**COVID-Calm, 2020 Well-Being Letter**

Tuesday, 24 of March, 2020

Dear Parents/Carers,

For those of you I have not met, my name is **Zachary Hopper**, the **Student Well-Being Officer** here at Grovedale Primary School. The following letter is a communication of support to let you know, I’m am here, to not only support your children but support you through what is a very unique time. As you are aware the holiday period is going to look and be very different. Feelings of anxiety and frustration around the unknown are completely normal, your children going into this holiday period are feeling the same things in their own way. It is important to acknowledge these feelings and effectively deal with them together to allow us to see this upcoming period as an opportunity.

An effective tool is to write down as individuals what we are frustrated with and then as a family or significant group share and then throw those pieces of paper in the trash and open our minds and eyes to the unique opportunities we have in front of us. The unknown is daunting, however, if we can adopt a mindset of controlling what we can, there is exciting growth and fun to be had in these trying times.

Your children have given the best of themselves to ensure each time they participate in a moment at GPS, they are leaving it better than when they first got to it. They have also handled the ever-changing circumstances incredibly well and playing their part in “flattening the curve”. **It is important that now in the holiday period they are allowed to switch-off, reset, reflect and enjoy their break.**

As we are required now to be spending more time at home, it is important as a team we make these environments as productive as possible, through three core ideas of **Fun**, **Being in the Moment** and **Embracing the opportunity**.

At the end of this letter are **external resources** available to you if you require some extra assistance over the holiday period. Help is available and I encourage you to access it, if you have the need.

**Fun:**

Through fun, we can learn key aspects of self-development, empathy and achieving common goals. So much of our home lives, chores and routine can be **adapted in a way that creates fun**.

* Family dinners can be turned into a ‘master chef’ type of tournament. Where kids are responsible for dinner and desert or entre, dinner, desert and judged by the parents or carers in the home. It creates exploration of food, learning and teamwork.
* Board games (some of my family favorites are celebrity heads and scrabble, however monopoly nearly tore us apart!), puzzles and activities like ‘finska’, darts or cards are all great ways of having fun whilst being detached from technology and the busyness of today’s world, whilst bonding and developing significant relationships.
* Don’t be afraid to think outside the box.

I am going to attach an article on the **importance of letting kids be bored**, as this is where imagination and creation takes place. Having designated times of boredom, where they can’t access technology is okay and good!

<https://www.fatherly.com/parenting/the-importance-of-boredom-and-letting-your-kids-be-bored/>

**Appreciate The Moment:**

Why is it so important to be in the moment?

* Increase happiness
* Be more present for yourself and others
* Reduce stress and anxiety
* Increase attention
* More control of the things we can control

**Being present** is a skill and one that requires practise, however, it is an incredibly easy skill to practise.

The ‘Smiling Mind’ Application is one of the best mindfulness apps on the market that teaches the importance of being in the moment and guiding us through meditation and activities. If our days started and ended with designated mindfulness times, we would find ourselves being in the moment a lot more and dealing with challenges and opportunities a lot more effectively.

<https://www.smilingmind.com.au/>

One tool that is a great activity to do as a family or with significant others is at the end of the day share three moments in the day we are grateful for. It is important to focus on moments or acts of kindness, rather than ‘things’. By doing this each night, we are training our minds to scan the world for positives.

**Embrace the Opportunity:**

The mindsets we adopt have such power in determining how we approach moments in life, often we can view moments as ‘obstacles’ or ‘**opportunities**’.

With our normal day-to-day lives changing and doing our part for everyone by being home it can be easy to see this as an obstacle. However, if our mindsets are re-wired to see this as an ‘opportunity’ we can project such a strong message onto the way your children embrace this unique present time.

* Learn an Instrument
* Learn to juggle
* Explore our family history
* STEM ideas – Google offline STEM ideas
* Gardening
* Exercise

We have such a powerful opportunity to be a part of something that is so much bigger than us and that is pretty amazing.

