**NEWSLETTER NO 4  17.06.2010**

**Reminders**

### Sessions

Have you booked your child in for next term? Kindy session choices and fees for next term are now overdue. Please see Kerry.

### Questionnaires

Please return your Kids Matter questionnaire this Tuesday 22nd June so that they can be collated by the Flinders University team, to see if this project is useful to families. Thankyou.

If your child is in their final term of kindy at the moment could you please return your kindy questionnaire so that we can make continual improvements at our centre. They can be anonymous or you can add your name so we can follow up any concerns or ideas with you. Thankyou.

### Fundraising

Have you supported your child’s kindy and bought your $2 ticket from kindy? You have a chance to win your kindy fees back. Drawn Monday week 11.

### Fruit snack

Reminder, please bring fresh fruit or vegetables for fruit time for the children to munch and crunch. NO packaged variations of mushy fruit please and a reminder about no nuts, nutella, muesli bars etc with nuts. We are a nut free zone due to a child having a severe allergy.

### Library books

Have you returned kindy library books, literacy packs and children’s portfolios?

The kindy newsletters are also always online so please check the website for updates if you forget to check your notice pocket at kindy for your newsletter.

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**Kindy DIARY DATES**

**Kindy session form and fees for next term are now OVERDUE.**

WE ARE NEARLY FULL. If you have not returned your session form with payment your child will be allocated sessions if there are places left. Please see Kerry.

### Week 10 EXCURSION

Patch Theatre Sharon

Keep your hair on Tuesday 22nd June P.M. Please note: NO P.M KINDY SESSIONS on this day, excursion only for those that have booked tickets.

Last day of playgroup for term 2 Friday 25th June.

### Week 11

Kindy Raffle drawn Monday

Stayed tuned for who will have their next terms kindy fees reimbursed.

**KIDS MATTER project. Donna Broadhurst “Getting your buttons pushed” workshop.** Does your child push you to the limit sometimes? Come to this free workshop at kindy on Monday 28th June at 7.00pm to 8.30pm. Sorry adults only.

End of term Thursday 1st July

Kindy and School holidays Monday 5th July to Friday 16th July

Kindy resumes Monday 19th July.

**TERM 3**

*Advanced notice* Kindy closure in week 2. Tuesday 27th and Wednesday 28th July.

NO KINDY these days.

Staff are attending professional development on Reggio Emilia practices as part of the sites learning priorities.

**Parent Voice**

Week 4, Tuesday 10th August, 6.45pm at kindy. Discussing the children’s outdoor play area.
Have you seen Annette’s wonderful display about literacy through play? It gives a lot of information about how we further develop children’s literacy skills at kindy. It’s not about the ABC’s.

More interesting web sites

http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/behaviour

What’s happening at kindy?

In collaboration with the parent voice and kindy families the following values: RESPECT, INDIVIDUALITY, CREATIVITY and HARMONY will be part of the centre’s philosophy to represent the heart and soul of Frieda Corpe Kindy.


The children have been very interested in nature and creatures from the garden so we borrowed an insect kit from the museum for the children to observe. We swapped some caterpillars with another teacher for some stick insects which are fascinating.

The children have been looking at their eggs under the microscope and very carefully handling the insects.

Do you have any other interesting insects that reside in your garden? Would you like to bring them in?

For the past few weeks we have also been learning about Australian animals, people and cultures through play based experiences- music and movement, dramatic play, stories, poems, clay, painting and songs.

Some families have brought in some interesting aboriginal artefacts.

Does anyone else have any aboriginal artefacts or know of someone who would like to come in and share more about aboriginal cultures?

Literacy through play: alliteration, rhyme and counting syllables in words. Have you heard your child experimenting with more rhyme lately, singing, chanting or clapping words???

Lots of creative exploring- designs for the art show.

We have had the police in visiting to talk with the children about stranger danger and keeping safe as part of our Child Protection curriculum. We also had Delta Dog Safety to talk with the children about safety around dogs.

