

COLLABORATIONS

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MONTESSORI SCHOOLS AND CENTRES AUSTRALIA



MARCH 2021

NEWS & EVENTS

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- Upcoming MSCA events
- International events and training

YOUR COMMUNITY

- Picnic in the Park
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- Brain study suggests how students learn from mistakes
- Beyond PERMA: A New Approach to Wellbeing and Performance

MSCA UPDATES

FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

I welcome Montessori educators and leaders in schools and centres around Australia and beyond, to our first Newsletter for 2021. This time last year we were experiencing the early impact of COVID-19 and all that that entailed. A lot has happened in twelve months and it is probably a twelve month period that most people would like to put behind them! However, one thing that 2020 and COVID-19 has taught us is to be resilient, flexible, adaptable and to accept swift decisions and changes to plans at short notice. MSCA has certainly had to adapt and 'think outside the square' and respond to our members and community's needs in a totally different way from how we first thought that might look. Despite being a fledgling and new organisation, we have proven to be robust and 'up for the challenge'.

We are really excited about 2021 and the variety of online events we have planned throughout the year for the Montessori community. Already this term we have held some terrific, well attended events such as the Marcia Behrenbruch webinar on Agency and Student Voice. Marcia challenged us to reflect on our practice and question if our students truly have agency at our schools, querying if we embrace youth initiated shared decisions with adults, or are we offering merely tokenism. Roger Hart's ladder of participation was a great scale to use to self-evaluate on our students' level of participation, voice, ownership and empowerment. She led us through a 'punchy', well researched, provocative, and engaging presentation. As Marcia concluded, students who have agency work harder, have greater focus, have more interest, are healthier, more effective, more successful and less likely to give up. Some wonderful 'food for thought' from our first Ed4All MSCA Webinar.

I can't speak highly enough of the Conscious Marketing session recently presented by Carolyn Tate. Carolyn has a wealth of experience and is passionate about building organisations through the power of purpose and story. She believes that if you build something so good and so compelling and can articulate that through story, people will want to buy in, join your community and tell others about you. Her practical support structures that were provided throughout the session were invaluable.

I would like to remind members that if you are not able to attend the sessions on the day, most of our professional development events are recorded so that you don't have to miss out and you can watch the session at a convenient time to you.

Our MSCA Hub groups have commenced this term and it's terrific to have school deputies, business managers and new Principals meeting regularly to connect, support and inspire each other. We would love to hear from our members if there are other ways we can support educators and leaders to make connections. Over the past year COVID-19 has challenged us with making and maintaining connections, but also highlighted the value and importance of these, so as we move forward it is important to seek out opportunities and find ways that we as a community can connect and support each other.

I encourage you and your staff to attend the upcoming planned events over the remainder of the year. Visit our website to see what is on offer; www.msca.edu.au It is MSCA's commitment to provide affordable professional development opportunities to build connections, collaborations and networks and we have some wonderful speakers and presenters.

Thank you and welcome to the new Schools and Centres who have joined MSCA this year. We are thrilled to watch our membership grow and I encourage all members to reach out, communicate with us, use our website to advertise job vacancies and make the most of the valuable resource which is the Montessori Hub.

I hope 2021 is somewhat less challenging for us all and the COVID situation continues to stabilise across the country.

We all need to continue to play our part to ensure the safety and good health of our communities.

I wish a positive, fulfilling, safe and healthy year for everyone.

Warm regards,



Cathy France
MSCA Board Chair



MSCA AGM

In addition to being a company limited by guarantee, MSCA is also registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). Our charitable purpose is to advance education. Charities must adhere to specific Governance Standards to be registered and remain registered with the ACNC. These Standards require a charity to remain charitable, operate lawfully, and be run in an accountable and responsible way. Our constitution has also been designed to truly represent the Australian Montessori community, with Directors elected to the board via a democratic process. As a democratic peak body, our members have a voice.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Montessori Schools and Centres Australia Limited ("MSCA") is a public company limited by guarantee and is governed by a Board of Directors in accordance with the MSCA Constitution.

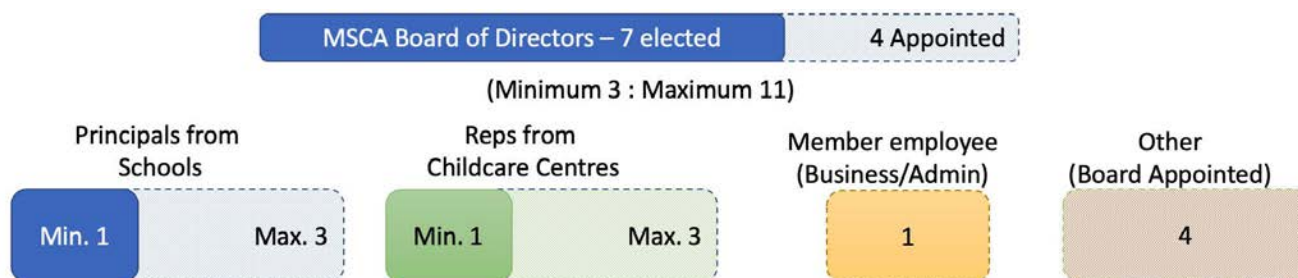
In accordance with clause 46.1(b) and 46.1(c) two (2) director positions (one school principal position, and one centre director position) are open for election this year.

