FaPMI Spring 2020 Newsletter

Welcome to the Spring 2020 edition of the FaPMI newsletter and our new design and layout. We hope you find it as pleasing as we do. We’d love your feedback and ideas for the newsletter, so don’t hesitate to contact us at fapmi@easternhealth.org.au .

Resilience and patience. There is no doubt that the extension of restrictions in Melbourne will test both. So hang in there. It has been a long haul this year and families are doing the best they can.

Check out the photos from families, as well as a lovely piece by Annie about how she and her family are getting through. We also have links to resources for families, online programs and counselling, and we introduce our new FaPMI Coordinator Justine Brogna. Check out the calendar in the back and go for the 30-day challenge! Or make a glitter jar and pancakes just for something different. Whatever you do, find the joy in little things and take good care of yourselves and each other.

Programs

As you can imagine, it’s difficult to plan ahead for programs at the moment. We will be running the Martial Arts as Therapy group online in term 4 for 6 weeks, commencing 14 October.

The FaPMI Family Fun Day will not go ahead in its usual format, but we are exploring alternative options. We’ll provide more details closer to the date.

Satellite are running some great programs over the September school holidays, so consider booking into these.

If you are interested in any programs now or in the future, contact Bronwyn Sanders.

[**bronwyn.sanders@easternhealth.org.au**](http://?)

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Phone: 9871 3988  
fapmi@easternhealth.org.au  
  
Bronwyn Sanders (Mon - Wed)  
CHAMPS Referrals Phone: 0408 291 580  
Michelle Hegarty (Mon - Thu)  
Justine Brogna (Mon - Wed)  
Becca Allchin (Mon, Tue, every other Wed)  
Elizabeth Fraser (Mon - Wed)**

School Holiday Activities

Well, we don’t know what these school holidays will bring or what activities might be running. However we have some great ideas from FaPMI families.

Fun activities to try!

• Make a friendship bracelet

• Make a wheat bag to keep warm

• Make a bird feeder

• Decorate cup cakes

• Make play dough

• Make a scrapbook or write a journal

• Check online for other great ideas

Art & Craft

It’s no secret that kids are full of energy and sometimes make lots of noise. At times, they have strong emotions that are hard for them to express in words.

When kids get overexcited or rowdy, it’s great to have some ways to help them settle down.

One fun and creative option is to make a super easy glitter calm jar. Make it as a quiet activity, then use it like an egg timer so kids know how long they have to finish tasks, such as cleaning their room.

It’s nice to hold, which is great for kids who need a tactile stimulus while they’re concentrating on other activities such as reading or listening.

Watching the swirling clouds of glitter slowly sink to the bottom is soothing, helping to settle anxious or restless little ones.

It’s a fun way to spend time together and make something pretty and useful.

Materials

• a plastic bottle or jar – about 500ml is great, but you can use any size

• glitter – in a variety of sizes and colours, or choose a single colour theme

• food colouring – to colour the water

• glycerine – this slows the movement of the glitter through the water

• washing liquid – helps to stop the glitter from clumping

• superglue – to glue the lid on if you have little ones

• warm water

Directions

1. Warm (not hot) water for the bottle, but don’t pour it in yet (note: hot water will warp bottles).

2. Choose your glitter and put it in the bottle. Start with small pinches of glitter, as too much can clump together and stick to the top of the bottle. Start with three to five types (small or large pieces).

3. Add a small amount of water. Gently shake and swirl the bottle to help prevent the glitter from clumping.

4. Add glycerine until the bottle is about one-quarter full.

5. Add warm water until the bottle is almost full. Allow some space at the top in case you want to add more glycerine.

6. Add two or three drops of washing liquid. This helps to disperse the glitter, but too much can make your mixture bubbly.

7. Close the bottle and rotate it a few times to mix everything together. Then gently shake it and have a look at the consistency.

8. Carefully take off the lid. You’ll notice that some glitter is stuck to the top, but don’t worry.

9. Add your chosen food colouring. You can also pop in some small, lightweight toys. You might like to have a theme, such as farm animals, sea creatures, flowers or dinosaurs.

10. When you’re happy with your combination, add more warm water or glycerine if needed. Use super glue on the lid to seal your bottle, then set it aside to dry.

Now you have a unique sparkly calm jar!

[**https://growingearlyminds.org.au/activities/creating-calm-how-to-make-a-sparkly-calm-jar/**](http://?)

Recipe

Easy Yummy Pancakes

Ingredients

• 50g butter melted

• 2 eggs

• 1 cup milk

• 1 1/2 cups self-raising flour

• 3 tbs sugar

Fun additions

• berries/banana & honey

• apple & cinnamon

• whipped cream/ice cream

• chocolate chips

• coconut milk instead of milk

• coconut flakes/chopped nuts

Directions

1. Measure ingredients into a large bowl, in the order listed.

2. Beat until no longer lumpy. Do not overbeat, or pancakes will be tough.

3. Heat a frypan, then spray or butter it lightly. Pour ¼ cup batter into the pan.

4. Turn the pancake when bubbles break in the middle of it. Cook until the middle springs back when pressed with a finger.