**SLEEP:**

I would also like to take the time to touch on the importance of sleep. **Research has shown that we are not getting enough sleep.** Sleep is essential for all, particularly developing brains. Primary aged students require effective and consistent sleep for essential development of emotional, mental and physical health as well as, improving memory, attention and behavior.

As kids now face the problem of switching off from technology and the day they had, some good strategies can be put in place to ensure a good night’s sleep.

Ideally, **kids aged 6 – 12 years of age should be targeting 10-12 hours of sleep a night.** A great way to achieve this is to have a nighttime routine that involves no contact with technology and going to bed without any forms of technology in the bedroom.

A routine can be simple, but really effective.

* Allowing kids to talk and ‘mentally dump’
* Glass of water/milk
* Shower/Bath
* Brush Teeth/Toilet
* Read/Journal
* Say ‘Goodnights’

The smiling mind app, also has great techniques to achieve better sleeping habits.

I look forward to returning from holidays and sharing in the fun that was had by being in the moment and embracing any and every opportunity we dared to explore.

Kind regards,

Zachary Hopper

Student Well-Being Officer

Grovedale Primary School

External Support Resources

* **The Orange Door**

<https://orangedoor.vic.gov.au/>

Ph: [1800 319 354](tel:1800319354)

83 Moorabool Street Geelong – please advise clients to call where possible, but the physical office remains open at the moment.

9am to 5pm Monday to Friday (closed public holidays)

Services offered:

* + - Women, children and young people's family violence services
    - Child and family services (Child Wellbeing)
    - Aboriginal services
    - Men's family violence services
* **Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre (SAFVC)**

59-63 Spring Street Geelong West

Ph 5222 4318 – please advise clients to call where possible

Free and confidential service, available to anyone in the Barwon Area who has ever experienced, or been impacted by, sexual assault or family violence.

# Online or phone-based Family violence, sexual assault services

* **1800 RESPECT**  
  [www.1800respect.org.au](http://www.1800respect.org.au/)  
  1800 737 732  
  24-hour service by phone and web chat.  
  National domestic violence, sexual assault and relationship counselling service.
* **Centre Against Sexual Assault**[www.casahouse.com.au](http://www.casahouse.com.au/)  
  03 9635 3610   
  CASA House the Royal Women’s Hospital provides phone support, in person counselling and case work to people who have experienced sexual assault.
* Crisis care (within 14 days of sexual assault)
* Counselling and advocacy for recent and past sexual assault
* **Sexual Assault Crisis Line**[www.sacl.com.au](http://www.sacl.com.au/)  
  1800 806 292  
  An after hours crisis line operating from 5-9pm each night.
* **Victims of Crime Helpline**

1800 819 817 or text 0427 767 891

(8am to 11pm every day)

For adult male victims of family violence and victims of violent crime

* **Safe Steps**  
  [www.safesteps.org.au](http://www.safesteps.org.au/)  
  1800 015 188 (24/7)  
  Safe Steps is the gateway to emergency/crisis housing for women who have experienced violence for those needing to leave a violent situation.
* **WIRE Women's Information Referral and Exchange**  
  [www.wire.org.au](http://www.wire.org.au/)  
  1300 134 130 9:30am-4:30pm  
  Wire can provide risk assessment, support, information and referral for all Victorian women, nonbinary and gender-diverse people.

**Men**

* **MensLine Australia**

1300 78 99 78

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

is a telephone and online counselling service for men with family and relationship concerns

* **No to Violence (including Men’s Referral Service)**[www.ntv.org.au](https://www.ntv.org.au/)  
  1300 766 491  
  The Men’s Referral Service is a men’s family violence telephone counselling, information and referral service providing support for men and also women seeking information on behalf of their male partners, friends or family members.

**Culturally and linguistically diverse communities**

* **InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence**[www.intouch.org.au](http://www.intouch.org.au/)  
  1800 755 988  
  9:00am-5:00pm, Monday-Friday  
  A specialist family violence centre for women from migrant and refugee backgrounds, their families and communities. They have legal services and case management.
* **Sikh Helpline Australia**  
  [www.sikhhelpline.com.au](https://www.cfecfw.asn.au/coronavirus/www.sikhhelpline.com.au)  
  0401 401 040  
  Support for the Sikh community in Australia.