MSCA invites nominations for member representatives to be elected to the Board of MSCA. People who are not representatives of members can express interest in joining the board in a Board appointed position.

Nominations must be completed on a Nomination Form for Elected Directors and received in writing no later than 11:59pm Sunday, 11 April 2021.

In the event of more nominations than positions then there will be a ballot at the AGM. The three (3) year terms for newly elected Directors will commence from the conclusion of the 2021 Annual General Meeting.

The board composition is defined within the constitution (see clauses 38 – 48) but can be summarised in the following diagram:



AGM NOTICE

MSCA members were recently advised of the upcoming Annual General Meeting. This is to be held on Wednesday May 19th, 2021 at 7:00pm AEST via Zoom.

At the meeting, members will have the opportunity to:

- Find out about MSCA's operations and finances.
- Ask questions about the operations and finances of MSCA.
- Speak about any items on the agenda.
- Vote on any resolutions proposed.

At the meeting, members will be asked to vote to:

- Accept the annual financial statements.
- Elect Directors from the nominations.
- Appoint an auditor.

The audited 2020 financial statements, 2020 Annual Report, and nominations will be sent to members via email prior to the AGM. A Zoom link for the AGM will be sent to members on May 17th.

- [CLICK HERE FOR A PROXY FORM](#)
- [CLICK HERE FOR A BOARD NOMINATION FORM](#)

Please note that nomination forms are due by 11.59pm Sunday April 11th.

YOUR COMMUNITY

NEWS FROM AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS AND CENTRES

PICNIC IN THE PARK

By Vanessa Aikins

Principal of Rockingham Montessori School

In Western Australia we have ten Montessori Schools with four of these schools offering Children's House through Primary, one just offering Children's House, one offering Children's House through to fifteen years and four offering Children's House through to eighteen years of age.

We are a collegiate group with the Montessori Principals meeting once per term, staff participating in group professional development offered through the WA Montessori Teachers Association, providing regular observations and practicums to staff and potential staff, along with arranging regular events for our students to come together.

This year our annual Picnic in the Park was held at Kings Park on Friday 12th March. Rockingham Montessori School, Perth Montessori, The Montessori School and Casa Mia Montessori all arrived at the park to meet new friends and have a day of fun whilst being fit and healthy.

A total of 534 children were split into groups to enjoy the many activities on offer, from playing on the play equipment, dodge ball, soccer, cricket, skipping and yoga to the funniest suitcase game. We would like to thank everyone who attended to help make this day a success.



FINDING MONTESSORI

Everyone has a story about how they came to be involved in the Montessori community; whether as educators or parents, leaders, trainers, business owners, and more! Each story is varied and unique, often involving some sort of chance stumbling across it, light-bulb moments, or feelings of finally finding your place. Here we share the stories of how MSCA Director, Rachael Stevens, and Administrative Assistant, Alice Champion, found their way...



Rachael Stevens

Rachael is a MSCA Board Member and also National Director of the Montessori Institute. She still enjoys relief teaching when she can.

I always wanted to teach, but my mother told me "you don't have the patience to teach" (thanks, Mum). So I went down the Business Studies degree route instead. As soon as I could, I undertook my teacher training.

It was a very bizarre thing. My future husband's mother was visiting London from New Zealand and picked up a flyer outside the London Montessori Centre in Bond Street advertising their courses. I signed up two weeks later having absolutely no idea what Montessori was all about (I actually can't believe I did!), because I could continue to work part time in marketing and study as well!! I loved it from the first lecture and haven't looked back since. I still have my final assignment about my aspirations of becoming a teacher and I wrote, "I feel so lucky to have found Montessori, my world is my oyster now." (how cute....and green lol!).

I was then employed by Nicky Chisnall in New Zealand, at her new school in Johnsonville, Wellington. Nicky was such an amazing Montessorian and mentor to me – I couldn't believe my fortune! The business degree came in good stead in the end (funnily enough!) but I loathed it at the time – I now liken the mismatch to trying to put a square peg in a round hole.

I remember first investigating Montessori education when my eldest daughter was one year old. I was so pleased to have found an approach that aligned with our family values and what my husband, James, and I understood about child development and psychology. Since 2015, my children have been attending Melbourne Montessori School; all three beginning in the parent-toddler playgroup and progressing through Early Learners to Cycle 1 and 2. As the years have passed, my passion and advocacy for Montessori education has grown.

