

# FaPMI Newsletter

(Families where a Parent has a Mental Illness)



Welcome to the Autumn edition of the 2017 newsletter. Term 1 of school is almost complete, and the holidays will be upon you before you can blink!

The FaPMI team have had several changes since our last newsletter. Becca Allchin has begun a Phd and working 1 day a week for the next 3 years. In summary the research she is undertaking is to evaluate the effectiveness of family-based interventions within mental health services.

We would also like to introduce a new team member, Michelle Hegarty, who began work with the team in January this year. She is an occupational therapist and teacher, and has worked in strategic and project roles within the mental health and drug and alcohol fields, run her own catering business, and worked in a school in the Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden program!

With additional government funding there are now FaPMI Coordinators across all area mental health services in Victoria.

### FaPMI Coordinator Team

Bronwyn Sanders (M,T,W) , Kirsty Jungwirth (M,T, Th )  
Michelle Hegarty (M, T, W, F) , Becca Allchin (T or W )  
Ph: 9871 3988, Murnong Clinic, 4 Bona Street, Ringwood East

## Contents

Welcome	Page 1
School Holiday Activities	Pages 2&3
Sibling Rivalry Article	Page 4
Spotlight on a Service	Pages 5&6
Personal Story	Page 7
Book Review	Page 8

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter in any way, please contact Kirsty Jungwirth, Editor, on  
0457 544 096 or  
kirsty.jungwirth@easternhealth.org.au

## Programs:

### CHAMPS After School Program :

**When?** Thursday 4 May, 4pm—5.30pm, for 8 weeks

**Where?** Groupworx Room, Wundeela, 21 Were Crescent, Ringwood East

### MAT Program:

**When?** Wednesday 26 April, 4pm—5pm, for 8 weeks

**Where?** The Avenue Uniting Church, 46 Blackburn Road, Blackburn

Contact **Bronwyn Sanders** to make a referral —0408 291 580

## School Holiday Activities

### **SkyHigh Mt Dandenong is open seven days a week, 365 days a year.**

**Situated less than an hour from the CBD, there is a restaurant and bistro with a view of Melbourne. When the weather's fine, the park area is often full of families and other groups hosting picnics and using the barbeques.**

**Kids and adults love our [hedge maze](#), where four stamps are collected on a passport in order to escape. Along the way, there are sculptures, illusions and plenty of beautiful climbing rose bushes.**

For something less puzzling, our [English garden](#) is an ideal place for a walk. Its winding gravel paths and well-established plants are the envy of amateur and professional gardeners alike, while kids love the nearby [Wishing Tree and Percy Possum's House](#).

**More serious walkers enjoy tackling the marked trails which traverse the native bushland surrounding SkyHigh. One popular landmark is the Kyeema memorial site, erected where a DC-2 plane crashed into the summit of Mount Dandenong in 1938.**

**Front gates open Monday to Thursday, 9am–10pm (10am on Christmas Day and New Years Day)**

**Friday, 9am-10.30pm, Saturday, 8am-11pm and Sunday 8am to 10pm.  
Entry fee is \$6 per car \$10 for a minibus or coach.**

Exit gates are locked half an hour after the front gates close.

***On Sunday 16th April there will be a visit from the Easter Bunny and a free Easter Egg Hunt. You need to be at Skyhigh at 10am sharp and children are limited to 6 eggs each.***

## CHAMPS Facilitator Guide Review

We would love your input/feedback about the CHAMPS programs as we undertake a review of the facilitator guide. If you have been a participant, parent, sibling, grandparent, facilitator, and have some ideas to assist, please contact Bronwyn Sanders on 0408 291 580

## School holiday activities

### **Cotton Wool Race**

**Materials:** Cotton wool balls, straws

**How to play:** Position two children at one end of a table. Give each child a cotton wool ball and a straw. The object of the game is for the children to blow the cotton wool ball to the end of the table using the straw. The cotton ball that reaches the end of the table first wins! If the cotton wool ball falls off the side of the table, the player must pick the ball off the ground and start at the beginning.

