

FIRST STEPS



**HAPPY FOR LIFE: HOW
KINDYROO HELPS
EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

**YOUR CHILD'S DEVELOPING
VISION: WHAT PARENTS
NEED TO KNOW**

**MAKING GOOD
SUN SENSE**



Comments & Photos



We love KindyROO:
The encouragement, developmental activities and reasoning as to why it's important for your little one, are amazing. The music and take home activities are also super helpful and fun. KindyROO is our favourite time of the week!

**Michelle – Canberra
KindyROO**

Because of the Active Babies Smart Kids videos, my husband is more clued in than I am on how we can help our daughter have a great start to life. I'm so grateful they are free and available for every parent.

Beck

At KindyROO I love that they run group classes, yet the teachers also consider each individual child and his or her developmental needs.

Mandy - Cheltenham KindyROO



Iliana is the most passionate, enthusiastic and wonderful teacher. Both my girls love her and we travel a good distance to do KindyROO with her. It's worth every minute.

Sophie – Mosman KindyROO



My little man LOVES KindyROO and has been going for three terms now. I love how fun and engaging the classes are and that they provide detailed developmental information so we can apply what we have learnt in class at home too!

Lauren

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- Email them through to us at newsletter@KindyROO.com.au
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- Message them through to our Facebook page here: <https://www.facebook.com/KindyROO.KindyROO.BabyROO/>

Please note that by tagging or sending your photos and comments you give KindyROO permission to use them in their social media platforms and in their advertising.





EDITOR'S LETTER

Hello, welcome and welcome back to all of you who make up our wonderful KindyROO community! We look forward to all the fun, learning and development that this year will bring. At KindyROO Head Office we are very excited to welcome some new members to our team and the passion, enthusiasm and fresh ideas that they bring with them. We are also completely over the moon to have our new KindyROO website up and running. Take a look! KindyROO.com.au

In this, our 99th issue of First Steps, Dr Jane Williams explains the science behind happiness and why KindyROO kids have such an excellent chance at being happy for life. This is, for many of us, more important than anything else.

Read about your child's developing vision. Vision is different to sight. Vision is a learned process and how well children develop their vision is going to considerably affect their future learning ability. We have also included recent research news on what to 'watch out' for with screen time and the strain placed on children's eyes. Moving onto screens of a different type, enjoy reading the latest expert recommendations on sun protection for littlies, it may surprise you!

We share with you why walking your babies by their hands, or 'finger-walking', is not something we recommend and Dr Robyn Floyd gives insights into the fun and benefits of making books with your children.

All this and more. Enjoy!

Bindy

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**ANZAC Award winner 2002
Margaret Sasse**
Founder and Director of
Toddler Kindy KindyROO

Margaret is the author of
'If Only We'd Known',
'Tomorrow's Children'
and 'Smart Start'

KindyROO (Australia and New Zealand) is known as **KindyROO** in South East Queensland and overseas.

Throughout this magazine **KindyROO** and **KindyROO** will be referred to as **KindyROO**.



Happy for Life: How KindyROO helps emotional development

Dr Jane Williams

As well as setting children up for academic, sporting and behavioural success, KindyROO also, very importantly, lays the foundations for emotional development and the 'happiness factor' which is, for many, the most important of all. This not only comes about as a result of the KindyROO experience being such a happy, colourful and positive one, with babies, children and parents loving the 'in the moment' fun of the classes, but also because underneath all the fun we are having there is deeper emotional development going on. To understand how our program contributes to long-term happiness we need to look at the science behind it all.

The science behind happiness

Active movement in the first years of life plays an important role in how well a child will respond to the emotional ups and downs of life. Some very interesting research points to the effect of movement on 'genetic expression' and how this affects emotional control and responses. Movement plays a part in the wiring of the emotional systems in the brain through the stimulation of the motivational system that gives us drive and confidence to learn new tasks, even if they are a bit tricky! Children who develop the ability to control and regulate emotions are happy and enjoy life more as they can cope with the emotional highs and lows of every-day living.

The first years of life are particularly

KindyROO kids have an excellent chance at being generally happy for life.

important as this is when the brain is busy 'wiring up' and creating the essential connections that enable them to think and emotionally respond at a higher cognitive level when they are older¹. Children who engage in a daily exercise program improve not only in their physical capabilities, literacy and numeracy, attention, concentration, classroom coping skills, social sensitivities and playground behaviour but also in their emotional skills²⁻⁶.

How does movement affect emotional development?

