

*Partners in Learning Newsletter*  
*Moving forward With the Passion to Succeed*

Dear Families,

Welcome to another fun filled week at Melton West Primary School. In this Newsletter I have put together key points from a document titled 'Evidence Based Guidelines for Mindfulness in Schools.' We hope that you will find these key points of interest and perhaps explore the concept of further with your children.

Key Ideas taken directly from: 'Evidence Based Guidelines for Mindfulness in Schools.'

The modern world is becoming faster, more stressful with distractions and children are particularly susceptible to these influences. It is growing more and more evident that the modern child and teacher needs new skills and awareness to deal with such an environment.

Mindfulness is like gym for the mind. Practising mindfulness is mental exercise that literally strengthens the brain's grey matter in the prefrontal cortex and hippocampus, two key learning areas, supporting the minds ability to focus, pay attention and reduce worry – the more we practise the stronger the mind becomes. Therefore, mindfulness is like gym for the mind. We don't just go to the gym to enjoy the benefits of fitness for the half hour we're there, we go to the gym in order to enjoy the benefits of fitness for 24 hours of the day, and that's the same approach we need to be taking for our mind.

Research has shown us that practising mindfulness strengthens areas of the brain that control 'executive function' such as the prefrontal cortex, hippocampus and amygdala. For this reason, mindfulness leads to better attention, memory, regulation of emotions and self awareness. In turn, improvements in these areas can lead to reduced stress, anxiety and depression, and improved academic skills, social skills and self esteem.

Deep and lasting changes in areas of the brain related to learning Mindfulness causes changes in brain structure and activity. Studies tell us that people who have practised mindfulness show thickening of the grey matter in their frontal cortex. This is the area of the brain responsible for attention, self regulation, executive function, and planning. They also show thickening of the hippocampus (responsible for memory function), the insula and precuneus (responsible for self awareness and emotional processing). Those who practise mindfulness also show reduced activity in the amygdala (associated with distraction, anxiety, fear, depression and stress) and the default mode network (associated with worry and rumination and depression. Because brain changes are considered more permanent than behavioural changes alone, improvements that come from mindfulness are thought to be lasting.

Below is a FREE App SMILING MINDS that you are most welcome to download and explore further. <https://www.smilingmind.com.au/smiling-mind-app/>

Warmest Regards,  
Kathy Cvitkovic  
Assistant Principal

*'Mindfulness is the practice of focusing attention on the experience of the current moment, with an attitude of non-judgemental acceptance and curiosity*

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**Monday 27th August: Book Week Parade 9:10am**  
**Parents Welcome to attend.**

**Thursday 30th August—Fathers' Day Stall**

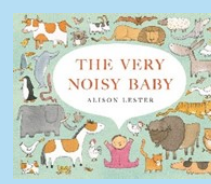
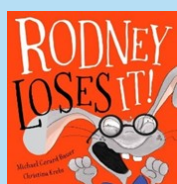
**Friday 31st August: Fathers' Day Breakfast**  
**8:00am—8:30am**

## Quality Literature for Children

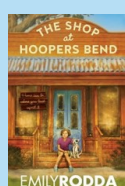
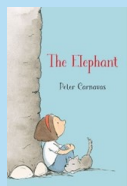
"To learn about literacy, young children must have opportunities to see lots of print and must have easy access to books. Children also need to observe their parents, other adults, or older siblings using literacy in everyday situations. Selecting the right book is the first step toward a successful story" (Christie, J. F., Vukelich, C., & Enz, B. (2007)).

It is currently Book Week (20th-24th August) and every year the Children's Book Council of Australia present the short list for the Book of the Year. Below is a list of some of these books. These books are engaging, high quality children's literature that your children will love and won't want to put down. Head to our school library or your local library and check them out!

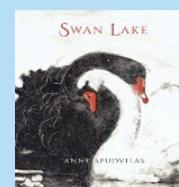
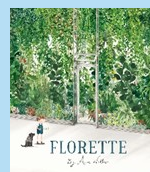
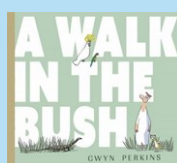
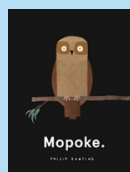
### The Book of the Year: Early Childhood



### The Book of the Year: Younger Readers



### Picture Book of the



Further examples of quality literature you might like to read at home can be found on the Children's Book Council of Australia's website: <https://cbca.org.au/>

Head to the **Book of the Year** tab along the top of the page and select from Book of the Year, Shortlisted and Notables.

