

The Spark Special

Welcome to another edition of **The Spark Special**. What a month it has been! We hope your family has found some rhythm within the changes and uncertainty.

No day is the same, and each brings its gifts and challenges.

Remember to practice self-compassion and know that you are all doing the best you can.

We thank you for your flexibility and patience during this time.

Tele-health has been a new discovery for us all.

Wishing everyone well with the upcoming transitions.

Tina & The Spark Team XX

Reminders:

- Transition back to face-to-face appointments has begun. Please contact your therapist to discuss an individual plan for your family.
- Please review our COVID-19 policy to refresh yourself on the new hygiene standards at the Spark.
- ALL paperwork requiring signatures is now being completed through SignRequest. You can find more information about this program here.

Today's Topics:

- How to Make Home-Schooling Work for You,
- The Importance of Emotional Release,
- Facilitating the Back-to-School Transition,
- Activity Ideas for Home.

How to Make Home-Schooling Work for You

- Angela McCosker

You are not alone if you are finding home schooling challenging at times!

Our families are expressing difficulties such as:



- Supporting more than one child through home learning.
- Finding space for everyone to work.
- Juggling working from home with home learning and caring for younger children.
- Motivating kids to engage in school tasks at home.
- Understanding expectations of tasks set for the kids.

OT TIPS

1. **Break the day down** into “work times” and “recharge times”. This can be a time to check in with each other to see how your batteries are running. Do you need to recharge before settling back into work?
2. **Daily checklists** can help to create a feeling of success and accomplishment. It may include the set tasks of the day, movement breaks and submitting work at the end of the day.
3. **New tasks can be difficult.** Help your child explore what is familiar about the task- what do I already know about this?. Then look at what is new or different- is there anything I don't know how to do? How can we find the answer to this?
4. Having a **break during the day** to go for a family walk or backyard picnic can be a nice way to reset and recharge.



If you would like some support from your OT to negotiate a work schedule with you and your child, please don't hesitate to ask.

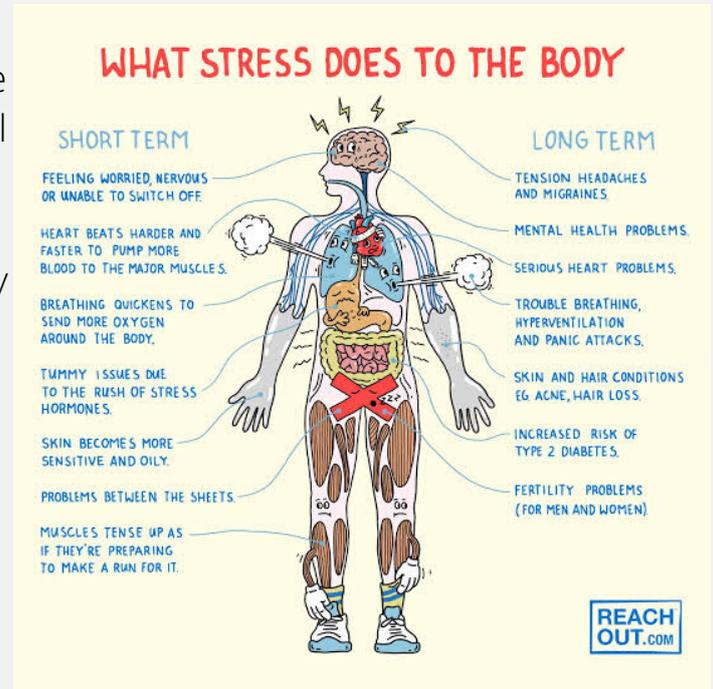
The Importance of Emotional Release

- Jessica Angus

In the current times of the COVID-19 crisis and global uncertainty, it is expected that we all will experience a higher level of emotional stress than normal.

- **Short-term stress** can be beneficial, helping us to focus and work efficiently by putting our body systems into high alert.
- Experiencing **stress long-term** can result in physical and mental decline.

Emotional release strategies involve overcoming 'stuck' emotional stress like anger, sadness, guilt and worry by utilising the body, shared connection and humour.