Active early movement experiences impact on the development of emotions in two key ways, firstly through the effect of certain chemicals on our genes and secondly, via the emotional and motivational system in the brain.

1. Genes, genetic expression and movement

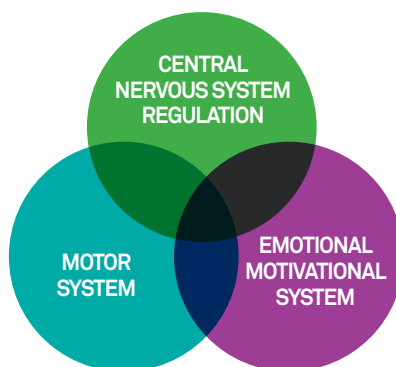
The structure of our genes, or DNA, is fixed for life. There is nothing we can do to control the impact it has on our health and wellbeing. However, every gene has a 'switch' or a 'landing strip' for chemical messengers that can attach to the DNA, and which messengers 'land' determines what gene is activated and how it is able to express itself. In this way, the brain actually writes social processes into biological processes. Emotional and psychological experiences can affect epigenetic structures negatively or positively for the long term⁷.

For example, relationship experiences can affect genetic activity. In one study, they scanned the brains of three to five year olds who attended Day Care and looked at the volume of neurons in the hippocampus at seven years old. The researchers found that children who had high support from their mother, or primary carer, had higher volume of neurons in the hippocampus, important for memory and learning. They also had a decreased incidence of depression⁷.

2. Movement and the development of the motivation system in the brain

While love and security are fundamental to emotional security and maturity, children also need to be able to actively explore and learn on their own to develop the ability to regulate their own emotions⁸. Emotional regulation means children learn to cope with the good and not so good of every-day life.

Exploring through movement is essential for the regulation of the central nervous system as well as the emotional/motivational system of the developing brain. When children exercise, they reduce the level of stress hormones, such as cortisol, and increase the release of 'feel good' hormones, or endorphins. If the brain is not bathed in enough endorphins then, stress systems are activated and children feel increased angst, depression and/or aggression⁸.



Interestingly, young children need to experience some low levels of stress. They need to feel what it is like to be stressed and be able to learn how to 'work through the process' of reducing stress. If an adult constantly helps a child avoid stressful experiences or 'fixes' the stress up for the child, then children really struggle to manage emotions when they leave their parent's side. Never experiencing stress is as detrimental for emotional development as too much stress because children do not learn to be patient, or to cope with the challenges they face and this decreases emotional regulation and control⁹.

The challenge for families today is getting the balance right. It's important to strike a balance between needing love and security and being able to explore the world and learn on our own. This works to develop the healthy emotional 'regulation' system of the brain.

How we help develop emotional maturity at KindyROO

- Our program incorporates lots of physical exercise and movement activities that lead to motor maturity and motor skill development.
- Parents or carers are actively involved in the KindyROO program, providing support, love and security while children tackle new challenges and learn new skills.
- Children feel safe in the structure and routine of the program, and feel confident to explore and attempt new tasks.

- Children have the time to learn a new task through trial and error. Not getting it right the first time, in the company of a supportive adult or mentor, gives children the opportunity to develop patience and to cope with the challenge of learning to get it right with practice.
- Accomplishing a new task gives children a positive feeling about themselves, their ability and what they can achieve into the future.
- The KindyROO program promotes success and successful children are happy children.

KindyROO and you, making the world brighter and happier one child at a time.

KindyROO makes my little girl sooo happy! It's the highlight of our week! **Kat**

My 18-month-old squeals with excitement when we arrive at KindyROO. Nothing makes me happier than seeing him learning and enjoying himself. **Leah**

My twins LOVE going to KindyROO. They ask me almost every day if it's KindyROO day!

Renee

Our KindyROO day is the best day of the week. **Rebecca**

Dr Jane Williams (PhD, BMgt, RN(Paed)) is the Research and Education General Manager for KindyROO and KindyROO. Dr Williams is one of Australia's leading experts on baby and child development.

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Your child's developing vision: What parents need to know

Dr Jane Williams

How well your babies and growing children learn to develop their vision is going to affect their entire development, including how well they are able to learn now and later while attending school.

Children are not born with the visual skills they need for learning. These skills need to develop over the earliest years of life.

It is important to understand the difference between sight and vision. Sight is the eye's basic response to light, while vision is a learned process – a cognitive act, as the brain learns what it is seeing, stores the memory and sends out messages to respond accordingly.

