

Meditation for Children

Learn methods and ideas to implement meditation to children since early ages

Speakable

A magazine with news and articles about communication and confidence

Taking care of children's mental health

Tips to take care of children's mental health of every age range



Introduction

Hello achievers,

2022 just started and we are super excited to begin our operations at Speakable. Last year was a huge challenge for the whole world, but we all kept a strong-minded focus on providing services with excellence to our clients and continuously adapt to new procedures.

Speakable learned how to provide telehealth services and is perfectly able to provide both in-person and remote sessions for the best outcomes of our clients, allowing us to expand our services overseas. Nowadays we have clients in all Australian states, America, Middle East, Singapore and Vietnam, making sure our services retain the same excellence as if in-person even with international customers. We appreciate your ongoing support and you can always count on us!

Our new issue is full of cutting-edge articles to inspire parents, students, teachers, speech pathologists and other health specialists.

We hope that you enjoy our sixth issue! Please feel free to share your reading experience and to give your feedback for us to be better and better!

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Integrating children back to school in NSW



NSW's crisis cabinet has decided for an earlier return of children to school, which is a relief for the educational system to ensure students have their social and learning environments back towards their mental health and educational performance.

The first classes to return to school are the Kindergarten, Year 1 and Year 12 on October 18th, followed by Years 2, 6 and 11 on October 25th. On November 1st, the remaining grades will be back, ensuring a relative normality to schools.

However, many details must be taken in consideration for this return, in order to avoid new outbreaks or negative effects over the school operations:

- School restrictions include:
 - Staggered lunch breaks
 - No assemblies, bands or choirs
 - Additional cleaning of facilities
 - Permanent supply of masks
- All staff, including teachers, must be fully vaccinated to return to work. As well, all of them must wear masks.
- Students will not need to be vaccinated but are strongly encouraged to.
- In case of any outbreak (cases exceeding 50 per 100,000 people in any LGA), the area enters in lockdown which means schools being closed.
- It's still unclear if school buses will operate – the recommendation is to go to and back from school by walking if the distance is reasonable, since outdoors walking is still the safest way to move between places.
- HSC exams will be delayed until November 9th, with Year 12 students having greater access to their teachers for this important exam. As well, NSW government assures that it will not affect University admissions.

Many parents are overwhelmed with the high volume of demands and stress from keeping children at home, which has affected children's mental health and need to be checked and treated with every means necessary for the kids' future. Among the effective actions to be done for children re-adjustment back to face-to-face classes, we could mention:

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- **Open talk.** Children might be feeling different things such as anxiety, fear of fitting in or belonging, new dynamics with friends and any other emotional issue the child might have. Parents should acknowledge their feelings and give advice for them to feel more confident when returning.
- **Preparation for a different world.** There is a “new normal” that includes different procedures for health and safety when at school. Children need to be reminded of such procedures in order to protect themselves, school staff and their own families.
- **They’re not alone.** Sometimes, people (which include children) might believe they are the only ones having specific issues. A child might think the same thing, as if he or she was the only one with social anxiety, fear from the potential exposure to the virus or any other issue. Parents can remind them that they are not alone in this, and that they can even be great friends and supporters when seeing a classmate sad and helping out with their feelings.
- **Speak-up encouragement.** While at school, parents will not be there with their children, so it might make some children feel unsupported, affecting their confidence. Parents must remind them that teachers and school staff are there to take care of them, and any concern or complaint must be shared with someone from school in order to ensure children feel safe and protected.
- **Professional help, if necessary.** It is possible, however not desired, that all the support from parents, friends and school are not enough to ensure the child to feel psychologically well. If this is the case, professional help might be necessary, with a counsellor, therapist or similar allied healthcare professionals to help the child solve such issues.

In this new world, children urgently need educational and psychological support to overcome so many unexpected challenges and be able to grow safe and sound towards a fulfilled adulthood.

Taking care of children's mental health



We are observing a gradual return to something that could be called 'normal' after so many significant changes in our lives since 2019. Such changes have affected absolutely everyone, in different ways and levels of impact. However, children are probably the ones who suffered the most, facing for the first time the effects of social isolation, dependence on technology for simple human interaction with friends, school staff and even some family members.