In terms of formal qualifications, I hold a Bachelor of Social Science (Psychology) and a Bachelor of Arts (Honours; first class) from Swinburne University of Technology. For the eight years prior to 2020, I was completing a PhD in Sociology (in between lengthy periods of maternity leave!). Training as a sociologist helped me to understand and appreciate the methods by which Dr. Maria Montessori established her principles and practice. In 2017 I completed the AMI 6–12 Assistants Certificate and learnt so much more about the theory behind the Montessori methods. Although I already knew this was a form of education for a modern world, reading and engaging with the theory, and understanding more about the scientific methods involved, further reinforced the deep importance of Montessori education for our children, our community, and wider society.

Last year I was fortunate to take on the Administrative Assistant role at Montessori Schools and Centres Australia (MSCA), the new national representative body for Montessori education. In September I made the decision not to continue my PhD and finally put my skills and interests into fully supporting and progressing Montessori education.



Alice Champion

Alice is the Admin Assistant for MSCA and also a parent of three children attending a Montessori school.

ELEMENTS OF A BUSH PLAYGROUP

The damper dough is mixed, clay seed pod activity is prepared on the creek bank, the campfire is built, and the welcome mat is ready for the children's arrival. The Montessori Children's Centre Bush Playgroup is ready for action!

Our Montessori bush playgroup is in its third year of operation, growing from a small and intimate group of five families to the current at-capacity program. Each week we welcome 12 children aged between 2-5 years, with one accompanying care-giver, to our bush site for the two hour program. Based on the Montessori method, the playgroup incorporates key practical life and grace and courtesy activities into a nature play curriculum. The program maintains a structured environment, with children and care-giver's free to move between prepared activities and experiment with nature play resources.

A typical playgroup session starts with children arriving on site ready to greet the facilitator on the welcome mat. Here each child is welcomed individually, and is invited to thread a natural bead on twine to signify the start of the playgroup day. Included on the mat is a basket display introducing the new daily activity. This week we are building clay seed pods using local clay and seeds collected from the trees and bushes which grow onsite, a new activity added to the regular resources and materials set up across the bush site.

The program reflects the seasonal changes in the landscape. Activities, snack foods and circle times incorporate seasonal songs and changing natural terrain. Acknowledging the transformation of the country between seasons helps children form connections to, and understanding of, their local environment. As Maria Montessori recognised, 'The child, more than anyone else, is a spontaneous observer of nature.'



ABOUT AINSLEY ROSCROW



Ainsley Roscrow is the CEO and Director of Montessori Children's Centre in McLaren Vale which has been operating for over 12 years. She is the founder of Innakaso Montessori Teacher Training,

the training arm of the McLaren Vale Centre. Ainsley is a highly experienced and passionate Montessori educator who has worked in Montessori Education for over 15 years. Ainsley has worked in Montessori classrooms in Indigenous communities in Northern Australia, as well as leading the Montessori program at her Centre in McLaren Vale.

Core practical life and grace and courtesy activities form part of the routine play group set up; pouring with cups, teapots and jugs, mud play using the tippy tap and bush walks and flower arranging are regular activities set up in familiar places so the children and adults can predict and engage in the program at their own pace. The structure of the activities combined with the children's freedom to move between interests, mirrors the prepared environment in a Montessori classroom.

The preparation and set up of activities are essential parts of an engaging and smooth- running playgroup. After initial presentations on regular activities, parents can be included in the set-up routine. As children are welcomed to the playgroup, and introduced to the new weekly activity, parents can take responsibility for setting up simple pouring, sanding and mud play activities. This helps balance the care-giver's responsibility for supervising children, with the expectation for free play and exploration.

While parents and children are included in some activity preparation, it remains the facilitator's responsibility to ensure all required resources are ready, with clear expectations of each activity which have been role modelled and demonstrated over the first few weeks of playgroup. Without the foundation of grace and courtesy expectations, the program can quickly degenerate and lose the Montessori qualities so valued and treasured by families and children alike.

The prepared environment is pivotal to the success of the program, and for the engagement of children in the playgroup program. Building connections to the local environment and seasonal changes further deepens the holistic experience for families and children.

Including a snack routine into the playgroup program also forms an integral part of building practical life skills and independence. Collaborating and preparing bush tea, and sharing food draws on skills the children have refined during their exploration of planned activities. COVID restrictions have impacted some of our routine including shared platters, but we still enjoy the ritual of preparing ourselves, and the space for a shared snack.

One of the essential elements of the snack routine is the preparation of the hand washing bucket. At the time of enrolment, each child is given a silver bucket which remains their property and responsibility for the duration of their time at playgroup. Each week the children bring the bucket to playgroup complete with cup, drink bottle and face washer. Filling the bucket from the tank, alongside washing and drying hands is the shared responsibility of child and caregiver. This routine supports the development of independence and the group comes together to share individual fruit in the shared space.

There is a free-flowing snack time to accommodate the diverse needs of the children, but the routine remains constant. Sharing tea is an important part of the snack ritual where caregiver and child harvest native peppermint and brew a communal pot of tea for the group. Using the cup brought from home, children and care-givers share tea and during the winter months cook damper on the fire. Including the processes of harvesting and brewing tea or mixing and rolling damper support the Montessori philosophy of whole child education, including the preparation, celebration and packing up of activities and completing full cycles of activity.