Healthy Eating and Be Active is promoted throughout kindy.

Risk taking, persistence

“Police Officers are our friends.” Delta Dog Safety

Positive social skills develop from the home environment with children modelling all that they see and hear. Children want to be and act just like their parents (you are their everything) so positive role modelling is very important.

Something to reflect on!

When you stop and really listen to how your child speaks, responds and acts is this you?????

We have also been encouraging the children to further develop learning dispositions of resilience and positive risk taking-to give things a go. We acknowledge with the children that there will be things that challenge us and we might even find them difficult but that’s part of the way we learn and it is through persistence, resilience and positive risk taking that we do learn and keep on learning. This is all part of our learning journeys.

“Have a go spaghettio”

Kids Matter

When children experience trauma and stress in their lives they go into what we call “fight or flight” mode. The critical thinking part of the brain actually switches off and they go into automatic survival mode. If children are in a state of constant emotional stress they literally go into shut down and cannot learn. They may look as though they are functionally normally but their behaviour, (their under or over reactions to things) will be clearly evident.

Children’s emotional well being is crucial to their learning (We have a lot of information about this at kindy for borrowing or perhaps Google it on the internet.)

Opening hearts and minds to life long learning. Kerry, Annette, Tonia, Pam and Chris.
The Effects of Conflict
The High Price Your Children Pay

The effects of conflict on children are well-documented. Family researchers generally agree that parental conflict is the biggest predictor of poor outcome for children. The most powerful determinants are the level and intensity of the conflict between parents, and whether the conflict is resolved. This is true no matter whether parents are married or divorced.

Summary of the Research on the Effects of Conflict

- Some children respond to parental conflict by acting out. They may demonstrate behavior problems, increased anger and inability to manage anger, violent behavior, delinquency, and gang involvement.
- Some children respond to parental conflict by turning inward. They are likely to demonstrate depression (we are prescribing anti-depressants for children at an alarming rate), isolation from friends and activities, physical symptoms like headaches, stomach aches, ulcers etc., and substance abuse.
- Children who are exposed to parental conflict do not interact well with others. These kids often have very poor social skills, low self esteem and poor relationships when they become adults.
- Some children exposed to high conflict have trouble thinking. Advances in neuropsychology have shown that when exposed to conflict our brains release stress hormones that over time can actually change brain functioning. Scary stuff! The effects of being exposed to conflict show up as problems in school, truancy, impaired thinking (things like problem-solving, abstract reasoning, memory are affected) and symptoms that mimic Attention Deficit Disorder.

Parental conflict is toxic for kids. It's as simple as that. And as scary. No parents in their right mind would knowingly dose their kids with a bit of poison each day. And yet, parents who fight in front of their children do just that.

Try This

Try this exercise to bring this important concept home. The next time you are about to get into an argument with the other parent, do this. Take out a photograph of your children or just create a mental picture of your kids. Look at those sweet, innocent faces and repeat the following:

"I know that what I am about to do is damaging to you and is likely to affect you forever. But at this moment, indulging my anger is more important than your well being."

Yikes! Who wants to say or do that to their children? Yet, when we fight with the other parent in front of our kids, in essence our actions say to our kids, "I don't care how you feel about this."

Accessed 8/4/08
Parents ongoing fighting costs kids too much.....

Fighting comes in different shapes and sizes. Parents who fight a lot can look like this:

- are angry
- distrust each other
- yell, insult and scream at each other
- argue or interfere
- threaten or intimidate their partner
- criticise their partner
- hit, push, choke or hurt their partner in other ways
- have trouble agreeing on how to parent

That's hard for anyone to live with and especially hard for children. It's important to change because parents' fighting hurts children.

Kids say that the greatest cause of unhappiness for them is fighting between their parents.