*Sarah Marshall- Leading Teacher Literacy*

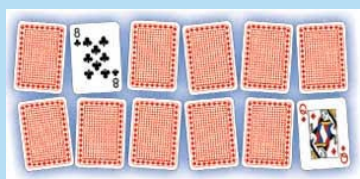
## Top Ten Apps for Learning Maths

These days more and more kids are using tablets and smart devices. This is providing a great opportunity for parents to use mobile applications (APPS) that link Maths to real life experiences as a way of drilling, practicing problem solving and teaching concepts.

### The top 10 apps for children

Amazing Time - helps children learn to read the time as well as understand the language of time. Age group: 5-12.

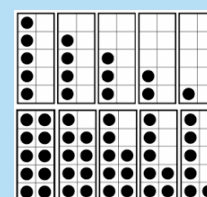
Bee-Bot - helps children practice the language of position. Age group: 5-7.



Concentration - covers a range of mathematical concepts beginning at number recognition, all the way through to equivalent fractions. A very useful app for building fluency and improving concentration. Age group: 5-12.

Coop Fractions - a fraction app that provides practice at placing proper and improper fractions in a number line. Players choose a level of difficulty. Age group: 10-12.

Friends of Ten - uses 'ten frames', a resource used in most classrooms in Australia and allows children to practice their number skills using the familiar structure of the ten frames. Age group: 5-7.



Math Quiz - for older children, the game can be played individually or in multi-player mode, and covers a wide range of mathematical concepts. Great to help children revising for maths tests. Age group: 11+.

Mathsterious Mansion - based on whole number understandings, addition, subtraction and the 100s chart, it supports the development of mental computation. Age group: 7-10.



Ninja Factor Free - builds fluency around multiplication facts. Age group: 8-12.

Number Lines - helps children with basic addition, sequencing and skip counting. Great for practicing the number skills learned at school. Age group: 5-6.



Threes - teaches children to double numbers and to use strategy. Age group: 10+.

*Courtney Templeton- Leading Teacher Numeracy*

# insights



## Four critical tools for kids' anxiety management

by Michael Grose

Anxiety disorders are currently taking a heavy toll on Australian children and young people.

It's been estimated that there will be at least four children in every Australian classroom who are experiencing an anxiety disorder at some stage during a year.

Anxiety is not restricted to secondary schools either, with children as young as four now presenting with symptoms of anxiety, manifested in headaches, tantrums and refusal to go to school.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that there is still a stigma attached to anxiety as people still seem to associate it with weakness and don't understand the difference between normal feelings of stress and crippling anxiety.

### **Anxiety is normal**

Anxiety is the body's response to fear, real or perceived. It's our body's way of protecting us when we're in danger. It's completely normal to feel anxious from time to time. A child might feel anxious about speaking in front of their class or a teen might feel anxious about an exam. Those anxious feelings can act as a motivator to do more revision or be better prepared. With 'normal' anxiety, when the stressful event has passed, the anxious feelings pass too.

We can liken our anxiety response to a smoke alarm. The alarm is designed to alert us to fire, a danger that can threaten our lives. Anxiety becomes a problem when the mind's alarm system is extremely sensitive and responds when there's no genuine danger present.

Anxiety needs to be addressed when it starts interfering with daily life. Kids and teens with anxiety experience the symptoms when they're actually quite safe; the danger is only imagined. And sometimes anxiety shows up for no reason at all.

Parents are well positioned to provide kids with the tools and skills to regulate their anxiousness. Here are four critical skills to teach kids to help them self-manage feelings of anxiousness:



## 1. Breathing to calm down the anxiety

When it comes to calming down anxiety, the brain 'listens' to the body. Kids and teens can show their brain they're safe using deep, slow breathing. This type of breathing helps bring the brain down from high alert and signals the nervous system to begin to return to normal. Encouraging kids to practise deep breathing in between times of high anxiety is essential. By practising, they're preparing their body to also be able to calm down using breathing when the fight or flight response is in full swing.