There is a very close relationship between how children's visual skills develop and their movement experiences. In fact, the latest research tells us that without active movement, vision develops poorly. Babies' and young children's vision improves as they actively move, act on, explore and manipulate, see, describe and make use of what is in their world.



Vision: a hands-on process

Visual learning involves the eyes, hands and the whole body, as the child learns to coordinate all parts to work as a 'team', to gather and process data through sight, feel and location, and to store the information for later use as patterns for muscle response and action.

Babies learn to 'see' through their hands every time they feel, bang and mouth an object. They also learn to 'see' through their feet – the smooth floor, the rough carpet, the prickly grass, all of which helps to develop their visual skills. As babies crawl around the room and then toddle around the house, they are visualising the world around – computing visual images for future reference. As motor abilities increase, children continue integrating their body motion with vision using their bodies, hands, eyes, ears and speech in increasingly complex ways. These abilities become avenues for learning more about the world around them.

What you can do

Babies

At birth babies have sight, but no vision. They will seek out visual experiences and there are many ways you can provide these for them – ask your BabyROO instructor what to do and watch KindyROO's free online video with loads of tips and ideas for appropriate visual development activities for babies here: <http://activebabiesmartkids.com.au/episodes/baby-vision/>

Crawling – 18 months

- Once your baby is crawling, offer a bright coloured object in the near distance to encourage development of depth perception, time and distance, and visual attention.
- Play 'Peek-a-Boo' to develop eye fixation.
- Develop visual memory by playing 'Hide and Seek' with toys. First, let your baby see you put a toy under the scarf/towel and see if they can find it!

- Roll large balls and toss balloons. Encourage hitting balloons for eye-hand coordination.
- Hang a ball from the ceiling for your baby to track and follow with his eyes or hit with his hand or foot.
- Let your toddler explore your pots and pans cupboard – it's a goldmine for fun and learning about shapes, sizes and sounds.

2 – 3 years

- For early naming skills, identify objects. For example; parts of a doll, car, dog, table, girl, boy etc. You can use a book with pictures or simply play this game as you are walking about.
- Match colours.
- Catch and throw large balls and balloons, progressing to smaller balls.

- Grasp small objects.
- Scribble on a blackboard or whiteboard. Trace over and copy basic shapes such as squares, circles, stars and triangles.
- Encourage visual thinking: 'What's missing?' for memory; 'Match shapes' for visual discrimination; 'Find the same one' for figure-ground differentiation.

3 – 5 years

- Identify the same things in pictures.
- Identify differences in pictures.
- Identify the longer line.
- Name primary and secondary colours.
- Play games that involve understanding numbers.
- Copy a cross, square, circle, union jack.

- Stack smaller and smaller blocks.
- Construct Lego.
- To develop visual thinking, describe a picture.
- To develop visual attention, 'Dot to Dot' and colour in.
- Draw and trace on a chalkboard.
- To develop handwriting as well as writing skills, start a diary.

See also in this magazine:

Watch out! Screens and your child's eyes.

Dr Jane Williams, (PhD, RNPaed) is Director and General Manager of Research & Education, Toddler Kindy KindyROO & KindyROO, and Adjunct Senior Lecturer, Discipline of Nursing, Nutrition and Midwifery, James Cook University.



FOSTER A LOVE OF BOOKS BY MAKING BOOKS!

Dr Robyn Floyd

Making a book with your little one can be lots of fun and there are a great many developmental benefits! Book making aids the development of language, encourages children to develop thinking and creative skills and engenders a love of reading.

The books you make together can be as simple as a few pieces of paper with pictures cut from junk mail, stapled together with coloured tape to make an attractive binding, or they can be thoughtful collections of digital photos created using online software about a special event in your child's life. By including family members or pets, favourite events, digital photos and scanned children's art, your child's books can be personalised and special to read.

THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE

Making a book with your child is an excellent way to talk about the way words and pictures work within a book. You can ask, "Which one will we paste next? The hen or the cow?" encouraging choice making and language development. Cut out a variety of pictures and allow your child to sort them into

groups or categories. Encourage your child to explain how and why they have grouped the pictures and what to write about the picture in captions or sentences.

DEVELOPING A LOVE OF READING

There's nothing a child loves more than seeing his or her own picture in a book. Personalised books create a strong motivation to read. By making and writing their own books, children

MAKING A BOOK WITH YOUR CHILD IS AN EXCELLENT WAY TO TALK ABOUT THE WAY WORDS AND PICTURES WORK WITHIN A BOOK.





also learn informally about book conventions such as having a front cover, creating a title, how text and illustrations are placed and numbering the pages.

BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM AND RESILIENCE

Children feel a sense of shared ownership and pride when they read the book you have created together. Writing their own stories allows children to express their thoughts, feelings and fears, while sharing stories validates the child's experiences.

SOME BOOK MAKING IDEAS TO GET YOU STARTED

Make a counting book. Depending on the age of your child they can be simple 1, 2, 3 books or more sophisticated books on specific mathematical topics like fractions.

Make a shape book. Cut all the pages in a shape such as a fish and write a story about a fish.

Make a colour book. Cut out objects of the same colour from magazines or print them from the Internet and place them on the same page.

Make a family photo album. For toddlers just beginning to talk, family photo books are a great way to help them learn the names of family members so that great-aunt Sue is not offended at Christmas dinner. Older children can dictate sentences about family members and begin to understand how text works in relation to the illustration. For example: *I am swimming at the beach.*

Trip or special daybooks. Use photos that you have taken of special events or experiences to capture memories that your child can enjoy with you. Ask them to tell you what is happening in a photo and write their text.

Flip books. These are a firm favourite with toddlers who delight in lifting the flaps to see what is beneath. Why not try making a homemade flap book?

Recycled material books: Use cereal boxes, brown paper bags or other pieces of paper or card to make books that encourage a respect for our environment by using less paper, as well as encouraging children to think creatively about book making materials.

For older children, create a publishing centre. If you have space in your house, a writing station is a perfect place to invite children to write. The station may be a desk, table or even a tray which holds writing tools, scissors, staplers, glue and a variety of paper, cards and recycled materials that invite your child to create books. Look in discount stores for items to add variety.

Dr Robyn Floyd is a lecturer in Education at Swinburne University of Technology. Robyn began making photo books for her children, nephews and nieces and now makes all kinds of books with her grandchildren.

Making good sun sense

Vivien Mitchell

Taking toddlers to the beach requires the expert planning of a logistician. It's pretty much like acting out the Scouts' motto "Be prepared". You've got to pack for wet, dry, hot and windy conditions, insects that sting and bite, hungry and thirsty kids, mini-scientist-kids and sand engineers, even budding marine biologists who like to collect things. All of this before you even think about sun protection.

You've packed what seems to be enough kit for the entire neighbourhood and your mind returns to an essential aspect of a beach day: lobster-pink just isn't cool these days. It's time to add the sun-safe part of the beach tool-kit – hat, rashie, sunglasses, sunscreen, zinc or block-out. We now understand that Australians' love of the beach, which is central to our enviable way of life, isn't as benign as we'd like. **"Two in three Australians will be diagnosed with skin cancer in their lifetime, including the most deadly type – melanoma,"** says Craig Sinclair, Chair, Public Health Committee, Cancer Council Australia.

Here's what experts are saying about how to best protect our babies and kids

Cancer Council Australia's old campaign, Slip. Slop. Slap. has been updated to include five sun safe elements: Slip (shirt), Slop (sunscreen), Slap (hat), Seek (shade) and Slide (sunglasses). However, according to its recent National Sun Protection survey, over half of Australians are confused about sunscreen – how much to apply and how often. There's also concern about sunscreen chemicals and if they're safe to use on children and babies. Associate Professor Schumack from the Australasian College of Dermatologists says, "we don't generally recommend widespread use of sunscreen in the first six months of life." He adds that,



“The primary forms of sun protection should always be protective clothing, hats, shade and sunglasses for babies and children of any age. For older children, sunscreen can be used on the parts of the body not covered by clothing.” More on sunscreen below.

Sun wear

Sunwear is simply one of the most effective ways to minimise sunburn and protect our kiddies. A rashie (rash vest) is a practical, convenient way to go. Quick-dry fabric and offering a high UPF, rashies cover arms and bodies. UV-protective clothing has got you covered; back, front and shoulders in one easy step! Rashies are comfy, stretchy, sun and kid proof. It's a quintessential Aussie look. Thankfully, days of the plain black rashie are long gone and you'll find a range of vibrant and playful prints and colours which have the added benefits of becoming favourite items of clothing and making your child easily identifiable. You and your kids can wear them from sand to street or beach to beach café.

Shade

A retro beach umbrella is a great idea. We all know that the struggle is real and that beach umbrellas get kinda unwieldy – but don't give up, it's an important part of your beach kit. There are many light, fold away pop-up tents and umbrellas on the market. And a quick beach hack; find some natural shade under a tree by the sand.