The pandemic's restrictions have certainly impacted their mental health, making parents in need of closely observe their children and make sure they can recover from the negative aspect of these changes, while preparing them for future challenges in their adulthood. We have listed below some important tips to help protect and strengthen children's mental health:

- Be aware of the most common symptoms of mental health issues in order to initiate a friendly approach and check if everything is ok. Among the many possible symptoms, the most common ones are the following:
 - Change in appetite or eating habits
 - Demonstrations of fear, anxiety, sadness or anger
 - Difficulty to sleep or to go to bed
 - Low energy
 - Persistent negative thoughts
 - Trouble with concentration
 - Withdrawal from friends, family or favourite activities
- Create a sense of belonging at home and at school, building strong bonds among students, school staff and parents through honest and open communication about emotions and feelings. It's fundamental for children to know that they are loved and supported.
- Define a clear routine with school and home activities, including not only to-do things but also the leisure and relaxation times.
- Develop competencies, including social skills, problem-solving and conflict resolution for children to feel confident in face of challenges and stress.

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- Educate school staff, parents and children about mental issues symptoms in order to fight stigma and allow early response.
- Encourage good physical health through good eating habits, regular physical exercise and adequate sleep.
- Ensure a positive, safe school environment based on respect, responsibility and kindness.
- Establish a crisis response team at school, including relevant administrators, security personnel and mental health professionals, as well as the inclusion of programs related to mental health prevention, intervention and postvention.
- Facilitate access and partnership among mental health supports such as school psychologists, counsellors and social workers.
- Foster resilience through activities and conversations that approach connectedness, competency, helping others and facing adversities.
- Model healthy coping skills at home or at school, with relaxing activities such as deep breathing, using stress balls, making any kind of art or going for walks, among other options.

As a provider of many healthcare services, Speakable remains ready to provide any support to children, parents, schools and other allied health professionals towards the best of our children in physical and mental health. In case of any needed help, please contact us!

Lunchbox Tips for the Good Nutrition Month



Due to events such as Halloween and Thanksgiving, people tend to eat in a less balanced way between October and November. Therefore, it was established that November should be a month to be more aware of what is eaten, not only for November but for all the other months. Fast food and stressful lifestyles affect people's concern regarding how they eat, so campaigns such as Good Nutrition Month are helpful to remind of the great benefits of eating in a healthier way. One of the most important meals for children is based on what the child has inside the lunchbox. Here are some tips of what to put and ensure a healthy meal for them at school:

- Fresh or tinned fruit.
- Crunchy vegetables and vegetable sticks such as cherry tomatoes, carrot sticks, capsicum and cucumber.
- Dairy food such as a cheese stick or slice, grated cheese, milk or yoghurt.
- A meat or protein food such as slices of lean meat, hardboiled egg, peanut butter or nut paste.
- Include a variety of bread, especially if children begin to lose interest in sandwiches, such as bread rolls, pita bread, flat bread, bagels, fruit loaf or buns, *focaccias*, scones, pikelets, muffins, crumpets, crispbreads, rice cakes or corn thins.
- Fillings can include vegemite or other yeast extract, peanut butter, cheese (try different types), tuna, egg, sliced cold meats, baked beans, grated carrot and lettuce, chopped roast meat with pickles or chutney, and avocado. Dips like caviar (*taramosalata*), eggplant, chickpea (*hommus*), cucumber, yoghurt (*tzatziki*) or spinach also make good spreads.
- Water and milk are the best drinks for children. They can be frozen to help keep foods in the lunch box cool.

Don't forget to read our other article regarding the Good Nutrition Month, just [click here](#) and learn more about the broad benefits of good nutrition and the SPRING habits developed by Susie Elelman.