Rough Play

Managing your emotional stress through the body is one of the most effective methods for changing your emotional state.

- Family game of tug of war,
- Sock wars: <http://www.youthgroupgames.org/game/sock-wars>,
- Pool noodle battles using them like swords or whacking the floor,
- Kicking or throwing a ball against a wall really hard.

Humour and Silliness

Talking and dealing with emotions can feel really serious and uncomfortable. Lighten the mood through the use of silliness and humour!

- Scream! - outdoors or into a pillow,
- Have a dance party,
- Talk in silly voices or accents.

Externalisation of worries

Emotions and worries can get 'stuck' in our head and bodies! By writing them down or picturing them outside the body can provide a sense of release and separation from the thought/feeling.

- Scrunch and throw paper with 'worrysome' thoughts written on them
- Going on a walk and throwing sticks/leaves representing different stressors.

The Power of Relationship

Utilise the power of your connection with your child.

- Tell them that you are here and can work through this with them,
- Give them a tight hug and take some deep breaths - this can trigger their body to mimic your breathing pattern,
- Use your instincts to direct them to a release activity when they need it.

Facilitating the Back-to-School Transition

- Jessica Angus & Serenity McErwin

With COVID-19 restrictions easing, kids are allowed to return to child-care, kinder and school in the coming weeks. This is another big change to their lives. Just as they have become familiar with the new life of isolation and homeschooling they are having to re-enter some 'normality'.

Preparation is key to helping minimise stress related to change!

Here are some ways that you can help your child cope with this change:

1. **Pretend Play** - Use toys and dolls to play schools. By letting kids play it out they can explore any worries that they might be experiencing in a non-directive way. Keep this as playful as you can, incorporating difficulties like navigating temperature checks, feeling uncomfortable on the first day, addressing that the environment will be louder and busier than home.
2. **Journalling/Draw-it-Out** - Journal and draw what the first day back might look like to help your child mentally prepare for this. This is a similar idea to visualisation of a new skill you're learning. Your child doesn't have to be the scribe! You can draw it out for them while they dictate the story or you ask them questions.
3. **Reintroduce key persons** - Show your child pictures of the staff and friends they have at school/kinder/child-care to reestablish a familiarity with them. You may also like to show them pictures of the grounds and building.
4. **Let them take their favourite toy** - Use it like a transition item to help comfort them as they navigate their first day back. It could also facilitate the debrief of the day as you can address the toy to ask how their first day back went.
5. **Read them a social story** - This again helps with the preparation process. The Spark has created two versions of a back-to-school story for younger and older children respectively. You can find these linked here:
 - o [Back-to-School - Simplistic](#)
 - o [Back-to-School - Detailed](#)
6. **Playfulness & humour** - Regardless of all the preparation it is likely that your child will still be feeling slightly uncomfortable on their first day back. This is expected. Acknowledge and validate their feelings with empathy. You can then use humour and silly voices to shift the mood. For example you might give a reminder like "Don't forget to brush your teeth" in a monster or baby voice.

Activity Ideas for Home

Click the photos for rules of play and set up requirements!

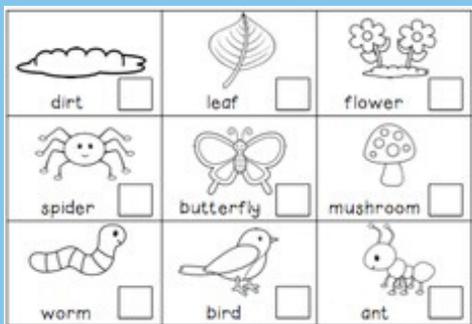
EXPLORE



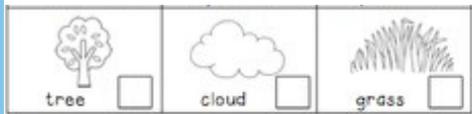
Cutting Busy Box

PLAY

Kaleidoscopes



Scavenger Hunt



DISCOVER



Indoor Picnic

CONNECT



THE SPARK
THERAPY SERVICES

Explore • Play • Discover • Connect