Sunshine and sun sense

Avoid the heat of day. It's best to go outdoors in early morning or late afternoon, when the sun is lower. UV radiation peaks at midday, so look for longer shadows before you head outside. The most recent Sunsmart campaign advises to seek shade between 10am-3pm.

Sunscreen

Sunscreen is important and an essential item in the beach bag. However, with 53% of us confused about sunscreen use and 85% of Australians not applying enough, below

are some key points to note.

Mineral / Chemical? There are two ways that a sunscreen can protect the skin from sun damage, with a mineral barrier or a chemical one. Mineral sunscreens use zinc oxide and/or titanium dioxide to create a physical barrier to protect from harmful UVA and UVB rays. Organic sunscreens fall into this category. Chemical sunscreens use one or more chemicals including; oxybenzone, avobenzone, octisalate, octocrylene, homosalate and octinoxate, to create a chemical barrier to block out harmful radiation.

How safe? Sunscreens in Australia are strictly regulated by the Therapeutics Goods Administration to ensure that the ingredients are safe and effective. There are however, claims that the chemicals raise concerns as they seem to be crossing into skin and other tissues. The Environmental Working Group (EWG) America, warns against using oxybenzone (most common sunscreen chemical), especially on children or pregnant/breastfeeding women. If you would prefer to err on the side of caution, then use the mineral, synthetic-chemical-free sunscreens, but be warned, you need to reapply these more regularly than the chemical variety!

SPF50+ means 98% of all UVB rays are deflected. Also offers improved protection from ultraviolet rays. Cancer Council Australia recommends that for children over six months use a SPF30 or higher broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen.

How often? Apply sunscreen at least twenty minutes before sun exposure to allow it to dry on the skin. Reapply every two hours or more regularly if exercising or swimming, using towels or using organic or mineral sunscreens.

How much? Dr Saxon Smith, an Australian dermatologist says, “We need to apply one teaspoon of sunscreen per limb and half a teaspoon for your face... seven teaspoons, or 35 to 40 ml of sunscreen, basically the size of a golf ball”, to cover the body.

Note: Before broadly applying any new sunscreen to children, test on a small patch of skin, (thigh area is best). Check for any reaction over the next 24 hours. Do not use this sunscreen if there is a reaction.

When the time comes to settle the kids into your patch of sand, hats on and you've rubbed all those little faces and legs with sunscreen – really, it's quite like applying a liberal layer of fluid sand paper – the last thing in the world you feel like doing is getting tiny sandy hands to rub your face with sun block. But that's what we do as parents, we put a positive spin on it, and take the massage and exfoliation pampering any way it comes...and we're already dressed for beach success in a stylish rashie, so happy days!

Vivien Mitchell is the founder and creative director of Solar Bare, a boutique sun wear label. Through her original and vibrant reef print designs for women and kids, she seeks to help drive awareness of the importance of sun protection by making it stylish and fun: solarbare.com.au

Images: solarbare.com.au

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WATCH OUT! SCREENS & YOUR CHILD'S EYES

Bindy Cummings

A massive health issue related to children and smart devices – screens, tablets, phones and computers, is sight/vision related.

A study in Australia has found that the frequency of myopia, also known as near-sightedness or shortsightedness, in children has almost doubled in the past five years. Another study in the United Kingdom reported that British children are twice as likely to be short-sighted now than fifty years ago, and a study by the National Eye Institute in the USA also found that the incidence of myopia has jumped exponentially in

Americans over the last few decades. A global study published by the Brien Holden Vision Institute predicts that half of the world's population could be short-sighted and need glasses by 2050 with many at risk of blindness.

According to research published in the *Ophthalmology Journal*, the two clear reasons for the spike in myopia in children, are an increased amount of time spent focusing up close and a

lack of outdoor activities.

“Children are spending more time on smaller screens closer to their faces and that puts more strain on their eyes,” says Optometry Australia president Kate Gifford. “Focusing on things too close to the eyes for a prolonged period puts excessive strain on the eyes and has been found to hasten the progression of myopia,” she says.



“When you’re telling your eyeballs all the time that your whole world is only fifty centimeters in front of them, the eye adapts to that.”

Ms Gifford explained that children’s eyeballs grow too quickly when they strain their eyes by looking up-close too often, resulting in blurred distance vision and the need for glasses. She said that children who spent more than three hours a day focusing at short distances were two or three times more likely to become shortsighted than those who spent less than two hours.

