education concerning the lack of appropriate treatments. Our objective is to raise sufficient funds to establish safe haven centres for those who want a 'place of safety' at times when suicide threatens.

ODD SOCKS DAY 5/10

Mental illness impacts all Australians. No family, workplace or community is unaffected. It is estimated that one in four Australians will experience a mental illness in any year and one in two Australians will experience a mental illness in their lifetime . But only around 35 per cent of affected Australians actively access services for mental health problems because of this stigma. Make a difference in your community.... Speak up and be brave – Don't tolerate stigma.

CHILDREN'S WEEK

Children's Week is an annual event celebrated in Australia held around the fourth Wednesday in October. In 1996 it was decided to adopt a permanent theme: "A Caring World Shares" as a reflection of Children's Week aims while at the same time acknowledging the designated year on national posters and other printed materials.