

CALL EVERYTHING AN EXPERIMENT, BECAUSE YOU CAN'T FAIL AT AN EXPERIMENT. YOU CAN ONLY LEARN - CLARE DUBOIS



MARCH
2022



THE LINK COMMUNITY HUB

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CLEAN UP AUSTRALIA DAY – MARCH 6

The amount of plastic waste has been surging because of the pandemic and we're concerned there will be long-term impacts on our environment. Over a third of Aussie households reported producing more waste and having had more items delivered than usual during lockdown periods.

Get a small group of your friends, family and neighbours together and give back to your community.
FIND YOUR LOCAL CLEAN UP HERE

NEIGHBOUR DAY – MARCH 27

For the last 20 years Neighbour Day is Australia's annual celebration of community, encouraging people to connect with those who live in their neighbourhood. Loneliness can affect anyone, at any time throughout their lives, and addressing loneliness across Australia is everybody's business. Getting involved in Neighbour Day is good for you and your community. **FIND OUT WHAT YOU CAN DO.**

MOROCCAN PUMPKIN & CHICKPEA STEW



PREP 10 min | COOK 4-6 HRS SERVES 5

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups pumpkin, peeled and chopped
- 2 tins chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 2 onions, diced
- 3 cloves garlic
- 1 cup kale
- 1/2 cup dried figs or dates
- 2x chopped tomatoes
- 4x Dutch carrots, chopped or 2x regular carrots
- 1 cup vegetable stock

Moroccan spice blend:

- 1 tsp ground cumin, 1 tsp ground ginger, 1 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp black pepper, 1/2 tsp cinnamon, 1/2 tsp coriander
- 1/2 tsp cayenne, 1/2 tsp allspice, 1/4 tsp ground cloves

METHOD: Heat 1 tbsp olive oil in a pan and sauté the onion, garlic and the spice blend until onions are soft.

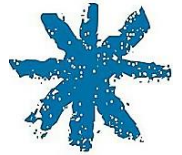
Add to a slow cooker along with the pumpkin, chickpeas, kale, figs, tomatoes, carrots and stock. Cook on high for 4-6 hours. It will be ready when the pumpkin and carrots are soft. Serve on its own or with some rice, quinoa or sourdough. Pop it into the slow cooker and enjoy the fact that dinner is mostly done.

Love this recipe and want more? Go to Jo Kate Nutrition

*Jo's course **The Nourished Family** provides you with a realistic approach to nutrition, health and cooking and will teach you foundational principles to use for the rest of your life.*



Three of Australia's best parenting blogs for 2022.



MY CHILD MAGAZINE

mychildmagazine.com.au

This is a place to find not only wholesome and simple parenting reads and information, but encouragement, humour and motivation for your journey as a caregiver. My Child Magazine is a free subscription online mag that's always there when you need it.

KIDDIPEDIA

kiddipedia.com.au/parenting-blog

Kiddipedia is Australia's leading parenting resources website, providing useful parenting tips and all sorts of parenting information such as parenting helpline numbers, parent directory and kids events. Use the search function to find answers and articles for any of your parenting questions instantly.

PARENTING IDEAS | POSITIVE PARENTING

parentingideas.com.au/blog/

Parenting Ideas was founded by Australia's leading parenting educator, Michael Grose. Parenting Ideas offer positive parenting tips on child development for raising children and teenagers to be happy & resilient and building strong families.

Over the course of nearly twenty years, Parenting Ideas has become one of Australia's most trusted sources of parenting education and support.

FOCUS: Simplifying Childhood May Protect Against Mental Health Issues

When my Dad was growing up he had one jumper each winter. One. Total. He remembers how vigilantly he cared for his jumper. If the elbows got holes in them my grandma patched them back together. If he lost his jumper, he'd recount his steps to find it again. He guarded it like the precious gift it was. He had everything he needed and not a lot more. The only rule was to be home by dinner time. My grandma rarely knew exactly where her kids were.

