

SESSION 4:

PARENT STRESS MANAGEMENT AND RESILIENCE

EHPS,
YCDI Investing In Parents
Presentation



Acknowledgement of Country

I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land, the Wallumattagal People of the Darug Nation.

I would also like to pay respect to the Elders both past and present and extend that respect to other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples present here today.



Welcome



Presenter: **Mr Joshua Gale**
Stage 3 Teacher

Key session message:

In order to parent successfully especially at those times when a parent is confronted with a problem regarding their child, a calm approach without strong negative emotions is vital. Tonight's content will help parents change an overly emotional parenting style. This session will also help all participants manage the inevitable high emotional stress of being a parent.

Too much parental upset in the face of children's problems, is generally not a good practice. Some degree of negative upset is natural and normal in dealing with problems associated with children growing up. However, excessive upset (e.g. anger, anxiety) on the part of a parent can cause further problems. If parents find their emotions running high because of their passion for their children and their anxieties about their future, it's time to reign those emotions in.

Tonight we will explore how parents can remain calm in stressful situations with their children. Parents and carers can change the ingrained thought patterns that lead them to experience extreme emotions

What you will Learn in the Session



1. Participants will be able to state the importance of staying calm and being resilient when facing adverse situations with their children.
2. Participants will be able to recognise a range of adverse situations that arise with their children that have the potential for pushing their emotional buttons.
3. Participants will learn about typical negative emotions parents may experience when facing adverse situations with their children.
4. Participants will learn that emotions may vary in intensity from strong to weak, and that when interacting with their children, it is far better to be 'medium upset' than 'extremely upset'.
5. Participants will be able to discuss how their own thinking—and not their children's behaviour—has a significant influence on how calm or stressed they are in the face of adversity.
6. Participants will learn to identify stress-creating thoughts and how to replace stress-creating thoughts with those that lead to greater control and calmness.
7. Participants will be able to keep adverse events with their children in perspective (not blow things out of proportion).
8. Participants will learn the importance of accepting themselves, and not putting themselves down, when things are not going well with their children or when faced with a negative aspect of their own parenting.
9. Participants will be able to identify a variety of different things they can do to be resilient.



Parents and their Emotions

There are three main emotions that parents may have in relating to their children. When experienced at very high levels of intensity, these emotions can be counterproductive.

“What is the name of the emotion parents may experience when their child is nasty to siblings or speaks disrespectfully to the parent?”

Being angry is a common, negative parental emotion that occurs when parents feel that their child is being unfair, inconsiderate, or disrespectful.

“What is the name of the emotion parents may experience when they feel that they have not done a good job as a parent?”

Feeling ‘down’ and feeling ‘guilty’ are very close in meaning, but in this program the word ‘down’ will be used

“What is the name of the emotion parents may experience when they feel that their child is having a problem with schoolwork or making friends?”

Anxiety and worry signify the same thing and arise when parents anticipate that something negative will happen in their child’s future.

Discussion:

Share things that your children do (or not do) or problems they have that may cause parents to experience anger, feeling down, and/ or a lot of worry.



A moderate degree of upset is healthy, helpful and normal. But when parents get extremely upset, it tends to have a negative– rather than positive– effect on their children.

The ABCs of Emotional Resilience

Calmness

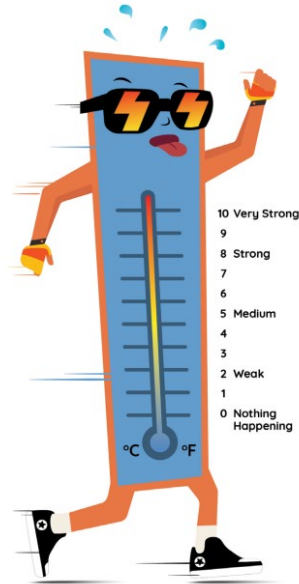


What is happening in this illustration?

