

The Spark Special

Term 2 2020 will go down as one we will all remember...toilet paper shortages...social distancing... home schooling... telehealth and a transition back to school! Adapting to change is something we've all had to adapt to!

Congratulations! You and your family made it to the finish line! Welcome to the school holidays! A time to pause, go slow and reflect on you and your family's experiences. This newsletter explores ideas to nurture yourselves, connect, play and strengthen your relationship with your child.

Tina & The Spark Team XX

Reminders:

- **Survey** - We would love to hear about your Spark experience. Your feedback helps us to learn what is working for you and what we can do better. Please complete our [survey](#).

COVID 19 Update:

- We are not using the waiting room at the moment, so please wait in the car on arrival for your appointment. Your OT will text you when it is time to come in.
- Please sanitise your hands on arrival.
- If you or your child are unwell - please stay home.

Today's Topics:

- Special Time - The Magic of Connection
- Storytelling
- Nurturing yourself
- Nature Play

Special Time - The Magic of Connection

- Angela McCosker

"Special time is priceless because it symbolizes the parent's unconditional love for the child." - B.J. Howard

What is it? Time to talk. Time to listen. Time to play.

Creating 1:1 time for our children, following their lead and interests, connecting with their world and their experience. This allows children to feel seen, heard and feel 'felt', building a sense of trust and security.

These moments of special time can help young people explore and understand their emotions; develop connections between events in their lives and feel a sense of control. Resilience is found in safe relationships.

Time to be present

Special time is about being with your child. Letting your child take the lead, playing and being together. Spending regular time engaging in enjoyable activities with young people can help them feel a sense of belonging, trust and love. You will have the opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of how your child perceives the world and the events that occur around them, which helps us to stay compassionate and empathetic to children's experiences. Special time allows us to meet our child where they are at.

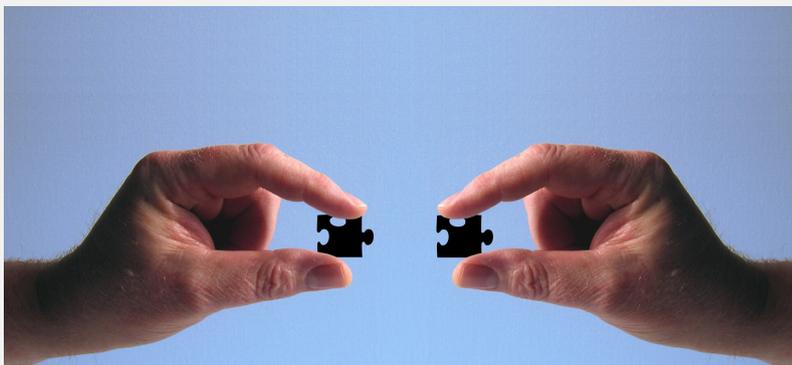
How to schedule in "special time"

- Where possible, 10 minutes every couple of days or if this is unrealistic, 1-2 times a week.
- Give your child your full attention. For children who enjoy playing, ask them what they would like to play.
- Follow their lead of ideas as they may be using the play to process an event that happened in the past or is coming up.
- You can also take it in turns to choose the activity if there is a subject you would like to explore with your child.
- If play is challenging, you may involve time in nature, sensory play, rough and tumble play or jumping on the trampoline.
- You can set a timer and place all phones/devices in a different room so you both know that this time is for each other without interruption or distractions.
- It doesn't need to be "structured" with tasks such as colouring, puzzles or books. It is time to be flexible and to just be together.

The Power of Story-telling

Tina Bruce

- Story telling supports children to process and make sense of their feelings and experiences. It helps them to "put the pieces together", allowing them to understand, learn and grow from their experiences.
- Term 2 has been epic! Create a journal piece, slide show or photo album of their experiences.
- Help them connect with their emotions, empathise and validate these.
- Explore how many changes they have adapted to and acknowledge that this takes a lot of energy and effort.
- Allow your child to talk about the challenges
- Encourage your child to name the things that went well.
- Celebrate your child's achievements and identify their strengths.



3 basic Story-telling Priorities

1. **The Facts:** to help the child understand what has happened.
2. **Acknowledge your child's feelings** - help them connect with their internal experience, whatever this may be. Don't rush this step or move to problem solving too quickly.
3. **Message of empowerment** - Support your child to do something to help them feel better. Building self-awareness and a tool boxes of strategies they can use when faced with future challenges.

[Click here to view a great picture that explains why this is helpful.](#)

Ref: The Whole Brain Child Dan Siegel and Tina Bryson

Nurturing Yourself

Our brain is wired for survival and is always on the lookout for danger. Currently we are experiencing uncertainty and change. The brain perceives this as a 'threat', which leads to high stress load and drained "battery". Recognising this allows us to be proactive in self-care and intentionally focus on nurturing ourselves and re-charging our battery. Think about what nourishes you and schedule in self-care. Some ideas:

Time in nature

Move your body

Engage in activities where you get into 'flow', this could be craft, gardening, walking, cooking or whatever activity you can lose yourself in.

Connect with friends – social engagement is essential for our wellbeing.



Taking care of yourself, models the importance of self-care to your child. It also allows you to charge your battery so you can be patient, present and available to them.

Activity Ideas for Home

Time in nature is a tonic for the mind and body. The Japanese have a term “Shinrin Yoku” which translates to “forest bathing”. There is evidence that nature play...

- Improves mental health and wellbeing. Studies have found that there is a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced stress, anxiety, and depression.
- Supports self-regulation
- Significantly improves all aspects of child development – physical, cognitive, social and emotional.
- Develops confidence and self-esteem
- Positive impacts on concentration

Why not swap screen time for green time these holidays!

EXPLORE!

Our favourite places to go wild locally:

- Hurstbridge Heritage Trail
- Warrandyte River
- Sweeney’s Flats, Sth Eltham
- Main Yarra Trail Eltham to Petty’s Orchard

PLAY!

[Eltham BMX track](#)

[Build a cubby in nature!](#)

DISCOVER!

[Check out these ideas for outdoor play from the Royal Botanical Gardens](#)

CONNECT!

With Animals!

[Go and meet the new alpacas at Edendale farm.](#)

Meet kangaroos:

Brown’s Reserve Greensborough

Gresswell Wildlife Reserve Watsonia



THE SPARK
THERAPY SERVICES

Explore • Play • Discover • Connect