But the world has moved on since then. We've become more sophisticated. And entered a unique period in which, rather than struggling to provide enough parents are unable to resist providing too much. In doing so, we're unknowingly creating an environment in which mental health issues flourish. When I read Kim John Payne's book, *Simplicity Parenting* one message leapt off the page. Normal personality quirks *combined* with the stress of "too much" can propel children into the realm of disorder. A child who is systematic may be pushed into obsessive behaviours. A dreamy child may lose the ability to focus. Payne conducted a study in which he simplified the lives of children with attention deficit disorder. Within four short months 68% went from being clinically dysfunctional to clinically functional. The children also displayed a 37% increase in academic and cognitive aptitude, an effect not seen with commonly prescribed drugs like Ritalin. As a new parent I find this both empowering and terrifying. We officially have a massive opportunity and responsibility to provide an environment in which our children can thrive physically, emotionally and mentally. So, what are we getting wrong and how can we fix it?

The Burden of too much Early in his career, Payne volunteered in refugee camps in Jakarta, where children were dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. He describes them as, "jumpy, nervous, and hyper-vigilant, wary of anything novel or new." Years later Payne ran a private practice in England, where he recognized many affluent English children were displaying the same behavioural tendencies as the children living in war zones half a world away. Why would these children living perfectly safe lives show similar symptoms? Payne explains that although they were physically safe, mentally they were also living in a war zone of sorts, "Privy to their parents' fears, drives, ambitions, and the very fast pace of their lives, the children were busy trying to construct their own boundaries, their own level of safety in behaviours that weren't ultimately helpful." Suffering with a "cumulative stress reaction" as a result of the snowballing effect of *too much*, children develop their own coping strategies to feel safe. Parents and society are conscious of the need to protect our children physically. But sadly, we are messing up. Modern day children are exposed to a constant flood of information which they can't process or rationalise. They're growing up faster as we put them into adult roles and increase our expectations of them. So, they look for other aspects of their life they can control.

The Four Pillars of Excess Naturally as parents we want to provide our kids with the best start in life. If a little is good, we think more is better, or is it? We enrol them in endless activities. Soccer. Music. Martial arts. Gymnastics. Ballet. We schedule play dates with precision. And we fill every space in their rooms with educational books, devices and toys. The average western child has in excess of 150

toys each and receives an additional 70 toys per year. With so much stuff children become blinded and overwhelmed with choice. Simplicity Parenting encourages parents to keep fewer toys so children can engage more deeply with the ones they have. Payne describes the four pillars of excess as having too much stuff, too many choices, too much information and too much speed. When children are overwhelmed, they lose the precious down time they need to explore, play and release tension. Too many choices erode happiness, robbing kids of the gift of boredom which encourages creativity and self-directed learning. And most importantly "too much" steals precious time.

How can parents protect childhood? Similar to the anecdote of the heat slowly being turned up and boiling the unsuspecting frog, so too has society slowly chipped away at the unique wonder of childhood, redefining it and leaving our kid's immature brains drowning trying to keep up. Many refer to this as a "war on childhood". Developmental Psychologist David Elkind reports kids have lost more than 12 hours of free time per week in the last two decades meaning the opportunity for free play is scarce. Even preschools and kindergartens have become more intellectually-oriented. And many schools have eliminated recess so children have more time to learn. The time children spend playing in organized sports has been shown to significantly lower creativity as young adults, whereas time spent playing informal sports was significantly related to more creativity. It's not the organized sports themselves that destroy creativity but the lack of down time. Even two hours per week of unstructured play boosted children's creativity to above-average levels.

Why parents need to take charge (and simplify) So, how do we as parents protect our kids in this new "normal" society has created? Simple, we say no. We protect our kids and say no, so we can create space for them to be kids. *No*, Sam can't make the birthday party on Saturday. *No*, Sophie can't make soccer practice this week. And we recreate regular down time providing a sense of calm and solace in their otherwise chaotic worlds. It provides a release of tension children know they can rely on and allows children to recover and grow, serving a vital purpose in child development. We filter unnecessary busyness and simplify their lives. We don't talk about global warming at the dinner table with a seven-year-old. We watch the news after our kids are asleep. We remove excessive toys and games from our toddler's room when they're sleeping. We recreate and honour childhood. Our children have their whole lives to be adults and to deal with the complexities of life, but only a fleetingly short time in which they can be kids. Silly, fun-loving kids.

