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Dear

Parents

I want to thank each and every one of you. Firstly, for choosing Crayon Kids Academy and secondly for trusting us with your child's education and finally for all the support that you have given us so far this year.

We have not only had a full academic programme this term, but also focused on other fundamental life skills including how to be a good friend, how to resolve conflict, how to persevere, how to find one's own solutions and how to always do their best.

I have placed a lot of emphasis on a "no bullying" campaign at school and I am pleased with the children's' understanding of this concept and the empathy they have developed. We cross our arms and say no bullies! We have noticed that children pick up on many things around them (this is what makes early years so wonderful) but they also unfortunately can't yet filter out what is appropriate behaviour and what is not. I want to create awareness around the use and exposure of social media and television which promotes bad behaviour. Bullying doesn't only happen in a physical form but also emotional bullying. Words can be very hurtful and my aim is to teach the children to be aware of their words and that it can hurt someone. My aim for 2022 is to drive kindness and empathy at Crayon Kids and I have to say that I am very proud of our children. They are still learning to understand the world and we have to guide them on this journey of understanding how to navigate life but they are doing great so far. Thank you for trusting me and my team with this important job!

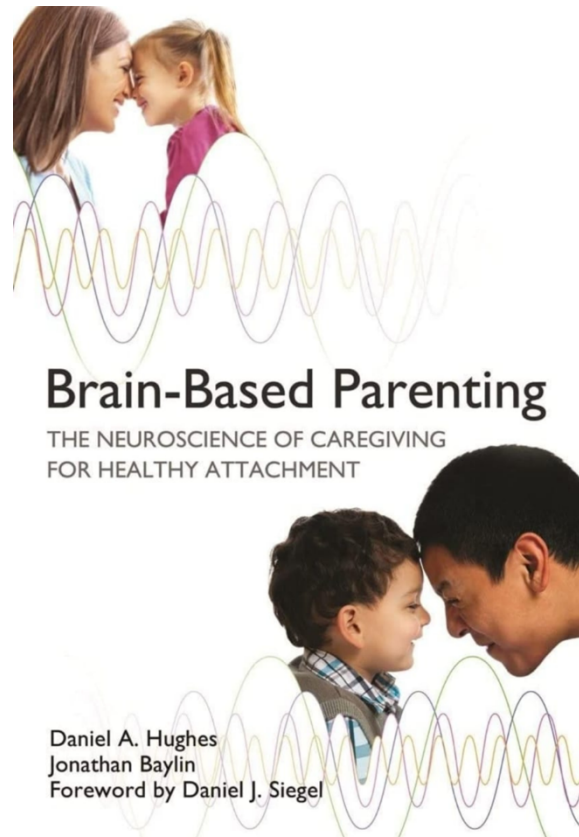
I am aware that you as parents also experience challenges in many different forms, remember to use the "handle with care" message when you need me to keep a closer eye on your little one. The rule for this message is that I don't ask any details about what challenges are at home but rather just become more aware that your little one might have a challenging day at school. This also helps us to understand if there is a shift in behaviour.

I have to salute our parent community. It is so wonderful to see the support we get when we reach out to the greater community around us. We had a very successful PAWS outreach and also managed to get 150 soup jars ready for Mandela day! We will have one more outreach for the year where we put together Christmas gift boxes for the elderly, we are excited to share the details with you later in the year. I look forward to the last part of our year together, we are working hard on our concert and this will most definitely be a highlight on the calendar. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to let me know

Thank You
Nikita

Research Corner

Brain-Based Parenting: Introduction



Background

Sometimes one comes across a book that is so good that you want to share it with as many people as possible. One such book is “Brain-Based Parenting: The neuroscience of caregiving for healthy attachment. Written by two experienced clinical psychologists”, (Daniel Huges and Jonathan Baylin), the book offers a great introduction to the neuroscience of parenting as well as practical advice and guidelines for parents who want to ensure that their children grow up as resilient, caring and well-adapted individuals who are able to fulfil their potential and contribute meaningfully to society. I will therefore be sharing their insights during my research corner/blogs over the next couple of months.