These practical life activities provide the foundations for success as the children move from the playgroup setting to preschool and school.

“Before we ever put a pencil in a child's hand, those hands should dig, climb, press, push, pull, squish, twist and pinch in a wide array of environments and with a wide array of materials.”
--A. Morgan



An important part of the Bush Playgroup philosophy emphasises the need for children to run, drag sticks, build, collaborate and problem-solve. Alongside the real risks of fire, snakes and water, which are managed with clear policies and procedures and parent education, we encourage managed risk for children. Parent's hover within a metre range of their exploring child, acting as a safety net while the child negotiates inherent risks found in the bush environment.

Part of the success of the program relies on parent education, and the understanding of how best to support young children, without 'helping' or 'overshadowing' their experience. This means part of the playgroup program is spent supporting parents to scaffold their child's development. Pushing children into situations, over enthusiastic encouragement, lifting children onto branches or to places where they could not otherwise get, actually hinder physical development, not support it.

Managing parent education and expectations from the program is a fundamental element of a successful bush playgroup. Dr Pikler summed it up best noting, 'If we provide enough space and possibilities for moving freely, then the children will move as well as animals: skillfully, simply, securely, naturally.' These skills are best gathered through independent practice and freedom, all provided from in the natural bush playgroup setting.

As children and families arrive for the playgroup session, I introduce the clay seed pod activity, and reassure the children that the mud play, and flower arranging is set up just where it should be. I watch as the children and care-givers wander into the bush from the welcome mat, each seeking out their own activity, some in pairs, and some independently. I move to the creek bank and sit on the mat, carefully demonstrating the rolling and kneading of clay and seeds, smiling at the children near me. I observe Dad leaning close over his child, putting his larger hands over his daughter's hands, rolling the clay together.

The sounds of the bush are close, and as I enjoy the solace of the moment, I am already thinking ahead. What can I plan for next week building on the skills the children are refining this week? As I gaze into the bushland, I know that inspiration isn't far away... 🌿

RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

BRAIN STUDY SUGGESTS HOW STUDENTS LEARN FROM MISTAKES

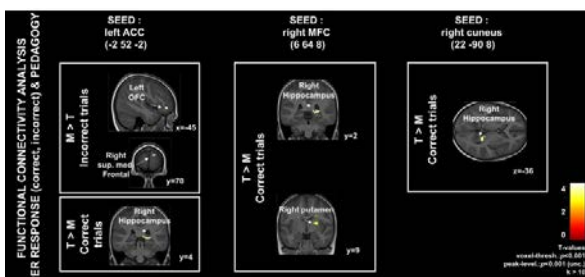
Words by Ross Brenneman, re-published from the USC Rossier School of Education website.

The process by which people learn to recognise errors and correct themselves is called error-monitoring. How children engage in the error-monitoring process can teach us about how they interact with and learn from surprising information they encounter in the world. And a new brain imaging study offers the first evidence that the way students develop error-monitoring is linked to how they are taught in school.

The study compared 8–12 year-old students from Montessori schools to similar students educated in traditional schools. While traditional schools emphasise getting the right answers and avoiding mistakes, with the teacher at the helm, in the Montessori method, teachers guide students toward materials specially designed for students to discover for themselves what they are meant to learn. This means that mistakes provide as much information as correct answers, and so should be valued by students.

Students in the study were asked to solve math problems while an fMRI tracked brain activity. Only Montessori students showed coherent changes in brain activity following errors, suggesting that they were engaging with the errors strategically to learn. Traditionally-schooled students, by contrast, showed coherent activity only after correct answers, and the activity pattern suggested that they were trying to memorize that event.

Though both groups got the same number of problems right, the Montessori students skipped far fewer and got more wrong, making them learn the task more efficiently by the end.



An fMRI study of error monitoring in Montessori and traditionally-schooled children.

Solange Denervaud, Eleonora Fornari, Xiao-Fei Yang, Patric Hagmann, Mary Helen Immordino-Yang & David Sander

npj Science of Learning, volume 5, Article number: 11 (2020)
<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41539-020-0069-6>

[Click here to read the full study.](#)

Mary Helen Immordino-Yang, a professor of education, psychology and neuroscience at the USC Rossier School of Education, and who co-led the analysis, says the study shows that in traditional teaching methods, “we’re potentially teaching kids to curtail their natural curiosity and exploration to try to memorize correct answers, but not to try to use information from the world to figure stuff out.” Immordino-Yang is also the director of USC Rossier’s Center for Affective Neuroscience, Development, Learning and Education.

The study builds on previous evidence to suggest that educational systems which prioritize correctness over engaging deeply with content may be less beneficial to student development. In other words, are educators setting students up to hew toward being concrete achievement-oriented thinkers, as compared to reflective thinkers who are self-directed?