Childhood serves a very real purpose. It's not something to "get through". It's there to protect and develop young minds so they can grow into healthy and happy adults. When society messes too much with childhood, young brains react. By providing a sense of balance and actively protecting childhood we're giving our children the greatest gift they'll ever receive.

Source: Gillet, Tracy. (2016, March). *Simplifying Childhood May Protect Against Mental Health Issues*. Retrieved from <https://raisedgood.com>

KEEPING ACTIVE

5–12-year old's need at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity every day. That includes fast walking, riding a bike or scooter, playing, running and doing organised sports. There should be a mix of activities that make them puff and activities that are good for their bones, like climbing on monkey bars, gymnastics, dance, running, skipping and jumping. The 60 minutes doesn't have to be done all in one go. You can build it up so your child accumulates the physical activity over the day. **How many minutes are your children doing?**



HEALTH & SAFETY: Perfectionism in children

Children who have perfectionist tendencies exhibit a continuum of behaviours. On one end of the spectrum are children who take pleasure from doing difficult tasks, setting high standards for themselves, and putting forth the necessary energy for high achievement. On the other end of the continuum are those children who are unable to glean satisfaction from their efforts due to their pre-set, unrealistic goals. Since mistakes are unacceptable to them, perfectionism provides these students with little pleasure and much self-reproach.

Perfectionism appears to result from a combination of inborn tendencies and environmental factors. These can include excessive praise or demands from parents, teachers or trainers, observation of adults modelling perfectionist tendencies, and from parental love being conditional upon the child's exemplary achievement. Extreme perfectionism has been linked to performance and social anxiety, eating disorders, migraine headaches, obsessive-compulsive disorder, depression, and suicide. When behaviour of this type affects normal development and social relationships, these children need assistance.

Characteristics of Perfectionists

Some characteristics of children who are extreme perfectionists:

- having exceptionally high expectations for themselves
- being self-critical, self-conscious and easily embarrassed
- having strong feelings of inadequacy and low self-confidence
- exhibiting persistent anxiety about making mistakes
- being highly sensitive to criticism
- procrastinating and avoiding stressful situations or difficult tasks
- being emotionally guarded and socially inhibited
- having a tendency to be critical of others
- exhibiting difficulty making decisions and prioritizing tasks
- experiencing headaches or other physical ailments when they perform below the expectations of themselves or others

Gifted children, who are accustomed to excelling, are often perfectionists. Problems occur if they refuse to attempt a new assignment or do not complete their work because it may not be done flawlessly. The result is gifted children who are underachievers. These students are also susceptible to burn-out if they attempt to display exemplary performance in every academic discipline.

How Parents Can Help with Perfectionism in Children

Parents may help children who exhibit extreme perfectionism in the following ways:

- Provide unconditional caring and respect.
- Provide a calm, uncluttered, and structured environment.
- Avoid comparing children.
- Give specific praise. (Effective Praise)
- Avoid using words such as brilliant, genius, and perfect.
- Use listening and other communication skills.
- Acknowledge without judgment children's negative emotions such as frustration, anxiety, sadness and fear.
- Ask children to keep a journal expressing their thoughts and feelings.
- Help them understand that it is impossible to complete every task without making mistakes.
- Encourage high standards, but explain that there is a difference between perfectionism and quality work.
- Involve them in setting realistic standards for themselves.
- Let them know that even if they fail at something, they are loved.
- Challenge their belief if they call themselves a failure, and provide a more rational evaluation.
- Teach them to revise, start again, and learn from their errors.
- For those who procrastinate, change the goal from perfection to completion.
- Provide support if they perform at a lower level than expected.
- Help them learn coping skills such as positive "self-talk."
- Encourage the use of self-control skills.
- Promote relaxation techniques such as listening to soothing music, counting slowly, taking deep breaths, participating in a hobby, walking, reading or something else calming.

Read the full list of suggestions via the link below.

Children who suffer from extreme perfectionism need assistance from the adults in their lives. They may also need help from a professional therapist. The goal would be to reduce their perfectionist tendencies to the point of having them become an asset rather than a liability.

Source: Davies, M.Ed., Leah (2019, November). Perfectionism in children. Retrieved from <https://centerforparentingeducation.org/library-of-articles/school-and-learning-issues/perfectionism-in-children/>



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