What is awareness of the brain-based nature of parenting about?

As with most of our other roles and responsibilities, parenting is made possible by interactions between different parts of our brains - some of which we share with other mammals, and others unique to us being humans. What Huges and Baylin do brilliantly in their book is to provide us with an accessible framework for understanding "which brain systems are involved in all the characteristics we consider crucial to 'good parenting', and what happens in those brain systems when parents get stressed out and their caregiving suffers"(2012:3). If we better understand how and why we react the way, we do - especially during moments of stress (which is an inevitable part of modern life) - we are able to self-regulate our behaviour accordingly. As caring parents, we do not like to admit it, but it is inevitable that we all sometimes react in a way that is dominated by our primal "emotional brain" rather than our higher-order thinking and caring capabilities. This sort of interaction is rarely constructive - in the words of Huges and Baylin, our actions become "unparental". However, if we are aware of this, we can quickly address these moments of blocked care and ensure our connections with our children remain are restored and remain intact.

What is good parenting from a brain-based perspective?

- Being sensitive and emotionally responsive to children's need for attention
- Comforting children effectively and consistently when they are stressed out
- Being a good first companion as children are initially learning how to enjoy and stay connected to other people
- Knowing when to let kids struggle and work through challenges to build their own resilience
- Protecting children from the dysregulating effects of our own negative emotions by using our powers of self-regulation and stress management - by being the "adult" in the room. (2012:3)

Why is brain-based parenting important?

As parents, we are intuitively aware of our unique role in caring for and developing our children. Research has shown that the early years are especially important to ensure that our children develop into the best version of themselves. The field of developmental social neuroscience focuses specifically on the unique link between parent and child and the crucial importance of this connection for their brain development. In the words of Huges and Baylin: "This research deals with the impact of a child's experiences with other people, especially parental figures early in life revealing how early experiences literally 'build' a child's brain." So the better we manage our interpersonal connections with our children, the better it is for their own brain development.

To summarise, a wealth of research "makes it clear that parenting matters, and it especially matters early in a child's life when the brain is in a sensitive period for social, emotional learning and is vulnerable to stress. It is not an exaggeration to say, based on research across mammalian species, that good parenting sculpts the child's brain for emotional resilience, and social competence while developing the child's capacity to trust other people and to sustain positive, caring relationships. Sensitive parenting builds resilient, caring brains, (2012:6)

In subsequent blogs, I will specifically look at what Huges and Baylin calls a caregiving formula - a practical way to ensure that we are able to provide the sensitive parenting that our children require. They call it PACE - Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy.

Part 1 is attached below in this newsletter. Keep a close eye on the MiniGenius app for the blogs that follow.

Dr. J (Lieb) Liebenberg

A Caregiving Formula for Brain-Based Parenting: PACE

Playfulness, Acceptance, Curiosity, Empathy

Introducing PACE

In this second instalment of our discussion of the book “Brain-Based Parenting: The neuroscience of caregiving for healthy attachment”, we move to some practical implications of brain-based parenting. In the words of Huges and Baylin, “What are the characteristics of this open, engaged relationship that the parent can intentionally, mindfully bring to it?” (2012:102) They choose the acronym PACE (playfulness, acceptance, curiosity, empathy) as an easy way to remember four key components to manage the reciprocal or intersubjective relationship between a parent and a child. When both parent and child are open, receptive and sharing with one another, it leads to a healthy interaction where children can flourish.

Even in instances where parents are under stress, resulting in what Huges and Baylin call “blocked care”, they can quickly “improve their ability to stay parental, regulate their internal stress, and promote intersubjectivity in their relationship with their children” (2012:103) by implementing these four components.