Taking care of your voice



Your voice is one of your most precious things, a vital tool to allow communication and transmit ideas and feelings. However, it's easy to forget about the high value of it when we are happily screaming at a rock concert, trying to be heard in the middle of a noisy place or in other situations that demand more of our voice capacity. Therefore, pay attention to the tips below to keep a healthy voice with good habits:

- Drink as much water as you can. Always keep your mouth and throat hydrated, which also helps your entire body benefit from that by being also hydrated.
- Get more vitamins A, E and C. These vitamins help keep mucus membranes that line the throat healthy. Whole grains, fruits and vegetables are helpful with that.

- When drinking alcohol or caffeinated beverages, try to balance it by drinking water as well. As well, avoid mouthwash or gargles that contain irritating chemicals or alcohol.
- Take vocal naps throughout the day.
- If possible, use a humidifier at home or workplace.
- Try not to smoke. If possible, never smoke! Smoking might damage vocal folds, and vocal folds cancer is more common among smokers.
- Avoid eating spicy foods, because they can cause stomach acid to reach the throat and cause GERD (Gastroesophageal reflux disease).
- Exercise regularly. It helps with stamina, muscle tone, posture and breathing. Practice good breathing techniques as well.
- Avoid overusing your voice. Try to rest your voice especially when your voice is tired or hoarse.
- Always monitor yourself. Check if you're getting a hoarse voice, or your speech is a little nasal, or any change in its regular use. It can indicate important initiatives for you to go for, such as treating a flu, resting the voice a little, checking your hydration or what you've been eating.
- If you do some or all of these practices and still have some problem with your voice, contact a speech and language pathologist who will understand what's going on and will help you solve the issue.

When keeping the practices above, your voice will likely be clear and sound all the time! If you find an issue with your voice even after practicing all these techniques, Speakable team is always ready to assess your speaking and provide speech therapy to help you overcome barriers.

Meditation for Children



According to some recent studies, a strikingly majority of the population will suffer from anxiety at least in a moment of their lives which includes childhood. The recent pandemic has emotionally affected everyone in different manners, demanding from every person some initiatives to cope with their mental health. One of these initiatives is the meditation.

Though usually thought to be an activity only for adults, meditation is actually a possible activity for children, providing the following known benefits:

- Ability to focus and study.
- Better breathing habits.
- Better sleep.
- Development of emotional intelligence skills such as active listening, empathy, humility and resilience.
- Improved self-esteem.
- Improved metacognition, the awareness of their own learning and thinking processes.
- Improved working memory capacity.
- Reduced anxiety.
- Reduced levels of stress and increased feelings of calmness, relaxation and self-acceptance.

However, children need some adaptations on their meditation activities in order to keep them engaged, especially when they are too young. Four activities are very effective with children:

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- **Guided meditations:** Some meditation guide can use available apps to keep the children following instructions – we recommend [Insight Timer](#), [Mindful Kids](#), [Smiling Mind](#), [Stop, Breathe & Think](#), and [Headspace for Kids](#). If you prefer, you can create your own meditation script with your kids.
- **Meditation stories:** This technique guides children's minds and imagination through a relaxing and insightful journey with positive affirmations. The story will relax children and encourage them to learn how to self-regulate behaviours, also broadening their sensory experiences. Among popular meditation stories, we can mention:
 - Blowing out birthday candles while focusing on breathing.
 - Following the journey of a leaf as it travels along a river.
 - Imagining a butterfly flitting through a field of flowers.
 - Visiting the beach to lie on the sand in the sand to make sand angels.
- **Meditation music:** Online relaxation sounds can be very useful and easily found in iTunes, Spotify or YouTube. They can simulate sounds such as falling rain, rainforest sounds with birds and water streams, or waves crashing on the shore. Sometimes, the use of a xylophone can be engaging, or even letting them select which sound texture could be used instead of the famous 'Ohm'.
- **Sleep meditations:** In a similar fashion of guided meditation or meditation music, the aim is to relax children in such a way they can have a calm sleep. Breathing, focusing on the sensory experience of relaxing each body part, clearing the mind, all of these activities are part of sleep meditation.

Speakable is owned and led Binh Doan, a talented speech pathologist and yoga instructor, perfectly able to provide speech and language therapies as well as meditation sessions. Contact us to know how we can help you with our services!