5. Serve with a little butter and maple syrup.

**SERVES 4 PREP: 5 minutes COOK: 10 minutes**

[**https://www.kidspot.com.au**](http://?)

DadStuff

[Join one of our FREE webinars.](http://?)

We’ll share our resources developed for dads:  
7 types of dad  
Healthy family relationships  
Bonding with your kids  
Connecting with other dads  
Dads at work

Plus we’ll talk about what else is going on for dads   
in Australia.

[https://supportforfathrs.com.au/event/dadstuff-webinars-for-dads-father-figures-and-families/](http://?)

Celebrate Grandparents Day on 25 October!

The Hello Nan and Pop Fun Pack is a great way for families to keep in touch while staying at home. Activities are ready to copy, print, colour in and cut out for sharing with a grandparent or family member. Connecting kids with grandparents.

Check out the pack [here](http://?)!

[https://www.boltonclarke.com.au/globalassets/bc-nanandpopfunpack\_2020\_8june.pdf](http://?)

Book Review

The Boy in the Tower

Written by: Polly Ho-Yen Reviewed by: Laura Pettenuzzo

*“Ade loves living at the top of a tower block. From his window, he feels like he can see the whole world stretching out beneath him. But one day, other tower blocks start falling down around him. Strange, menacing plants begin to appear and no one knows where they came from. Now their tower isn’t safe anymore. Ade and his mum are trapped and there’s no way out …”*

The Boy in the Tower is about Ade, who is trapped in his apartment block by plants that are destroying the world. The plants are eating nearby buildings and many of the other residents are leaving.

Ade’s mum was mugged a few weeks before the plants came and she is too scared to leave the house. When it was still safe to go outside, Ade would do the groceries for his mum, and leave food beside her bed. Ade (whose name is pronounced A-dee) was very brave and worried that he and his Mum would be trapped if she couldn’t leave the house.

He didn’t understand what was wrong with his mum because she didn’t know how to explain it to him. But when Ade spoke to his neighbour Ben, he understood what Ade was going through. Ben’s wife had also had a mental illness and this helped Ade realise he was not the only person who loved someone with a mental illness.

The Boy in the Tower has a happy ending. Ade and his mum manage to escape the deadly plants and Ade’s mum seeks support for her mental health challenges.

FaPMI Family Voices

What one of our families say about coping with social isolation during COVID-19

Lock down has been hard and really challenging at times, but my dog Bruce has loved having his tribe home constantly!

Things that have helped me …

… choosing not to watch the news, getting out daily with my dog (and sometimes my teenagers) into nature, looking for beauty in the small things … the wattles blooming, a leaf decomposing, the jasmine about to flower, Bruce rolling in ecstasy on the ground or leaping into the river!

Watching movies I’ve never seen, nightly backgammon games with my daughter, sharing favourite music with each other. DIY hair colour, preferably pink! Singing, dancing, music blasting, phoning friends and family, Zoom chats, walking weekly with a friend who lives locally, laughing, comedy spics and specs, taking photos on my walks of shadows, nature, structures, saying hi to people I pass.

Dark chocolate, being kind to myself, takeaway when I can’t be bothered cooking, weekly phone counselling sessions, aromatherapy, afternoon naps when I’m able, cuddles with pets and kids, being silly (singing to the dice), getting extra help when needed (visiting my GP for a mental health plan, extra medication), meditation, going to sleep to relaxing music, knowing we’re all in this together and looking for things to be grateful for!

**Annie**

**Lived experience of bi-polar and a single parent to two teenagers.**

Staff Profile

**Justine Brogna: FaPMI Coordinator**

I am very excited to join the FaPMI team at Eastern Health. I have worked for 20 years as a social worker in public mental health services and private practice, mostly in the west of Melbourne, with adults, adolescents and children.

I come to this role with a real commitment to providing support to families, particularly children of parents with a mental illness. I hope to use my skills and experience to co-facilitate group programs for young carers and improve services for families. I value work that enables consumer and carer voices to be heard and reduces stigma related to mental illness.

I have my own lived experience. I became a young carer during my adolescent years. I understand first-hand some of the challenges one can experience in the face of family mental illness. Receiving adequate support during a time of complexity was very important for me to cope.

Keeping active is one of things that has helped me over the years. I love to dance and have even taught dance classes, although now it is more of a hobby that keeps me feeling positive and energised. I love singing and song writing and have written songs about my lived experience. Exercise is very important to me. Going on long walks and runs is a calming and reflective time for me.

Two years ago, I started a mental health awareness walk in the western suburbs of Melbourne called Walk A Mile In My Shoes to raise awareness for mental illness, particularly around lived experience for consumers and their families and carers. The official colour for mental health is green, so walkers wore the colour loud and proud on the day. This year, due to COVID restrictions, the walk will not go ahead, so I’ve decided I will run the distance of a half marathon (21km) in honour of mental illness.

My mother has had a diagnosis of schizophrenia for 22 years, so I am running 1km for each year she experienced difficulties with her mental health.

I encourage everyone, particularly those with lived experience, to walk or run during Mental Health Week this October wearing a splash of green in honour of mental health.