The research could have wide-ranging implications, such as whether grading practices need re-assessing. “If a grade means you have successfully defended a substantial piece of work after an iterative process over time, and now you’ve reached a milestone, that can be OK,” Immordino-Yang says. “But grading generally provides summative feedback of where you’re at now ... whether you’re done or not and what the outcome was. Effective, transferable learning is instead about the process.” The work also shows how emotionally traumatized children may have a harder time learning in traditional schools, since they may be especially averse to making errors.

Immordino-Yang says that the researchers don’t think the benefit to students is related to Montessori schools specifically, so much as to certain learner-centered features. The research team hopes to conduct further studies of different instructional types, such as progressive performance-based practices that encourage students to debate and discuss various ways of thinking about a problem.”



THE 29TH INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI CONGRESS 28-30 JULY 2022

GET READY TO FASTEN YOUR SEATBELTS AND COME TO THAILAND IN 2022!

It's hard to imagine international travel in the time of COVID, but we are very optimistic about our world opening up in time for the July 2022 International Montessori Congress in Bangkok!

In a little over a year the Montessori world will gather in all its diversity and with incredible excitement to share what Education for a New World might look like. The theme unfolds during the 3 days of the Congress starting with a close look at our Universal Child in a diverse world. We will then share ideas and projects on how a Montessori education may guide our learning into the future, culminating in some practical applications of education for a new world to take back home.

Thailand is a unique place to hold the next Montessori Congress. Following on from Prague in 2017, AMI looks to one of the most vibrant growth communities in the world, Thailand, to host the 2022 Congress – a country that has embraced Montessori education in many of its government run schools in rural regions. Participants will be invited to come early or stay after the congress event to visit schools and other Montessori programs, and even enjoy a rare holiday in the Land of Smiles.


So mark your calendars for the 28th, 29th and 30th of July 2022 and be a part of this historic and timely event.

For those interested in participating by presenting a breakout session or volunteering, information will be sent out over the next few months with all the information needed. And go to the website: montessoricongress2022.org

See you in Thailand!
Congress Organising Committee

**"EDUCATION MUST FUNDAMENTALLY
BE COMMON TO ALL HUMANITY"**

Maria Montessori, A New World and Education (1947)



Education for a New World

29th International Montessori Congress
28-30 July 2022 | Bangkok, Thailand. **Mark your calendars!**

BEYOND PERMA: A NEW APPROACH TO WELLBEING AND PERFORMANCE

Last year, Dr. Tom Nehmy hosted a webinar for MSCA titled, 'How Student Wellbeing Can Change the World'. Here, we take a deeper look at the Wellbeing Wheel, a self-assessment tool that can be used by leaders, educators, parents and students.

JOIN US ON WEDNESDAY JUNE 9TH FOR ANOTHER HEALTHY MINDS WEBINAR, THIS TIME FOR PARENTS! DETAILS ON PAGE 12.

To many, the realisation that we could legitimately study and pursue happiness for happiness' sake, and could elevate wellbeing enhancement to sit alongside the treatment of psychological disorders, was a revelation. A school of thought mired in the discussion of distress, problematic behaviour and problematic thinking could finally bask in some sunshine and break free from a focus on the negative.

But has the effectiveness of positive psychology matched the enthusiasm with which its proponents endorse its merits?

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

Although often citing the prevalence of mental ill-health as the motivation behind positive psychology interventions (including 'positive education'), the field still suffers from a dearth of high-quality evidence that it can dramatically affect mental health outcomes long-term. And despite having some important wins on the board, it has neither replaced traditional evidence-based treatments for psychological disorders, nor has it demonstrated the ability to prevent the onset of psychological disorders.

As I predicted two years ago, the pendulum is beginning to swing back toward the middle, and positive psychology is losing a little of its gloss – forcing its proponents to strive for an integrated middle-ground between addressing the need to effectively regulate negative emotion while also generating positive emotion.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) rightly utilises wellbeing and fulfilling potential as part of its definition of mental health, but it also disseminates sobering reports on the burden of disease worldwide. No matter how many positive emotion generating strategies we can devise, no matter how many times we can identify and use our strengths, the prevalence and burden of becoming stuck in negative emotion – clinically manifest in depression, anxiety, eating disorders and chronic stress – is a leading and growing source of disease burden worldwide.

This article was written by Dr. Tom Nehmy and published on www.healthymindsprogram.com.

DON'T IGNORE THE ELEPHANT

Unless we can effectively deal with the pathological manifestation of negative emotions, the trumpeting of positive psychology as the exclusive focus of a wellbeing approach is like ignoring an elephant in the room.

PERMA, the acronym developed by Professor Martin Seligman as part of his 'positive' psychology, stands for Positive emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Accomplishment.

Gradually the PERMA acronym has grown, however, as it seeks to encompass wellbeing factors it had previously ignored. PERMA + now includes physical activity, nutrition, sleep and optimism.