## 2. Mindfulness to bring kids into the present

Generally kids become anxious about future events such as giving a talk, starting secondary school or going into an unfamiliar situations. They can be perfectly safe yet their bodies can respond as if they are in danger because they are thinking about what may happen. Mindfulness is a great tool to bring kids into the present and relieve them of their feelings of anxiousness.

## 3. Exercise to dissipate anxiety

Exercise plays a huge role in anxiety management, yet children's lifestyles are increasingly sedentary. Exercise and movement help kids regulate their moods and reduce the symptoms of anxiety. Play and exercise help to ease muscle tension, regulate breathing and induce the release of 'feel-good' neurotransmitters.

## 4. Thought-noticing to shift thinking

Thought-noticing is a wonderful skill set that helps kids to better manage their mental health. When kids tune into their thinking, they can immediately distance themselves from it. Rather than being lost in the thoughts that are making them feel anxious, they can mentally step back and see the thought for what it is – a thought which comes and goes, and not a fact.

Breathing, mindfulness, exercise and thought-noticing are best taught and practised when kids are not under stress. They are most effective when they become an entrenched part of kids' lifestyles rather than an activity to be called upon from time to time.



### Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's the author of 10 books for parents including Thriving! and the best-selling Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It, and his latest release Spoonfed Generation: How to raise independent children.

# Living with Asthma

## What is asthma?

Asthma is a lung condition which can be controlled in most cases but cannot currently be cured. People with asthma have sensitive airways. These airways are more likely to react to triggers. The lining of the airways is thicker and inflamed. When a person with asthma has an asthma flare-up, the muscles around the airway squeeze tight, the airways swell and become narrow, and there is more mucus. This makes it hard to breathe. An asthma flare-up can come on slowly (over hours, days or even weeks) or very quickly (over minutes) – a sudden or severe asthma flare-up is sometimes called an asthma attack. Any person with asthma can have an asthma flare-up.



## Asthma facts

1 in 9 people in Australia have asthma. That is around 2.5 million people (11% of the population) 419 people died from asthma in 2014. To find out the latest asthma facts view the Asthma Snapshot online at [aihw.gov.au/asthma](http://aihw.gov.au/asthma)

## Symptoms of asthma

The most common symptoms of asthma are:

- wheezing – a continuous, high-pitched sound coming from the chest while breathing
- shortness of breath – a feeling of not being able to get enough air
- a feeling of tightness in the chest
- a persistent cough

**You do not need to have all of these symptoms to be diagnosed with asthma**

## Common asthma triggers

- Colds, flu and other respiratory infections
- Allergy related triggers
- These allergens include; house dust mites, mould, pollen and pets.
- Exercise
- Cigarette smoke
- Weather e.g. cold air, change in temperature, thunderstorms
- Work-related triggers e.g. wood dust, chemicals, metal salts
- Irritating substances breathed in the air, such as bushfire smoke
- Certain medicines, e.g. aspirin, some blood pressure drugs
- Stress and high emotions, such as crying

## Can I avoid triggers?

It is not always possible to avoid your triggers however reducing exposure to your asthma or allergy triggers may make your symptoms easier to manage.

The first step is to know what your triggers are, your doctor will be able to help you work this out and give you some helpful advice and tips on how to avoid your triggers.

**The good news is, for most people, asthma can be well-controlled by following a daily management plan.**

## Asthma Management

The key to living with asthma is keeping it under control. This means learning about what causes your symptoms, how to avoid these triggers and how to use your medications correctly.

It is important that you see your doctor for regular check-ups so that you can work as a team to monitor and control your asthma. Together with your doctor, you can fill in your personal written asthma action plan that will help you monitor and manage your asthma.

People who follow their action plans are likely to have better controlled asthma, fewer asthma attacks and fewer days off work or school because of their asthma.

## How can I provide the best asthma management for my child at School?

**The Department of Education and Training Policy requires parents/carers to**

- Provide an Asthma Care Plan, completed by the treating Doctor
- Provide the school with your child's medication and a spacer
- Make an appointment with the school nurse to complete a Student Health Support Plan for your child

*Don't let asthma get in the way of living your life to the full.*

*Quick action may help prevent an asthma attack from becoming an asthma emergency*

It is the mission of Melton West PS to work collaboratively to ensure high levels of learning for all.