Keeping Children Active



COVID-19 pandemics is a global phenomenon which has affected people in uncountable manners, especially regarding socialisation, learning and working processes, and collateral health consequences. One significant impact regards to mental health, increasing anxiety, depression and other aspects of people's mental health continuum. Another impact is related to physical health: many people just couldn't leave home to keep the physical activities they were used to, and it includes children.

While we see more and freedom to move around and have socialisation back, it's very important that parents and schools return children to physical activities in order to fight off the sedentarism from their pandemics-related routine. Besides returning children to their regular activities of socialisation, practising sports and other physical activities provide benefits such as:

- better sleep
- decreased risk of developing type 2 diabetes
- healthy weight
- strong muscles and bones
- a better outlook on life

For children between two and five years old, physical activities should be focused on refining basic motor skills and begin learning the rules of activities – nothing too complex would keep their attention or make them feel properly engaged. In this age range, it's a little difficult for a child act in competitive activities and as a team, so parents and teachers must take this in consideration when planning the physical activities. Recommendations for activities within this age range include:

- Climbing on playground equipment
- Hopping, skipping and jumping
- Kicking, throwing and catching
- Playing tag or follow the leader

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- Riding a tricycle or bicycle
- Running
- Swimming
- Tumbling

Between six and nine years old, children already have some improvement of their focus, senses and motor skills, so there are some more opportunities to increase the complexity of activities with more rules and instructions. However, some children simply aren't interested in competing, so it is important that the activities emphasise health, teamwork and fun. Recommended activities are:

- Baseball, cricket, softball or T-ball
- Dancing, gymnastics or jumping rope
- Martial arts
- Rollerblading or ice skating
- Running or hiking
- Skiing
- Soccer
- Swimming
- Tennis

From about ten years old on, the recommended activities are the same ones as above, but now considering other factors involving the life of the child, such as biological and social changes from puberty, school routines and so on. More complexity in activities can be considered, such as in basketball, football, hockey, netball, rugby, skateboarding, volleyball, yoga and others.

In every age range, pay attention to factors such as:

- **Lacking motor skills:** Be it due to developmental reasons or lack of support in early years, the child might be “clumsy” when compared to the expected to their age. A physical education teacher and parents must keep an eye on that in order to notice if it's necessary to have the child assessed for occupational therapy.
- **Uninterested in competition:** Some children simply don't like the pressure to win over others, individually or as a team. Non-competitive activities should be designed, as well as keeping the child practising in an environment with low level of competitiveness.
- **Social anxiety:** The child might feel to pressured by the school's team or parents to be a winner a high achiever. He or she might also be feeling “weird” throughout puberty by comparing his or her body to friends from the same age. When a child is not within an “average”, such as being too tall, too small, overweight or with any other physical trait which draws attention, it affects their self-esteem and reflects in physical activities. Constant and positive support from teachers and parents are extremely import in such cases.

Speakable supports a healthy life for children of all ages and can provide supporting services with allied health professionals to help with any need a child might have. Contact us to know more how we can help you!

Creating a Summer Holiday Study Plan



We're getting closer and closer to the end of term at school, so it will be about six weeks for a good time with family and friends, traveling, playing and preparing for next year. For Year 11 students, this is especially important because the following year is marked by the main demands over their performance in exams to enter the university. No matter the child's school year, being prepared for the new content is crucial for a good start. To help with that, we have three important tips for children to create an effective Summer holiday study plan to start the next year well-prepared:

- **Two first weeks off:** All children want when the last term finishes is to stop thinking about school work, deadlines and things to read and solve. It's fair desire from them, and it can be easily given. These two first weeks of holidays coincide with Christmas and New Year, so all children will be able to enjoy this period in full.
- **Consolidate assimilated knowledge:** Some part of lessons given in the past terms might not have been completely assimilated, so a quick review would be a good way to start the Summer holiday study plan. It should occupy 2 hours of every day (not weekends), preferably between 9.00am and 11.00am. An effective method is to print the syllabus of each studied subject and highlight each component in the traffic light system, to understand where to focus the review studies:
 - If you feel completely aware of that component's knowledge, it's green
 - If you can explain only part of it and feel some gaps, it's yellow
 - If you don't remember what that means, it's red
- **Work ahead for the content of the beginning of term 1:** It's a very good strategy to study by yourself at least the first lesson of each subject, when getting close to the return to school.