**Age:** 2+

### **Hold a LEGO building contest**

Put that tub of LEGO to use and challenge the kids to each build a house - with a 30-minute time limit - then judge first, second and third prize.



You could also put pieces of paper with a range of objects and ideas in a jar then take turns choosing one and giving everyone three minutes to make one as fast as they can. Then a judge decides whose sculpture most resembles the object.

### **Balloon High**

**Materials:** Balloons

**How to play:** The object of the game is to keep the balloon off the ground. No holding. If the balloon hits the ground, that person is out.

**Age:** 4+

# Sibling Rivalry

Author: Kirsty Jungwirth



*“ You can ’ t stop brothers and sisters from fighting, but there are some ways that may be helpful for you to assist and guide them to negotiate ”*

## Prepare kids for a new baby

There are a lot of changes that occur for everyone in the house in terms of routines and parent focus when a new baby arrives. Siblings may feel a range of emotions, so talk about how they might feel—sad, angry, lonely, excited, happy. **Don ’ t just focus on the positives. There are books at the library that you can read about the arrival of the baby.**

## Encourage siblings to talk to each other rather than you

**Let your kids know that you don ’ t approve of brothers and sisters trying to get each other into trouble.** When they have a difficulty, encourage them to talk to each other about what is bothering them, and try not to get involved, unless of course when someone is hurt or in danger. When arguing over toys, you can give them scripts to say to practice negotiating with each other, and setting timers to take turns can sometimes work too.

## Let children have their own precious items

There are times when kids need to share, but they also need to respect each other ’ s property. **You could make a separate space in your home for each child ’ s personal items, particularly their precious ones. With young siblings, the older ones could have the play pen around the items such as lego. Or a shelf or box could have special items that they don ’ t need to share.**

## Spend time with each child alone

One-on-one time with each child and parent is a way to really celebrate some special activity with your child. Not everyone wants to do everything together as a family all the time.

## Spotlight on a Service



**What is your name?** Liz Wrigley

**Who do you work for?** EACH

**What is your role?** SKIPS (Supporting Kids in Primary Schools) Coordinator and Consumer Engagement Coordinator in Mental Health

The purpose of the SKIPS program is to encourage schools to think about how they might support families who are impacted by mental health issues more effectively. The program also aims to reduce the stigma of mental illness by making it an accessible topic to discuss.

### **What does the program look like?**

The Program is made up of 3 components:

#### **1. Staff workshops:**

These are for all the staff, delivered by two facilitators. At these 2 x 90 minute workshops there is information about mental illness and demystifying it, and discussing how having a mental illness may impact on a person and their ability to parent, as well as potential impacts for the child. There is discussion about what they already have in place to support families in need, and help them make a connection that support is universally appreciated.

The key message is that knowing areas of support required is more important, rather than the condition or the difficulty the person has. Also, schools are well placed to provide this support, and families may not know what services and supports they can access.

Staff are encouraged to have the confidence to have a conversation with people about their needs. They may not be able to solve the problem or change the situation, but they can be supportive. Key discussions include encouraging staff to build rapport with parents, persevere, be flexible, genuine, non-judgemental, and be aware that there are a number of ways to achieve an outcome.

Information is also provided about services provided for families in this area and how schools or families can access them.

#### **2. Family/Parent Component: (this is not always offered or taken up)**

This is 1 x 90 minute session, developed to inform families about the SKIPS program and so they are aware that all grade 5/6 students will be participating in the program to raise their awareness and build knowledge.

#### **3. Student Workshops:**

These are 3 x 1 hour classroom sessions including all grade 5/6 students. The workshops do not identify whose family is struggling. There are open conversations about what good mental health looks like, what mental illness is, what might be the causes, and specifically some conditions such as bi-polar disorder, schizophrenia, depression, and anxiety. Students learn appropriate language to use, ie mental health literacy.

## Spotlight on a Service ..continued...



Both staff and students may have lived experience being shared – this can be helpful with the school experience, and there is discussion about how schools could have been different in the past.

Teachers sometimes think they will know which students are struggling, but often they don't realise. The student may be quiet/compliant/conscientious/academic. The workshops encourage staff to ask direct questions and also talk to students.