Recent ground breaking research, lead by Australian Associate Professor Scott Read, director of research at QUT’s School of Optometry and Vision Science, confirms the role of outdoor light in reducing short-sightedness in children. Increasing exposure to outdoor light is the key to reducing the myopia (short-sightedness) epidemic in children.

“Children exposed to the least outdoor light had faster eye growth and hence faster myopia progression,” Professor Read said.

Then there’s the ‘blue light’ issue with screens. Optometrist Dr Alexander Du explains: “Light that we see is made up of the colours red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet. These colours vary in wavelength and energy. The blue, indigo and violet lights are higher frequency and hence higher energy. Studies suggest that over time, exposure to these high energy blue lights may cause both short and long-term damage to your eyes.”

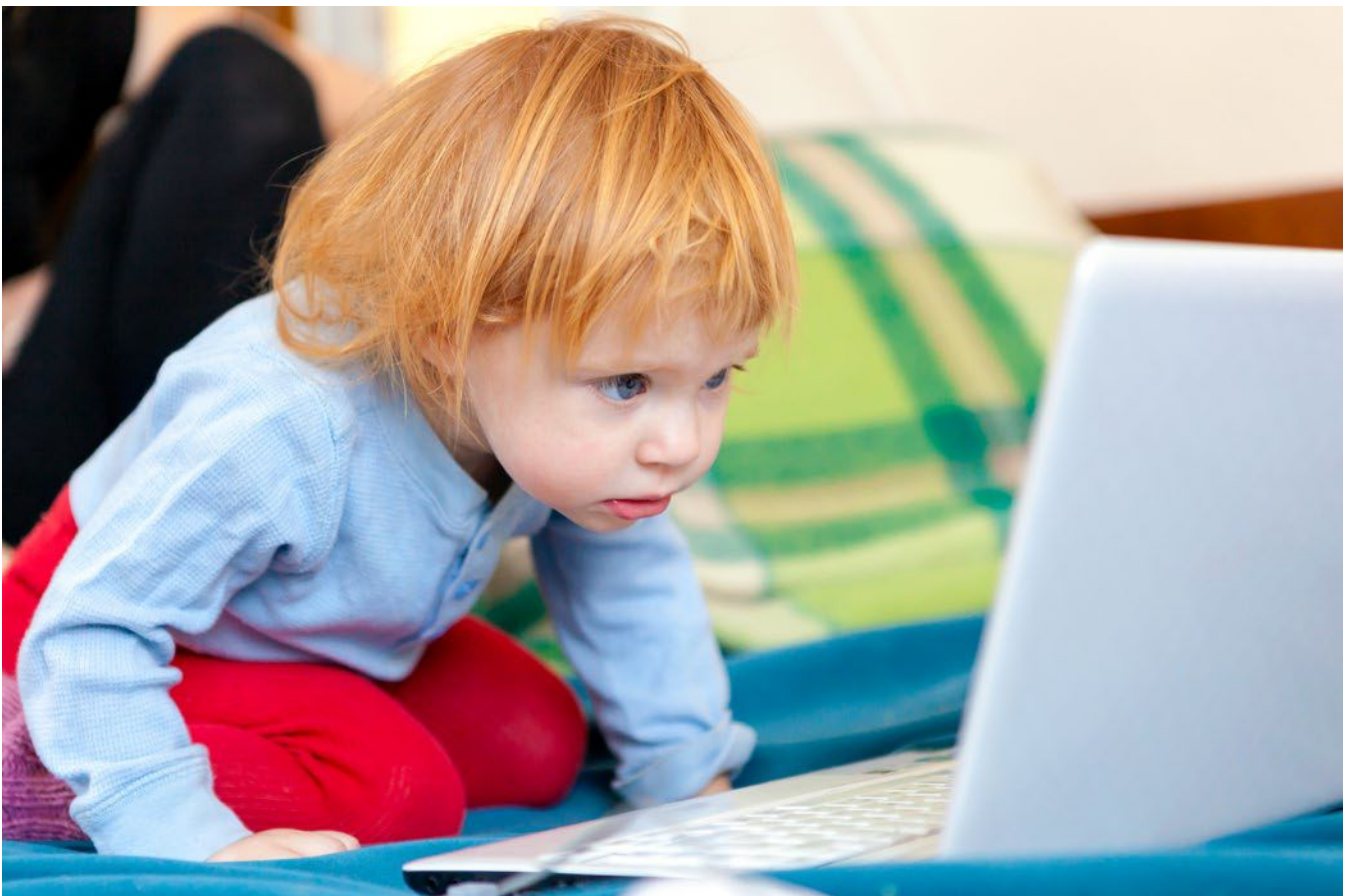
He goes on: “Every electronic screen emits higher energy blue light. Excess exposure to this blue light to the eyes may cause oxidative stress to the retina, which may lead to macular degeneration in the future. Apart from the oxidative damage to the retina, excess exposure to blue light is also known to disrupt the sleep cycle, which can cause problems in children.”