As parents you can reduce your children's unhappiness by stopping the fighting. Research shows that fighting between parents that goes on and on can affect children like this:

- they lose their ability to trust
- they are unable to make good bonds (or attachments) to their parents
- they don't believe in themselves
- their feelings get too much for them
- overwhelmed with their feelings they can misbehave
- they have trouble making friends
- they aren't confident
- they don't do well at school
- they don't make good relationships when they are adults

Something to think about.....

Kids tend to think the world revolves around them (this is normal and part of children's development). But it means they can think the fighting is their fault. When parents are fighting, kids talk about feeling distressed, being confused and feeling grief.
Ever wonder how our children’s futures will be shaped by our environmental challenges? With sustainability the seeming buzzword of the century; “greening” our parenting can seem like a daunting task. The good news is that it’s not only environmentally positive, but has many benefits for your child’s wellbeing, writes Annabel Brown.

Anyone closely involved with young children can see only too clearly that they have an inborn affinity for the natural world. Little ones love playing with water, digging in the sand, watching beetles and collecting pebbles, shells and such, and as adults we often look back fondly on such experiences as times of happy discovery and learning.

Sadly, many children growing up today receive far less day-to-day exposure to nature than previous generations. Increasingly, children spend large amounts of time indoors and have less opportunity for free, unstructured outside play.

Yet nature play is worth protecting. It is a vital part of early learning, and a growing body of research is showing the benefits it offers for children’s intellectual and physical development and emotional wellbeing.

So, how has it come about that our children are, as a whole, spending less time exploring their outdoor world? Certainly some major contributors are screen-based entertainment, such as DVDs and computer games, and the increased popularity of manufactured fixed-purpose toys.

In addition, we tend to live more time-pressured and highly scheduled lives, and often prioritize structured activities even for young children – sometimes at the expense of appreciating the many meaningful learning opportunities provided close to home by everyday life. In the increasingly urbanised environments in which we live, safe natural spaces for children to play in freely are becoming rarer, and concerns for our children’s physical wellbeing dictate strict limits upon their freedom to roam.

Such factors are significantly influencing experiences of childhood today, and their effects upon our children are very real – to the extent that our disconnection from the natural world is now sometimes described as “nature deficit disorder”.

Nature-deficit disorder is not an official diagnosis but a way of viewing the problem, and describes the human costs of alienation from nature, among them: diminished use of the senses, attention difficulties, and higher rates of physical and emotional illnesses, Richard Louv, author of Last Child in the Woods, says.

It seems that for children’s innate connection with the wild world to flourish, it must be nurtured by the adults around them, and their contact with nature valued and prioritised as a vital part of childhood.

Being aware of this, many parents actively seek out nature-based experiences to stimulate and enrich their children’s learning. Day trips
to beaches and bushland, zoo excursions and farmyard outings may all be memorable highlights in family life.

However, even more important is cultivating a simple day-to-day attentiveness to our near surrounds. This can provide a young child with their most enduring and valuable source of connection to the natural world, and a sense of stewardship of their space and the many life forms that make up its community.

It’s amazing how much there is to see when we stop to really look: ants under the clothesline, snails in pot plants, the pace at which the clouds blow across the sky. Even an insignificant patch of grass takes on new meaning when minutely explored, and a whole world can be found beneath a paving stone!

By taking it slowly and being receptive to the child’s own discoveries, a walk round the block can become an enjoyable adventure for child and adult alike. A butterfly wing, a seedpod, a smooth pebble – all these and more can be treasures to be cherished for a while then returned to their home in the earth. A Children and Nature Network spokesperson says: “Quite simply, nature is good for us. Evidence shows that it is important, healthy and fun for children to have frequent and varied opportunities for play outdoors – and especially outdoors with natural vegetation – as a part of their everyday lives. When they do, they are happier, healthier and smarter.”

In recent years, there has been growing interest from academics and researchers on the influence of nature on children’s wellbeing. In combination with the first-hand understandings of parents and educators, these are beginning to provide a picture of the specific benefits of nature for children’s development. Here are some of the key areas of benefit, and some ways to help our kids benefit too...