Playfulness

Playfulness is a deliberate and sustained attempt to reframe a situation by focussing on the possible joy, pleasure and entertainment that it can provide to both the child and parent. “It involves the moment-to-moment, fully engaged interactions involving facial expressions, eye contact, voice prosody and rhythm, gestures, postures and touch.”(2012:105) It allows both the child and parent to experience a particular shared moment or event as one of joy and pleasure. Because children, especially small children, initially explore their world through play, parents can strengthen their bonds with children immensely by participating and encouraging them to play. Instead of seeing these games as “silly” and childish, they should be embraced as powerful means to engage “the approach and reward systems of parents’ brains” (2012:105).

Restoring blocked care

Blocked care happens when parents are under stress, leading to a limited ability to engage one's higher cognitive abilities. Stress hormones block oxytocin and dopamine both of which is crucial for activating parents' approach and reward systems, which are crucial to thoughtful and caring parenting. "Playfulness is potentially a 'stress buster' that can reawaken these essential parenting processes. In a playful state, with the help of oxytocin, defences are inhibited and there is little desire to pull away and withdraw from the interaction. The pleasure associated with being playful together taps the power of the reward system in both parent and child, generating a desire to spend more time together. Parenting your child within this enjoyable, reciprocal state is not a chore but a delight." (2012:105)

Playfulness and higher-order thinking/parenting

As counterintuitive as this may sound, engaging in play is actually known to activate the higher order regions of the brain. This is because the dopamine that is stimulated by play enters the prefrontal cortex and, in this way, enhances the executive functions as well as the core approach and reward systems of the brain -all of which are crucial to optimal parenting. In addition, because play involves a lot of non-verbal communication it requires a lot of attention from both participants - all of which is great for the emotional and cognitive development of a child even as it is strengthening the bond between them. "In short, free play is actually a very creative process requiring a lot of people-reading and emotion regulating skills, a lot of 'emotional intelligence'. When playfulness is suppressed in a parent-child relationship, both parent and child are robbed of one of the most powerful processes for strengthening their connection..." (2012:106).

Playfulness in troubled times

The power of playfulness is not only evident in the trivial, everyday moments of joy and discovery, but even more so in times of stress and turmoil. That is so because the ability to play with a child strengthens the ability of a parent to deal with the unplayful aspects of the relationship - those times and events that require high levels of parental tolerance, patience, and self-control (2012:106).

It contributes significantly to the bond between them, creating mutual trust and affection and reducing stress and its accompanying side effects.

This in turn allows parents to keep perspective even as their child gets aggressive, throws a temper tantrum, or goes into any other potentially destructive behaviour. However, it does more. It often becomes a pathway to resolving potential conflict and restoring balance in the relationship. In such situations, after acknowledging a child's emotion by stating, for instance: "I see you are angry/Why are you angry?" and linking to aspects of the situation, a thoughtful parent could often introduce playful elements to diffuse the situation. Used in the right way, playfulness becomes an almost irresistible force in the healthy interaction between parents and children, but of course, this does not happen in isolation. It also requires playfulness to be incorporated into a broader framework of healthy interactions, such as acceptance, curiosity and empathy. We will turn to those in the upcoming blogs in the series.

Dr. J (Lieb) Liebenberg

Term 3 Calendar:

August	
Friday 19 th	Inside Out Day
Monday 22 nd	Deworming At School
Saturday 27 th	Suzan Birthday
Monday 29 th	Precious Birthday

September	
Thursday 1 st	Spring Day Picnic
Saturday 3 rd	Sello Birthday
Thursday 16 th	Deworming At School
Friday 23 rd	Splash Day & Heritage Dress -Up Braai For Children
Saturday 24 th	Heritage Day
Sunday 25 th	Anna Birthday
Thursday 29 th	Term 3 End (DBE) Mini Genius Term 3 End
Friday 30 th	Holiday Programme Start

Term 2 Gallery:

World Book Day

22 April 2022

World Book Day changes lives through a love of books and shared reading. We aim to promote reading for pleasure and helping students to develop a love of reading. We dressed up as our favourite book characters and spent some time reading in the school's library.