There are also activities to stimulate language and communication to be made during Summer – [click here](#) to know more about them. Everyone from the Speakable team wishes a great end of term to students and will be always ready to provide supporting services to help children in their learning and studies!

Emotional Intelligence for Children



Emotional Intelligence, also known as EI or even EQ, is the ability to intelligently handle with feelings – both from oneself and from others. Therefore, this is a crucial set of skills to allow a person from any social or cultural context to be successful and fulfilled. Due to this high relevance, help children develop such skills makes a huge difference for the rest of their lives. Among the main habits of children with high emotional intelligence, we could mention:

- They have a wider vocabulary to identify emotions in themselves and in others
- They can see events and situations from other people's perspectives

- They are quicker in helping who need some emotional support
- They know some techniques to manage emotions
- They are more comfortable saying “No” and establishing boundaries with other children and adults
- They can be specific when demonstrating gratitude

These six characteristics usually demonstrated by children with high EQ are already perfect examples of how emotional intelligence can be relevant. According to Daniel Goleman, there are five main parts that comprise emotional intelligence, and can be individually stimulated:

- **Self-awareness:** the ability to identify your own feelings and how these feelings might affect others
- **Self-regulation:** being able to control how to respond to your own emotions, thinking about consequences before acting or reacting by impulse
- **Motivation:** driving yourself to accomplish goals in spite of negative or distracting feelings
- **Empathy:** the ability of acknowledging and noticing other people's emotions and feelings
- **Social skills:** all skills that allow the management of relationships, being aware of best behaviours to assume when dealing with other people in each situation

Children who develop emotional intelligence can get some extremely helpful benefits, such as:

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- **Higher grades at school.** It has been identified that high EQ has a correlation to high IQ.
- **Healthier relationships.** Children with high EQ can better select good companies and avoid toxic relationships.
- **Long-term fulfillment.** Successful and accomplished adults have been identified as having high EQ since childhood.
- **Improved mental health.** Depression, anxiety and other mental illnesses are less likely to occur in children with high EQ.

Parents, teachers and other supporting professionals can help children develop their emotional intelligence through some stimulating activities which many times are just daily events that can be used to motivate the child to think about their emotions and other people's emotions, making them more aware and prepared for ways to respond. The following five steps are a good strategy to stimulate emotional intelligence in children of any age:

1. *Being aware of the child's emotions and feelings.* Good parents, teachers and professionals who deal with emotional intelligence must be able to identify the child's emotions before the child needs to demonstrate them with intensity such as yelling, making tantrums, swearing and any other unbalanced action.

1. *See emotions as an opportunity to bond and improve.* Even negative emotions must be dealt as the chance of understanding why it's happening to the child, so you better understand the child's preferences and boundaries.
2. *Listen and validate feelings.* The child needs to see that someone is really paying attention to their situation and wants to help. Sometimes being heard is all they want.
3. *Help the child label emotions.* There are moments when the child doesn't even know the name of what they are feeling, they can just say if it's good bad, or if it's related to a concern or another person. Enriching their emotional vocabulary is key to make them able to create techniques to deal to each emotion differently and effectively. You could even use a tool such as the **Mood Meter**, that is extremely interesting, though it's necessary to use it in different ways according to the child's age.
4. *Improve the child's problem-solving skills towards emotions.* Talk to the child about actions and consequences, and how to take some time for a deep breath, pondering about the best behaviour, and then acting.

As shown above, the development of emotional intelligence is an extremely positive strategy for your children to help them be happier people and coping with the most different emotional challenges throughout life.

This was the seventh issue of our new Speakable Magazine, which compiled the articles and relevant news about communication, confidence and our clinic from 2021's school term 4.

Thank you!

In case you are interested in following Speakable's social media profiles and blog, please check the list below:

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Thank you!

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