**Physical benefits**

For young children, play experiences in the outdoors provide endless opportunities to build physical confidence and interact with the world in a great variety of ways. Natural settings invite exploration – sand for digging, open spaces for running, skipping and jumping, branches for swinging, and rugged ground to be negotiated with ever-growing skill. Fine motor skills too are honed by the manipulation of delicate natural objects and the making of all kinds of special things. Studies from Norway and Sweden confirm the physical advantages of nature play, with preschoolers who experienced daily play among trees, rocks and uneven topography showing greater gains in motor fitness, especially balance and agility, than those playing in conventional playgrounds.

So next time you’re out for a wander, keep eyes open for good places to practice balancing and climbing, and support children in extending themselves and taking that little bit of risk to help their confidence grow. The chance for safe and playful engagement can be maximised by dressing kids sensibly with solid shoes, hats and practical clothing!

**Thinking skills**

Being outdoors in nature can spark boundless curiosity and help children to develop a love for learning. The natural world is full of things to be observed and investigated, checked out for subtle similarities and differences, opening endless questions as to “why this?” and “how that?”. Further, natural settings have a significantly positive effect upon children’s ability to concentrate and focus. There is clear evidence from US studies that children diagnosed with ADD and ADHD function better following free outdoor play in a natural environment and researchers found that the greener their surroundings, the fewer symptoms the children showed.

In another Swedish study that compared preschool children using a traditional playground with others whose play area contained a field and orchard, the children with the field and orchard showed significantly greater powers of concentration at the end of the year. So take time to observe the details of the natural world with your child, and love their questions!

**Creative ability**

Children given free time outdoors soon seem to look on their surroundings as a source of opportunities and resources for creative play. Whether it’s through make-believe, building castles and cubbies or making treasures, children respond with great creativity when
open-ended materials are available to them - things which, unlike designed toys, have no fixed and singular purpose. In a Chicago study, children observed in green outdoor spaces engaged in more play and more creative forms of play than children in barren spaces. The study showed that preschoolers with access to a natural yard developed more varied and elaborate patterns of play. The richness and beauty of even the simplest natural forms nurtures children's aesthetic sense, and puts them in touch with the creativity of life itself - seen in insects building homes, plants producing flowers, the patterns made by water or wind. Such creativity is also fundamentally important to thinking and practical life skills like problem-solving, constructing and even developing empathy.

Elements of nature play can easily be included indoors by bringing natural materials into the home or play space.

Access to natural settings has benefits when it comes to emotional coping and stress reduction for children and adults alike, so take the opportunity to de-stress outdoors with the kids.

A US study of 337 rural eight to 11-year-olds revealed that regardless of a family's socioeconomic status, the greener the home surroundings, the more resilient children appeared to be against stress and adversity. The protective effect of nature was strongest for the most vulnerable children who experienced the highest levels of stressful life events.

Indeed, the outdoors have been a refuge and a place of renewal throughout the ages, and for many of us, living in the grass, looking up through leafy branches has been a welcome source of comfort.

Natural settings, filled as they are with living things, can remind us of our place within the whole and provide a sense of grounding. By actively valuing children's regular time outdoors, we can help them to discover what may become a lifelong source for maintaining balance and wellbeing.

The evidence to support the developmental benefits of nature play is great - so much so that it's a wonder we ever forgot its crucial value! As well as all the gains it can bring to the individual child, early contact with nature is closely related with environmentally sound behavior later in life, fostering a sense of stewardship for one's place and the planet.

When children are exposed from an early age to diverse life forms, and make attentive to the changing seasons and the cycles of life, actions like saving water, flicking switches and buying the right brand of toilet paper make a lot more sense.

In this way, something as simple as outdoor play can be one of the greatest gifts we give to our children - and to the earth too!

Annabel Brown works in environmental education and early childhood.