The practice of emotional calmness or what is called 'Emotional Resilience' stands in direct opposition to the ineffective practice of overemotional parenting.

Emotional Thermometer

Emotional Thermometer



ARE YOU KEEPING CALM?

The emotional thermometer measures the degree of emotional upset that someone in this case, a parent extremes of anger, anxiety, and feeling down, whereas lower numbers (3, 4, 5) indicate less intense negative emotions.

The Emotional Thermometer can also measure the intensity of positive emotions.

Refer to your ***Are your Emotions and Behaviours Helping you and your Child?*** Responses. Discuss responses with the group.

Note: relating to children with calmness does not include being long suffering and patient. Rather, the practice of calmness enables parents to make the changes in their behaviour that are often required for their children to change.

Are your Emotions and Behaviours Helping you and your Child?



1. Write down something that happened recently where you became extremely upset with your child.

2. Indicate how you felt — and how strongly you felt about it — by putting a check next to the feeling, and rating its intensity Moderate or High (M or H).

angry M or H anxious M or H down M or H

3. Write down what you did (how did you behave)?

4. Was your behaviour helpful? Did it help solve the problem in the short term? yes no

Did your behaviour help solve the problem in the long term? yes no

Did your extreme feelings help you to think clearly and solve the problem or deal with the upsetting event? yes no

Did your behaviour help to keep your communication open with your child? yes no



“Does your child’s lying to you about homework directly cause what you feel and how upset you become? That is, does your child’s behaviour dictate your emotions?”



While it seems that our children’s behaviour can rule our emotions, it is actually the way we think about our child’s behaviour that determines our feelings.

We know from the evidence parents have provided that the same event (e.g. child lying about homework) leads to different emotional reactions from participants. If the child’s behaviour truly caused the emotion, all participants would have experienced the same feeling.

Our degree of emotions, calmness, or upset is determined by our thinking, and not directly by what happens to us.

Many thought patterns lead parents to intensify their feelings in relating to their children's behaviour.

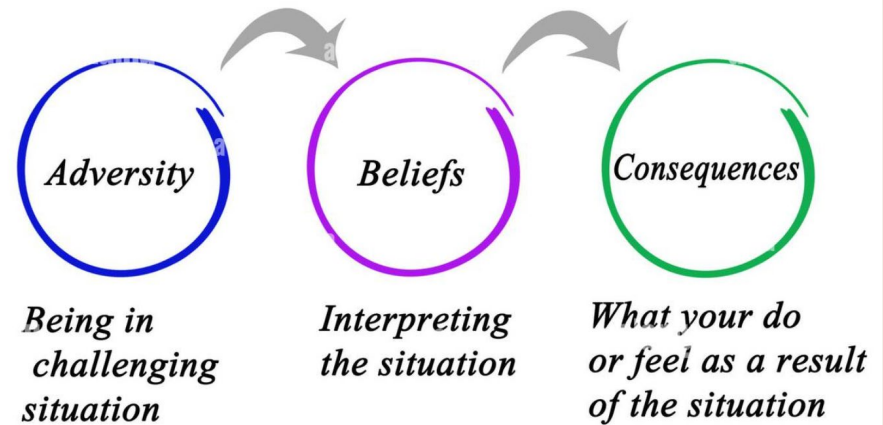
- **Lack of emotional responsibility:** *"My child can really upset me by acting that way."*
Rethink: *"It's my own thinking that upsets me about my children's behaviour."*
- **Exaggerating the inappropriateness of your child's behaviour:** *"My child's behaviour is awful and terrible."*
Rethink: *"Awful: yes. Catastrophe: no!"*
- **Global rating of the child:** *"My child is out of order or stupid."*
Rethink: *"My child's behaviour may be stupid, but my child isn't."*
- **Low frustration tolerance:** *"I can't stand my child's behaviour."*
Rethink: *"I can stand things I don't like."*
- **Self-downing:** *"Because of my child's failing, I'm a failure."*
Rethink: *"I cannot judge myself on the basis of my child's behaviour."*

Ask yourself; Can I stand things I don't like?