Experts recommend that to limit blue light exposure and to help prevent myopia from developing and progressing in your children:

- Avoid allowing excessive time spent looking at screens up close.
- Spend plenty of time playing outside, (more than an hour and preferably at least two hours a day).
- If your child wears glasses, a special type of spectacle lens can be used to avoid excessive exposure to blue light. These lenses have a blue light blocking coating that can selectively eliminate the harmful blue light from entering the eye.

Bindy Cummings (B.Ed hons) is a teacher and a KindyROO early childhood neuro-developmental consultant.

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Important reasons not to 'walk' babies by holding their hands

Dr Jane Williams

As a parent, I know how exciting it is when your baby first starts to walk. It's a highly-applauded milestone. However, please don't be tempted to 'help' your child to walk by holding their hands or 'finger-walking', because the skill of learning to balance upright on his own and to take tentative first steps without your help are actually essential to your baby's developing core strength, muscular control, visual-spatial orientation, timing and judging distances, coordination and postural development.

As you'll hear us say repeatedly at KindyROO – "Don't be in a hurry for your child to walk, for it is not how early a child walks, but how much is learnt before walking that will influence the development of physical, social and academic well-being."

Think about it. It is likely that your child will walk for over 80 years, yet she has only twelve months in which to get her body, her strength, balance and coordination prepared for the upright posture. So why do we hurry our children to walk? Perhaps it's a hangover from the past when it

was not safe to put a baby down on the ground, and was thus a matter of survival. Today, in stark contrast, our children have the time to learn essential developmental skills in the safety of protected environments.

Why not 'walk' children before they walk by themselves?

The temptation to help your child 'walk' by holding her hands is a strong one. Really, it does look very cute as she works to put one foot in front of the other aided by the enthusiastic grip of a loved one, however, there are some major advantages in resisting this

instinct and allowing your baby to get walking without your help:

- When you hold your baby's hands – usually up in the air as you cannot bend down low enough, your baby doesn't learn to balance himself. Arms are an essential part of learning to balance when learning to walk. They need to be held wide, out sideways from the body and they need to be free so they can adjust up and down when the body goes out of balance. Consider how you balance when you cross a narrow plank or log. A baby learning to walk



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needs to do this constantly and needs to practice, practice, practice until he feels secure enough and has developed enough body awareness to use his arms for something else. When you 'do the balancing for him' he is getting less practice and will often walk later as he struggles to balance on his own. The same problem arises with the use of devices such as 'walkers' (which we strongly advise against) and other 'walking aids'.

- Finger-walking reduces crawling and creeping opportunities. These earlier movement patterns provide many of the building blocks the brain and body needs, not just for walking, but also for many other later skills, academic, physical and social!
- A little after a baby starts to creep or crawl on all fours, she also learns to walk or 'cruise' around the furniture, holding on. This provides practice at learning to balance while in the upright position. The furniture provides stability. With much practice, she eventually reaches across a space and takes a step without holding on. This is how your baby gradually learns to control her own body upright against gravity.
- Once you start finger-walking it may be hard to stop – your baby will want to do it again and again. This is not only back-breaking for you, but also increases your baby's reliance on

you for movement opportunities and one that is not particularly useful in later life ...I mean how often do you walk around as an adult with your arms outstretched over your head?

Walking without assistance also is essential for the development of:

- **Muscle tone and control.** Think about the amount of muscle strength your baby develops purely by the action of plopping down onto his bottom when he loses balance and then standing up, over and over and over. Those leg muscles and the core muscles of the trunk work hard every time, and this is exactly what the body needs to do to gain the stability and posture required for walking.
- **Hand/eye/foot coordination.** Every time your baby takes a step on her own she needs to coordinate her arms and legs so that she maintains balance. Legs wide and arms out gives her the balance in the first instance. Gradually over time and with lots of practice, she will narrow the stance of her legs, and her arms can come down to the sides, or busily hold a toy or other object.
- **Being able to time movement across a space and to judge distance by moving.** How far is it? How long will it take me to get there? These are important questions the brain needs to work out, and over time and with practice, it does. When

first learning to walk, this is an unknown, and only through practice at his own pace can a child develop this unconscious awareness of time and space.