Mother's Day

5 and 6 May 2022

Our Moms and their children had a lot of fun at our *pawsitively* fun Mother's Day breakfast. We spread our event over two days this year to ensure that it is a special memory for both the moms and the children. We ate wonderful food and had fun doing some activities together. We can't wait for the next Mother's Day morning.







Reach for a Dream: Slippers Day

12 May 2022

We just love wearing slippers to school! We especially love doing it when we can also raise funds for a worthy cause, like Reach for a Dream.



World Baking Day

17 May 2022

At Crayon Kids Academy we love celebrating our diverse backgrounds. What better way than celebrating it through the food of our cultures? We tasted food from many different countries: Australia, Greece, The United Kingdom, Sweden, Portugal and of course, South Africa!

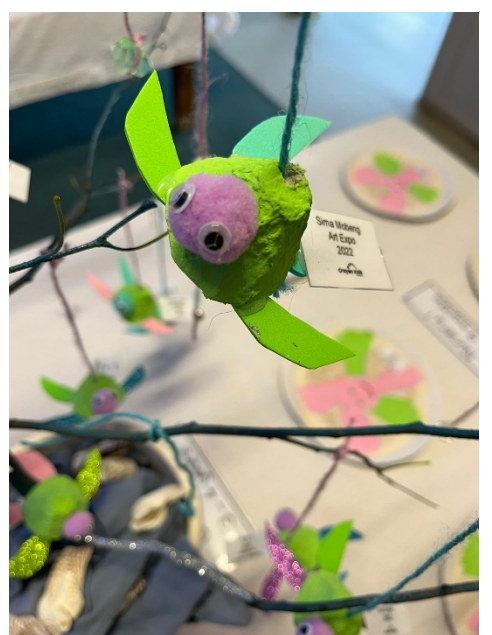
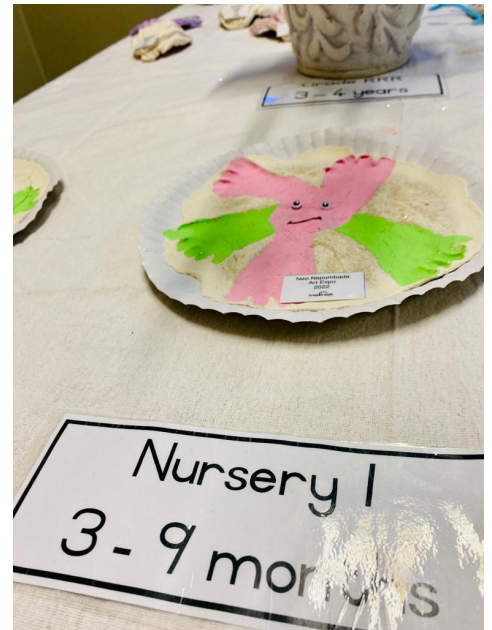