Despite there being much to agree with in the PERMA+ model, the most glaring omission is the lack of mention of psychological skills for acknowledging, understanding and regulating negative emotion. Every living human being can testify to the presence of so-called 'negative' emotions. Negative emotions are natural, they have conferred a survival advantage to the human race, their function is to be adaptive in some way, but depending on how we respond to them they can also cause us to become stuck in a state of psychological disorder. The Burden of Disease reports from the WHO do not cite a lack of positive emotion as a public health imperative, they cite anxiety and depression as the urgent priorities for health policy worldwide.

From a public health perspective, preventing psychological disorders is more important than feeling good, and building positive affect should be seen as only one part of the journey to mental health and wellbeing, not the destination.

A NEW MODEL OF WELLBEING

As an organisation that has been at the forefront of peer-reviewed scientific research into the prevention of psychological disorders, Healthy Minds is in a unique position to propose a new way of thinking about wellbeing. Our Wellbeing Wheel represents an integrated approach to preventing psychological disorders, remediating problems, and enhancing wellbeing. Unlike PERMA+, the Wellbeing Wheel includes six evidence-based factors that encompass the full spectrum of psychological functioning. We acknowledge that mental health is on a continuum: at one end is disorder and disease, and at the other end is focus, energy, motivation and fulfilling potential.



Figure 1. 'The Wellbeing Wheel' – An evidence-based, multi-factor model of mental health and wellbeing incorporating biological, psychological and social components (a 'bio-psycho-social' model).

HOW TO GENERATE YOUR WELLBEING SCORE

The Wellbeing Wheel is designed for subjective self-assessment, meaning it does not rely on standardised norms to be useful: the usefulness is in your ability to self-assess the relative strength of six key wellbeing indicators, and then generate strategies to improve your own self-ratings. Give yourself a score out of ten in each of these domains. From there, it is possible to start planning pragmatic and personally relevant tasks to enhance your wellbeing. Here are the factors:

Primary Relationships

The primary relationships segment refers to the people you live with, spend most of your time with, and/or who are 'closest' to you in an emotional sense – for better or worse. Relationships provide a huge amount of context to our experiences of life, and influence our wellbeing greatly. If the relationships we have with those closest to us are healthy, encouraging and supportive, they will enhance our wellbeing; if not, they will detract from it.

Exercise

Exercise gets a whole segment for itself, despite seeming as if it should come under the Biological Needs segment above. Why? Because it has such a big influence on mood management and stress relief. Research has found that for a certain subset of the population, vigorous exercise several times a week can have a major mood effect similar to or greater than that of antidepressant medications.

It discharges stress, increases our physical capacity for daily life, and causes the release of endorphins that make us feel good. For any mildly depressed client I see, the first thing I get them to do is to increase their activity levels, and one great way to do this is to simply exercise. Exercise will also positively affect sleep, metabolism, and will lower risk for many potential health problems.

Biological Needs & Health Status

Our diet, the amount of sleep we get, consuming enough water and not too much caffeine or alcohol are essential aspects of wellbeing. On the extreme end, very poor diet or the excessive consumption of unhealthy foods and drinks will result in serious physical health problems including illness and chronic disease. Some people are also highly sensitive to foods such as sugar and caffeine and therefore experience mood swings and peaks and troughs in their energy levels. Sex, medication compliance, and regular visits to the GP will influence our score.

Psychological Skills

It is probably not surprising that the psychological skills segment is the one people find the most difficult to rate. And this is the area in which we spend most of our time training others – from corporate audiences to high-school students. The psychological skills I am referring to include concepts like helpful thinking; techniques for managing emotions; relating to ourselves in an encouraging and compassionate way; being flexible; understanding and prioritising personal values; being willing to tolerate discomfort; and more.

This segment is the most challenging to self-rate. As a helpful prompt, try to give your rating based on your best impression of:

- How well you ‘manage’ strong emotions. Do you feel like you can make good decisions when having a strong emotional reaction to something? Do you find, in hindsight, that your responses fit the situation well or do you over- or under-react? Do you get ‘stuck’ in states of ‘negative’ emotion or do you tend to bounce back quickly.
- How accurate your thinking is. Do you tend to predict disaster that never seems to eventuate? Or do you under-estimate risk? Would your friends describe you as ‘level-headed’ and ‘flexible’?
- How you relate to yourself. Are you harsh and hard-hearted in what you ‘say’ to yourself, as in self-talk? Or are you an encouraging coach who employs constructive criticism but also acknowledges what you do well.
- The quality of decisions you make. If someone was viewing your life as a movie, would they say you have navigated life well? Would they say you have demonstrated an ability to learn from the past, and become ‘wiser’ over time?

It doesn’t matter if your rating feels like a guess – that’s all it needs to be.

Fun, Interests and a Social Life

A healthy life is a balanced life. And no matter how driven or focused you are, it is part of being human that we need to take time away from work and goal-directed activities to recuperate, focus on pleasurable things for their own sake and enjoy social connections and pastimes.