- **Being able to orientate herself visually and being able to learn to judge distances using her eyes.** Once again, the question of 'how far is it' has to be worked out by a child learning to walk. Can I stay upright for long enough to make it from the coffee table to the couch? The only way I will learn is if I try – on my own.

Learning new skills by themselves is the key to healthy brain development. 'Learning by doing' is far more effective than 'learning by someone else doing it for me'. When you 'walk' a baby, you reduce the opportunity for learning to take place, because it's not your infant doing the balancing, timing and coordination, it's you. The brain does not learn as quickly or as well when it does not learn by practice, and it needs lots of opportunities and experiences to walk with excellent coordination and good posture. Our role as parents is to provide our babies and children with every opportunity to do so in a safe and secure environment.

Dr Jane Williams (PhD, BMgt, RN(Paed)) is the Research and Education General Manager for KindyROO and KindyROO. Dr Williams is one of Australia's leading experts on baby and child development.

A FRANCHISEE STORY

Lynne Westerman

A casual question from a friend who owned a local KindyROO at Kinder pick-up one day, changed the direction of my professional career and life forever. "Would you be interested in becoming a KindyROO teacher?" It was a rare light bulb moment and was the first time since having my three children that I felt excited about returning to work and embarking on something new. So began my KindyROO journey, and it still continues today!

I began working as a teacher and assistant two days a week, which soon became three. As I clothed my knowledge with experience it became clear that this was where my interest lay. Teaching courses did not explain neuro-development like this! There is

so much to offer children and parents who, like me, seek to understand what is the best way to help our children be the best they can be and why these every day games, activities and experiences contribute so much.

In 2006, Helen Woodman, a friend and owner of the Diamond Valley KindyROO franchisee, offered me the opportunity to join her in partnership and become a franchise owner. Together, we established the Mill Park KindyROO centre in



Epping as a 'sister' centre to Diamond Valley. Helen is quick thinking with huge enthusiasm, organisation and business acumen, while I have the educational background to implement and oversee the programs. We share equal amounts of passion and enthusiasm for what we aim to achieve at our centres. The differences in our interests and strengths is a combination that works extremely well for us and our business! We thought it would be great if we could achieve 'six or so years' however ten years later, we are still enjoying the successes and challenges of being actively involved in both centres.

We have always enjoyed sharing the highs and have supported each other during the (fortunately few) lows that are part of any business venture. We have a shared vision that our centres should be happy, welcoming and supportive for all the families and our staff. I can proudly say, I believe we achieve that. Many of our staff have received their ten-year service awards. They too are dedicated to the KindyROO philosophy and thoroughly enjoy the company of both the parents and children who come to us weekly, some over many years with several children. Most of us began as KindyROO parents. We follow each other's children, their wide-ranging interests and many successes as they move through life beyond KindyROO. Over the years, we have welcomed

several of these children back as employable teenagers and young adults, setting up the equipment, working as assistants and teachers while completing tertiary studies. Our centres are not alone in this and it is a privilege and particularly special to be able to work with my children and to have them want to work with me!

Being a KindyROO teacher or assistant is so rewarding and always stimulating with every day different. KindyROO becomes a way of life that involves the whole family and cannot be confined to simply the teaching hours. Not only is there the planning, research and preparation you might expect, there are also the many extra things that one may choose to do, for example, making sixteen spiders, worms, very hungry caterpillars etc, the list is only limited by our imagination. It is what keeps us fresh – the quest for something new to take to our classes. My family will always remember standing over full suitcases on a holiday while I tried to fit in sixteen toy camels, which I had been so excited to find and just had to bring home!

As many parents know, work/life balance with children is a juggling act. The flexibility to do much of the work at home around our family activities made it possible for me. However, the most important factor by far in being able to devote time, thought and energy to a dynamic enterprise like

KindyROO, has been the unwavering support of my family, without which I would not have been able to follow this chosen path. It's a journey I am very grateful to be travelling in partnership with Helen, a partnership which has always been based on mutual trust, respect and friendship.

I have Helen, my family and our staff to thank for being able to look back on so many memories with a broad smile, while still looking forwards, with enthusiasm, for what is yet to come!

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There are no Toddler Kindy KindyROO (tm) centres in the Brisbane/Gold Coast areas of Brisbane, Logan, Ipswich, Cleveland, Redland Bay, Redcliffe and the Gold Coast. In these areas, Toddler KindyROO centres operate.

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