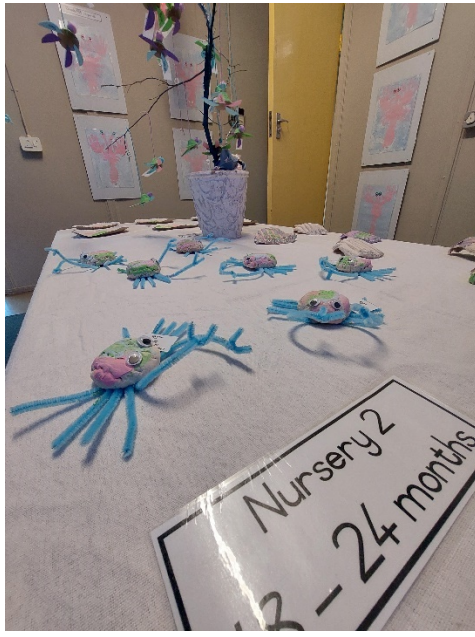


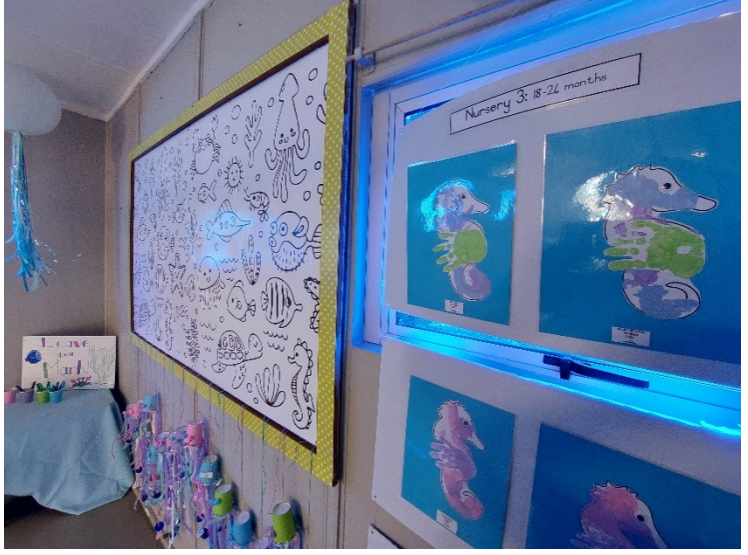
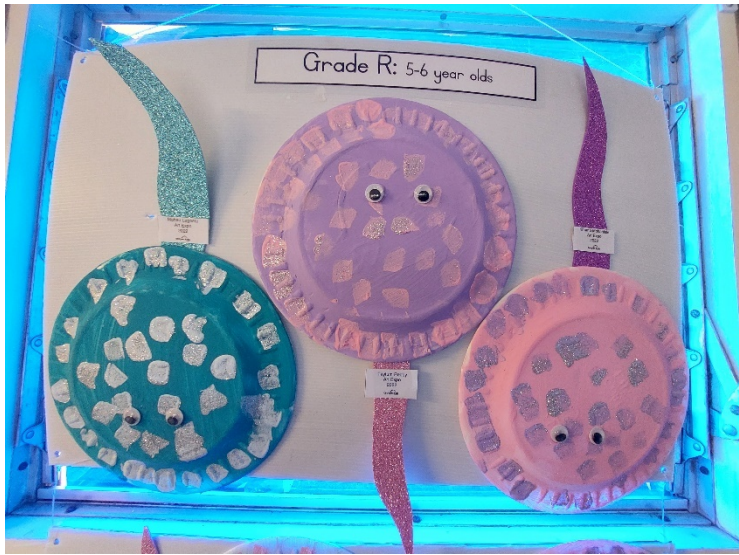
Art Expo

25 May 2022

This year we got our snorkels and flippers out and dove straight into creativity! Our art expo theme for 2022 was Under the Sea. Each class received two different sea animals to represent in our art show: Nursery 1 (sea star and dolphin), Nursery 2 (sea horse and crab), Nursery 3 (sea horse and shell), Gr. RRRR (shark and octopus), Gr. RRR (turtle and fish), Gr. RR, (squid and lobster) and, Gr. R (jellyfish and stingray).









Bring Your Bike to School Day

27 May 2022

Bring Your Bike to School Day is one of our favourite days on the Crayon Kids Academy calendar. We had a lot of fun with our wheel toys!





Superhero Day

3 June 2022

We started off our Superhero month with Superhero dress up day! Thank you to teacher Hanna for our amazing back drop that she painted herself!





Grandparent's Day





Father's Day

10 and 11 June 2022

Our Father's Day Weekend started off with a special Fathers' Morning Drop-off on Friday. We also enjoyed a lovely family day at Spur on the 11th. Thank you to our Super Dads!