Ellis' ABC model of emotional resilience

Albert Ellis, a world famous psychologist, has spent a lifetime developing an approach to stress management called **Rational Emotive Behaviour Therapy**. Ellis' approach is based on the idea that people's thinking/thought patterns determine how emotionally stressed they become when confronted with difficult, adverse circumstances. By changing our negative, irrational thinking about the difficult circumstances to more positive, rational thinking, we can actually reduce our own emotional stress **levels**.

ABC Model of Resilience

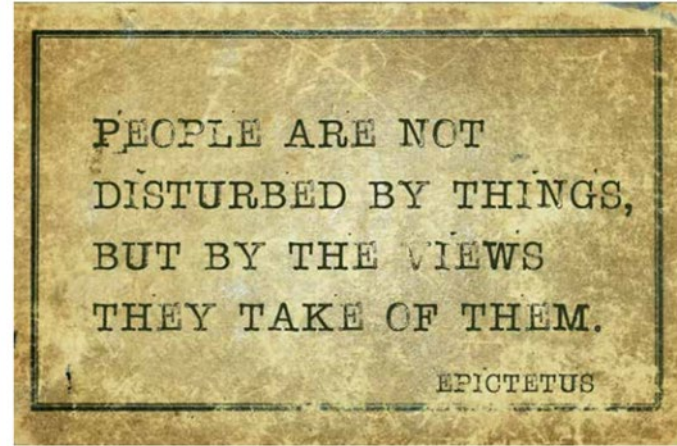


Thoughts to Decrease Emotional Stress

Thought patterns lead us to decrease the amount of emotional stress we feel in relating to our children's behaviour.

Can any of you suggest specific thoughts that you could use to reduce emotional stress when engaged in particularly demanding situations with your children?

Wisdom of the Ages

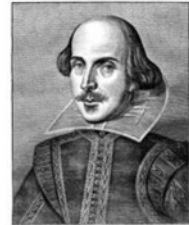


"You are what you think."

- Anonymous

"Things are neither good nor bad but thinking makes them so."

- William Shakespeare



The Catastrophe Scale

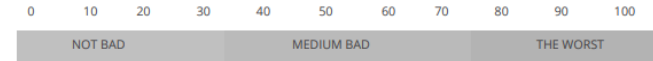
“Think of a time when you found yourself completely stressed out about something your child did or said or didn’t do or say. This should be a time when you would have described your feelings about your child’s behaviour as extreme: furious, very down, or worried. At the time you were extremely upset, how ‘bad’ were you thinking the child’s behaviour was?”

To do this, use a scale of 1 to 100, with 100 being ‘the worst thing that could happen’; 50 being ‘somewhat bad’; and ‘0’ being ‘not bad’.”

Have participants place an ‘X’ on the appropriate part of the handout and share their ratings with the group. Discuss other events that could fit on the scale.

The Catastrophe Scale

Instructions: Think of a time when you found yourself totally stressed out about what your child was doing or saying or not doing or saying. Your child’s behaviour should have led you to being furious, down, or very anxious. At the time when you were really emotionally stressed, how ‘bad’ was your child’s behaviour in your own mind on a scale of 1 to 100? On the scale below, rate the degree of ‘badness’ of the behaviour at the time you were very stressed (where at 100 you were thinking ‘worst thing that could be happening’; at 50 you were thinking ‘medium bad’; and at 0 you were thinking ‘not bad at all’).



Now look at the Catastrophe Scale below.