Apart from your primary relationships, this segment also nurtures that human need to feel connected to, and supported by others.

Values, Meaning and Purpose

This segment pertains to who we are, and why we are here. What gets you out of bed in the morning?

Your sense of purpose is the broader meaning with which you engage in life. Is it your work? Is it your role as a parent, grandparent or carer? Or is it volunteering your time for a cause that is important to you and goes beyond your own needs to give something back to society as a whole?

For some people, having a spiritual or religious practice and belief-set provides a context that both soothes and drives them in their life’s direction. Others still might be driven by a large goal that they are working hard to bring to fruition.

Whatever the cause, that sense of meaning and purpose, of having a ‘role’ of importance and relevance, is an essential component of overall wellbeing.

Likewise, living according to what we value is an intrinsic part of living in a purposeful way. Beyond enjoying good feelings, living according to your values provides a life rich in satisfaction and contentment that goes far beyond the pleasure of being comfortable, feeling ‘happy’, or leading a low-stress life.

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR SCORE

Once you’ve rated each segment around the Wellbeing Wheel, take a look at the scores in relation to each other. Which segment is your strongest? Which is your least strong? Have a think about your less well-developed segments and come up with 3 specific strategies to enhance your number on one or more of your segments. That is, 3 pragmatic things you can do that are likely to cause you to score higher on one or more of the segments if you were to conduct a wellbeing audit using the wheel in a couple of weeks or a month’s time. Make sure at least one of your self-generated wellbeing strategies should be something very easy. Set yourself up for success!

We recommend that you revisit your Wellbeing Wheel regularly to see how your scores have changed and to help you manage your wellbeing like a personal project. Remember: rather than having the goal of experiencing positive emotions (which can be fleeting, as emotions are designed to come and go), focusing on your wellbeing is the golden key to overall emotional self-management. When your wellbeing is high, positive emotions will naturally follow, and you will notice yourself being more resilient in the face of challenging times. You will also have unlocked the secret to the very foundation of your quality of life: to be well, and able to perform at your best. 🌈



ABOUT DR. TOM NEHMY

Dr Tom Nehmy is the founder of Healthy Minds. More than 35,000 people have attended his workshops, training programs, invited addresses, and conference presentations across Australia and overseas. He has co-authored 10 scholarly articles in peer-reviewed scientific journals and was awarded the 2015 Flinders University Vice-Chancellor's Prize for Doctoral Thesis Excellence. His new book *Apples for the Mind* is out now. He is involved in the accreditation and training process of all Healthy Minds schools and companies.

UPCOMING EVENTS: SAVE THE DATES



Saturday May 8th 11am – 2pm AEST (Online)

BALANCING FREEDOM AND LIMITS LEADING TO SELF DISCIPLINE.

A workshop for 0–6 educators by Amy Kirkham, 3 to 6 AMI Trainer.

We believe a person is disciplined when he is master of himself and is able to control himself when he needs to. This is the discipline we strive to support.” (Montessori). But what does this actually mean and what might it look like? What do we do when others have a different view of how this might be reached? Come along to this workshop to discuss when, how and if we need to intervene, redirect or allow the children time to work this out for themselves.



Thursday May 13th 6.30pm – 8pm AEST (Online)

THE FOUR PLANES OF DEVELOPMENT AS A TOOL FOR PARENTS

A webinar for parents, educators and leaders by Simone Davies.

All Montessori educators learn about the four planes of development. This workshop focuses on how we can help parents use the four planes to support their children at home as their children move through the planes.



Wednesday June 9th 7.30pm – 9pm AEST (Online)
(TOPIC CURRENTLY BEING FINALISED)

A webinar for parents by Dr. Tom Nehmy from Healthy Minds

Dr. Tom Nehmy is a clinical psychologist and Director of Healthy Minds. The Healthy Minds Program is a cutting-edge approach to preventive psychology: building resilience, wellbeing and performance.



Saturday June 19th 11am – 2pm AEST (Online)

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE ON A BOARD?

A workshop covering Director and Board Duties and Responsibilities

Facilitated by David Spear. David is a Director of VUCA Pty Ltd, was previously the State Director of the Australian Institute of Company Directors SA/NT and is a 2013 alumnus of the prestigious Harvard Business School Governance Program.

We have over 30 events planned this year. To see them all, view the Annual Schedule on our website, or [click here](#).

We also have Forums, Hub Groups and further workshops for all educators. Find out more about our Event Series [here](#).

ADDITIONAL EVENTS:

TERM 2 Friday May 21st – Head to Head Forum
Thursday June 3rd – Workshop for 6–12 Educators
Tuesday June 15th – Down to Business Forum

TERM 3 Wednesday August 11th – Webinar for Parents by Andrew Lines
Tuesday August 31st – Webinar for all by Alfie Kohn



INTERNATIONAL NEWS AND EVENTS

AMI AGM



2021 AMI ANNUAL GLOBAL MEETING

*Celebrating the
Rights of the Child*

REGISTER HERE

AMI's 2021 Annual Global Meeting will be held online on the 9th and 10th April 2021.