A person with lived experience talks at one of the student group sessions. This is very powerful for the students and enables them to think about the whole person. They may have a mental illness but they look okay. They aren't different or dangerous, and may have struggles, but they are just like everyone else. This also enables students to see what can be helpful in managing mental health difficulties. Often the helpful things are friends, family, or kindness of strangers.

The sessions bring out an understanding of values being tolerance, understanding, and compassion. Most people with lived experience also state that they wish they had been able to access early support.

### **How can families access this service/program?**

Parents/guardians or services can call or email me at EACH to discuss more about the program and if they consider their school may benefit from the SKIPS program, and discuss how to make a referral.

### **What is the best part of your job?**

Seeing change in the level of people's understanding about mental illness. This is within all the groups – staff, parents, and students. The response to the way people with mental illness is portrayed in the media, can shape people's thinking. After having met someone with lived experience, many of the participants have a 'light bulb moment'. They look at the person not the illness. Prejudices are chipped away. The compassion that I hear and see and the changes in their responses is remarkable.

Sensitive topics not generally spoken about in our society are discussed in the sessions. It is an honour to be a part of it. Staff may disclose to colleagues their own experience and have never done this before (my parent, my child has a mental illness). Children may talk about their own experiences in their family and fears about their own mental health. There is an enormous amount of understanding from the other children.

I can be contacted on: [SKIPS@EACH.com.au](mailto:SKIPS@EACH.com.au) or 9871 1800

My family has been lucky to have participated in the Family Fun Day for a number of years now. Although the kids are getting older, they still enjoy coming along.

**Life just gets hectic and it 's not often we get to spend 'family time ' together. I look forward to the Family Fun Day as a day of hanging out with the kids. We get to relive our inner child.**

**It 's the one day a year I sit down and make crafts...It 's actually so much fun? We love making the badges. The addition of the wood crafts is wonderful. It 's good to chat with the older fellas and allow them to share their knowledge.**

**Although I 'm typically not a social person, I make the effort to go as I really do enjoy seeing people enjoy themselves. My refuge is the petting zoo. It' s not often one gets to sit and pat a goat or a rabbit. Something about baby animals is just really comforting.**

**I don 't often do anything for myself, so the henna tattooing is a real treat. The foot has always been spot on. The staff/volunteers are always cheerful and friendly.**

**It 's an all round pleasant day and I 'm really thankful and grateful to be invited to attend.**

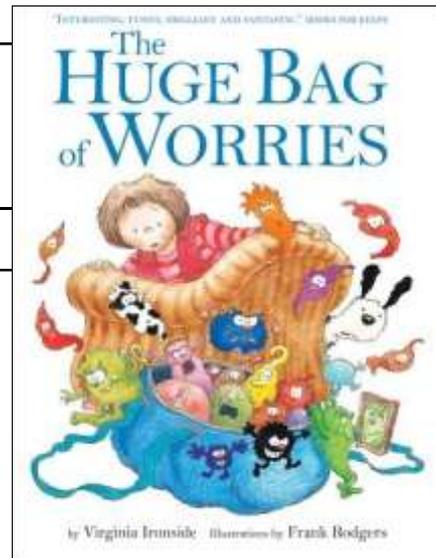
## Book Review

By Kirsty Jungwirth

The Huge Bag of Worries

By Virginia Ironside

Illustrations by Frank Rodgers



Children often worry about a range of different things, and whilst as adults we may dismiss them, they can grow larger and more **prolific if there isn't an opportunity to talk about them, dissect** them, and push them away. Of course, at night, for all of us, worries can become magnified, and then they may shrink in size in the morning light.

This beautifully illustrated book, targeted for primary school aged children, can appeal to all ages. The visual descriptions and explanation about how worries grow and multiply is very clear and understandable for children and the young at heart!

What really struck me were the decisions the young girl made not to tell anyone, and how she thought she would not be understood, believed, or burdened. Her peer tried to help but it was hardt. Once an older lady helped, she was able to discuss and model how to reduce worries and move them on. All the ideas were useful for children and adults alike!