**LGBTIQ+ communities**

* **w|respect after hours service**  
  [www.withrespect.org.au](http://www.withrespect.org.au/)  
  1800 LGBTIQ (1800 542 847)  
  Opening hours: Wednesday 5:00pm-11:00pm and Saturday and Sunday 3:00pm-10:00pm. Call any time to leave a message and your call will be returned during the listed hours.  
  wlrespect is an LGBTIQ+ after hours family violence service.
* **QLife**  
  [www.qlife.org.au](http://www.qlife.org.au/)  
  1800 184 527  
  3:00pm-midnight every day.  
  LGBTIQ+ peer support service, with some phone workers having family violence training.

**People with a disability**

* **National Disability Abuse and Neglect Hotline**[www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/hotline](https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/complaints/hotline)  
  1800 880 052  
  A free, independent and confidential service for reporting abuse and neglect of people with disability.
* **The Disability and Family Violence Crisis Response initiative**

[**https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disability-and-family-violence-crisis-response**](https://providers.dhhs.vic.gov.au/disability-and-family-violence-crisis-response)

Contact: Safe stepsFamily violence response centre

(03) 9322 3555 or 1800 015 188 (toll free)

24 hours a day, 7 days a week

**Online or phone-based Mental Health**

* **Lifeline**  
  [www.lifeline.org.au](https://www.lifeline.org.au/)  
  13 11 14  
  Lifeline provides a 24/7 crisis support and suicide prevention service, as well as online support and counselling.
* **Beyond Blue**

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/>

1300 224636 (24-7)

Beyond Blue provides online chat (3pm-12 midnight) and forums as well as information and self-help tools and resources

**Children and young people**

* **Kids Helpline**[www.kidshelpline.com.au](https://kidshelpline.com.au/)  
  1800 551 1800  
  A free, private and confidential phone and online counselling service specifically for children and young people aged five to 25.
* **headspace**

<https://headspace.org.au/>

headspace Centres act as a one-stop-shop for young people who need help with mental health, physical health (including sexual health), alcohol and other drugs or work and study support.

Geelong

105 Yarra Street Geelong 9-5,

5222 6690

Mental health and AOD Intake and scheduled appointments are still occurring via phone

Health services are still running face-to-face

* **eheadspace**

<https://headspace.org.au/eheadspace/>

eheadspace provides free online and telephone support and counselling to young people 12 - 25 and their families and friends. If you’re based in Australia and going through a tough time, eheadspace can help. Individual, group and chatroom options are available.

**Online or phone-based Parenting support**

* **Parentline**

13 22 89

8am-midnight, 7 days a week

* talk about any issues to do with parenting and your relationships with your child
* help you with ways to cope and be a positive parent
* help with your family's wellbeing and resilience
* connect you with services in your area.
* **Family Relationships Advice Line**

1800 050 321

Monday-Friday 8am-8pm, Saturday 10-4, closed Sunday

* + information about services to help maintain healthy relationships
  + advice on family separation issues
  + information about the family law system
  + guidance on developing workable parenting arrangements after family separation
  + advice about the impact of conflict on children
  + telephone-based Family Dispute Resolution for people who need assistance resolving disputes over parenting arrangements
  + referral to Family Relationship Centres and other dispute resolution services, and
  + referral to a range of other services to help with family relationship and separation issues.

**Department of Education Staff**

* DET Employee Assistance Program (EAP) information Ph **1300 361 008**
* DET Workplace Contact Officer Network information [link](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/divequity/Pages/WCONet.aspx)
* DET Family Violence webpage including policy, forms, additional information [link](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/Pages/FamViolence.aspx)
* DET Family Violence support numbers [link](https://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/Documents/FV-support-services.pdf)