This year we look forward to connecting with the AMI community across the world to continue our celebration of Maria Montessori's 150th birthday, highlighting the amazing work being done in the area of human rights, which was a foundational part of Montessori's work.

The online programme will cover two days:

- Friday, 9 April from 15:00 to 19:00 CET
- Saturday, 10 April from 14:00 to 18:30 CET

We are pleased to announce two of our Keynote Speakers:

- Marc Dullaert – Founder of Kids Rights Foundation, committed to children's rights worldwide.
- Joanne Dunn – Human Rights Advocate and child protection professional, working for the UN, and previously Senior Protection Advisor for UNICEF.



Montessori Aotearoa New Zealand Conference



MANZ

2021 CONFERENCE

Keys to Culture: Te tatau o te ahurea
10 & 11 July 2021
WAIRAKEI RESORT • TAUPO

Montessori
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

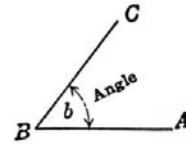
REGISTER HERE



The Montessori Adolescent Practitioners Symposium – MAPS – is a convening space for peer-to-peer sharing of best practices, cutting edge thinking, and practical strategies in Montessori adolescent education (12–18 years).



The Math Institute
Led by Michael Waski



Upcoming Online Workshop: Trigonometry for All

April 6 at 7 PM EDT-US | 6 sessions, ending April 22

This workshop introduces the concepts of trigonometry through The Math Institute approach – for students of all ages, and expands into more advanced work for older students or interested younger students.

Grades 7-12. Live workshop is 1hr at 7:00pm EDT-US. All workshops are recorded and emailed to participants.

AMI ADOLESCENT ONLINE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

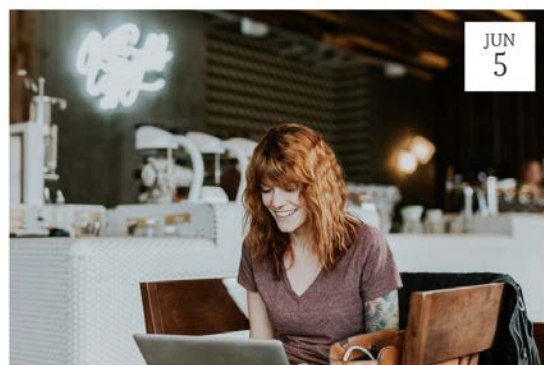
Train Montessori



AMI Adolescent Introductory Workshop

Sunday, April 11, 2021 11:00 AM to
Friday, April 23, 2021 12:00 PM

Train Montessori is offering an AMI Adolescent Introductory Workshop (25 hours) that is delivered entirely online. Our hope with our digital approach is it will fit better within your lifestyle and open pathways for global participation. Over the duration of 25 hours together, participants will be provided an overview of essential Montessori principles and background information necessary to meet the developmental needs of adolescents.



AMI Adolescent Virtual Orientation 12-18

Saturday, June 5, 2021 11:30 PM to
Friday, July 30, 2021 12:30 AM

Train Montessori is now offering Orientation 12-18 that is delivered entirely online. Our hope with our digital approach is it will fit better within your lifestyle and open pathways for global participation. Orientation 12-18, formerly known as the Assistants Course, has been renamed by AMI to more accurately reflect the course content. Over the duration of nine weeks (60 hours), participants will be provided an overview of essential Montessori principles and background information necessary to meet the developmental needs of adolescents.

Sydney Montessori Training Centre (SMTC) is a non-for-profit organisation whose core goal is to provide authentic AMI training nationally. SMTC operates training centres in Sydney and Melbourne however we offer training in various locations around Australia. Our courses are available to teachers, parents, carers, school administrators, and childcare professionals from other fields who would like an in-depth understanding of the Montessori approach to education.



2021 COURSES SYDNEY, MELBOURNE & ONLINE

AMI MONTESSORI 0-3 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, Commencing March 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 DIPLOMA
Block Mode, Commencing April 2021 (SYDNEY)

AMI MONTESSORI 6-12 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, Commencing June 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 0-3 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, Commencing August 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 ORIENTATION CERTIFICATE
Part-time, Commencing August 2021 (ONLINE)

AMI MONTESSORI 3-6 DIPLOMA
Part-time, Commencing September 2021 (MELBOURNE)

AMI MONTESSORI FOUNDATION CERTIFICATE
Full-time (5 full weeks), Commencing October 2021 (SYDNEY)

AMI MONTESSORI 6-12 DIPLOMA
Block Mode, Commencing December 2021 (SYDNEY)

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Need help? Email admin@msca.edu.au.

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- Download documents or share media items that can be used in your own organisation.
- Contribute and share your own resources for use by others.
- Request documents or media you need for your own school or centre.
- View and submit your own events, or events that may be of interest to the Montessori community.
- Engage in discussion and seek or provide support by connecting with your peers.