	100	
real catastrophes	90	e.g. nuclear war, death of a family member
	80	
bad, but not catastrophic	70	e.g. house fire, no one hurt
	60	
somewhat bad	50	
	40	e.g. minor car accident
	30	
a little bad	20	e.g. flat tyre
	10	
	0	

See if you can come up with other examples of events that could happen in the world, or to you, that you can add to the list of real catastrophes (90-100), things that would be bad or somewhat bad but not catastrophic (10-90), and things that are not really too bad (0-10). Now, using this scale of catastrophes, would you still give the same ‘badness’ rating to your child’s behaviour as you had previously? Place a ‘Y’ on the Catastrophe Scale where you would now rate your child’s behaviour. Place an ‘X’ on the scale by the number where you rated it earlier. Is there any difference between your first and second set of ratings?

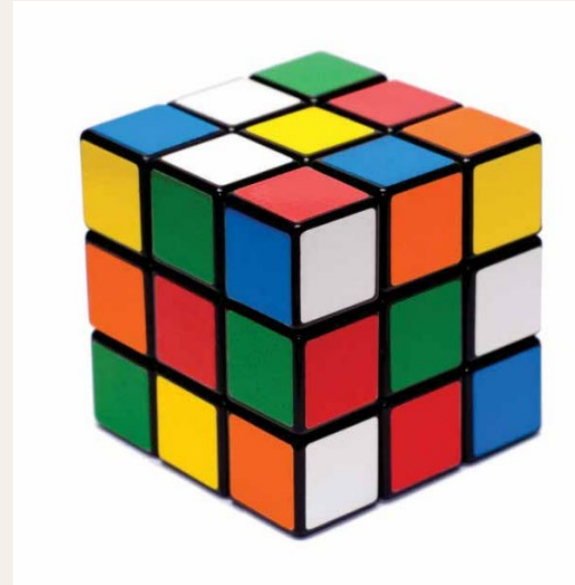
Parental Self Acceptance



By practising the Habit of the Mind (way of thinking) known as Accepting Myself, parents can feel less down and more calm in the face of their children's adverse behaviour.

Accepting Myself Cube

Imagine yourselves as a cube made up of an unlimited number of smaller cubes that grows with time. The smaller cubes within the big cube represent different aspects of yourselves in different areas of your lives (e.g. skills and talents). Each smaller cube represents one aspect of yourselves at one point in your lifetime, so it never makes sense to rate yourselves in your thinking as a totally effective or totally ineffective parent based on one small cube. While a parent may not be effective in one aspect of parenting (e.g. discipline), he or she might have a real talent in another aspect (e.g. good listener). It doesn't make sense for parents to think that their overall quality of parenting is ineffective just because they are not perfect in some aspects of parenting. A few weaknesses in the area of parenting do not cancel out their strengths as a parent or in any other area of your lives. People are more than just parents.



Parents need to accept themselves totally as parents and people, imperfections and all, instead of running away from, or denying those aspects of their parenting behaviour that require change.

Parental Resilience

10 Things to do to be Resilient



1. Be aware of how upset you are (using your Emotional Thermometer).
2. Remind yourself that it is OK to be upset, and that being medium upset means you are still in control of your emotions.
3. Remind yourself of the negative consequences of losing control of your emotions and allowing them to rule you.
4. Take a few slow, deep breaths to relax.
5. Remove yourself from the situation until you are calmer.
6. Do not blow the event out of proportion.
7. Remind yourself that while you may not like your child's behaviour, you can definitely tolerate it.
8. Remind yourself that your child is still a child, and that it is only natural for children to make mistakes.
9. Discuss the problem with a sympathetic listener.
10. Distract yourself by listening to music, taking a bath, or going for a walk.

Parent Implementation of Learnings at Home

Take note of a situation during the coming week in which you could have become angry or down about their children's behaviour, but did not.

Record a detailed description of the situation in your journal, including your thoughts that contributed to staying calmer. Describe your emotions at the time, as well as your behaviour.

Record in your journals the way you would have preferred to feel and behave.



Thank you for attending!



**Parent Session 5:
Develop Positive Relationships
with your Children**

Presenter: Mrs Ratinac

Date: Tuesday 31 May at 7pm