Holiday Programme





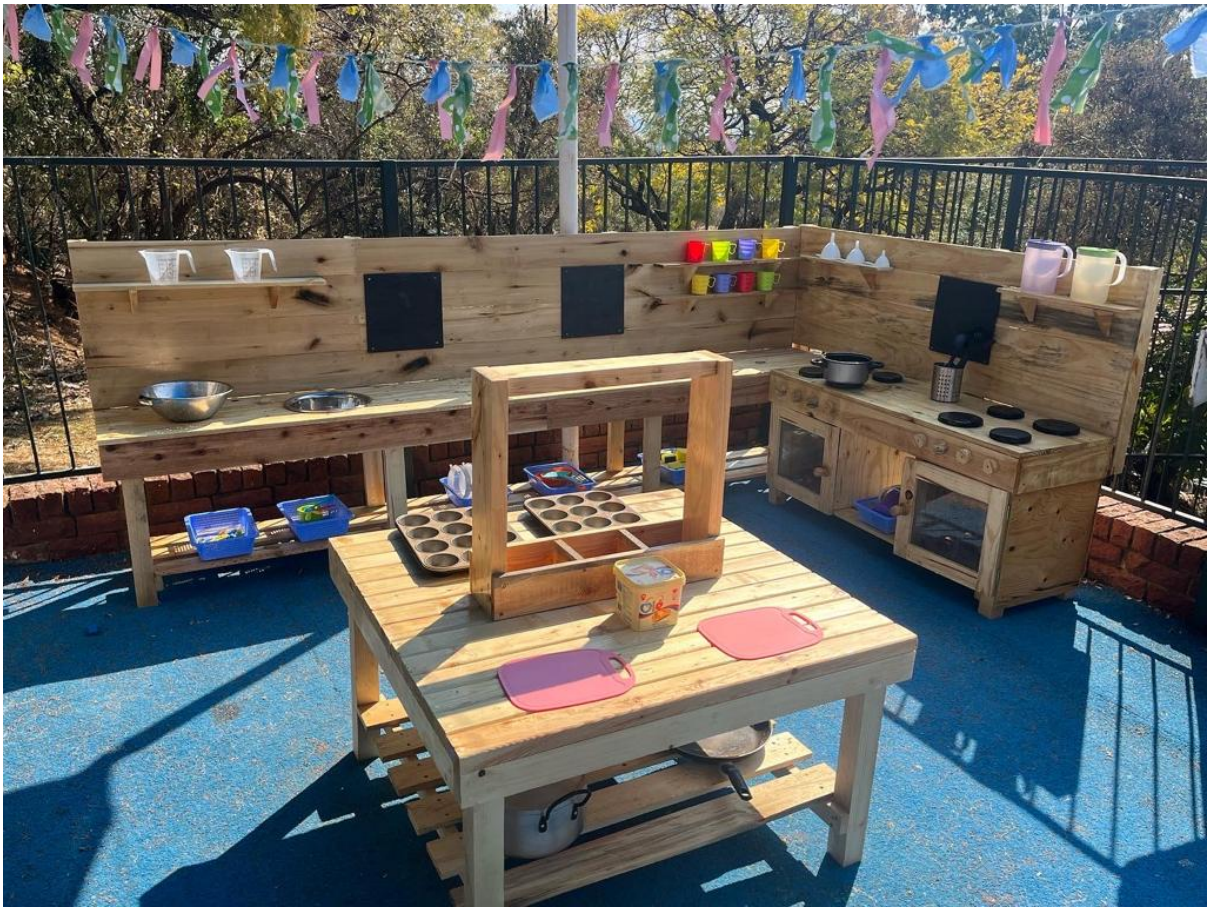




New playground additions

1. We revamped our old dollhouse and turned it into the Crayon Station! It now has a valued spot on the bike track and the children enjoy it every day.
2. We acquired a brand new mud kitchen! Thank you for all the holiday programme payments that contributed to this new addition!
3. We finally were able to get new sand to put in our sandpits!











Important Dates for Term 3:

1. Friday 19 August 2022:

Inside Out Day

2. Thursday 1 September 2022:

Spring Day Picnic

3. Thursday 15 September 2022:

Deworming

4. Friday 23 September 2022:

Splash Day

5. Thursday 29 September 2022:

Mini Genius Term 3 Ends

11. Friday 30 September 2022:

Holiday Programme Starts