



Issue 1, 2011

Christian Playgroup Network

what's inside

Encouragement and support sometimes comes at the most unexpected moments...

As the days start to shorten (and the darker mornings make it more tempting to stay in bed for five more minutes), I am a bit shocked to see that we are nearly a quarter of the way through the year.

My rosy optimism at how much I hoped to achieve in 2011 has faded just a little bit as my aspirations and dreams bump up against reality. It would be easy to throw my hands in the air and say, "Too hard, maybe next year will be better/less stressful/the year when bad things don't keep happening to me."

There are several reasons why I don't just give up on the challenges and go down the path of least resistance. One is the encouragement and support that I get (sometimes at unexpected moments) from family, friends and partners in ministry (especially CPN family/friends/partners!) Another is the reminders that come at just the right moment that God is still at work in me and through me in all sorts of amazing ways. Finally, there is the example of Jesus; particularly at this time of the year as I am preparing to celebrate Easter I am struck by all the ways that Jesus faced adversity and opposition.


A recent Sunday Bible reading in our church was from John 3, including verse 16: "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." This well-known verse reminds me of the price Jesus was willing to pay so that you and I, and all the families that come to our playgroups could know that incredible love. It puts all my little road bumps that have been slowing me down and rocking me around into perspective.

I hope that this newsletter will remind you that you have partners on the journey; the Christian Playgroup Network is here to encourage you and your church in your ministry to playgroup families. I trust that you will find articles that will be useful or inspiring as you think about how your year is going. May you continue to see the signs that God is indeed at work in and through you and your playgroup.


God bless,

Dorothy


CPN President




Event Calendar



Program Ideas for
your Playgroup



Disruptive Behaviour
at Playgroup



Helping to Introduce
Playgroup Families to
God

event **CALENDAR**

The Christian Playgroup Network is involved in a number of events that you and your team can attend at a discount rate.

Below are a list of key programs recommended by the Christian Playgroup Network.

28th May, 2011
Parkville, Victoria

Stories of Childhood Conference

17th September, 2011
Venue and Time TBA

Christian Playgroup Network Conference and AGM

For those in rural Victoria, we also recommend these Regional Resource Days

4th June, 2011

Shepparton

18th June, 2011

Warrnambool

27th August, 2011

Horsham

Other events you may be interested in

14th May
Frankston and Greensborough

2011 Boost

29th - 30th July, 2011

Messy Church, and more - an Introduction

For more information & registration contact Ruth on 03 9873 7730 or go to [www.cpn.org.au/ training-and-events/](http://www.cpn.org.au/training-and-events/) to download a flyer.



Program ideas for your playgroup - Seasons

The key purpose at Playgroup is to provide an environment where families can find support and build friendships. We encourage adult-child interaction in an environment away from household distractions and the general business of our fast-paced lives. We recommend that playgroup sessions have a very casual atmosphere with a little structure, just enough to help prepare children for pre-school or kindergarten.

We have included in this newsletter a lift out sample of some ideas that you could use for seasons at your playgroup. This includes craft activities and ideas to use at mat time.

We will be making this guide as well as other thematic guides available through each newsletter issue as well as at www.cpn.org.au throughout 2011. Some of the themes we plan to include are our world, Christmas, Easter, senses, colours, shapes and teddy bears. Watch this space!

To help you with your planning and setup each week, a P-L-A-Y-G-R-O-U-P acrostic can easily be used to check that you are catering for each child's individual learning preferences in your playgroup session. I recommend that you put this acrostic inside the door of your storeroom cupboard to remind you and your team each week.

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Have plenty of **PHYSICAL** activities

Use and hear **LANGUAGE**

Have time to explore, **ANALYSE**, think and reason

have space to be alone, by **YOURSELF**

have **GROUP** time with one, two or more friends

enjoy **RHYTHMS** and music

spend time **OUTDOORS** exploring nature or bring nature indoors

PICTURE and imagine then create and construct

Above all, was playgroup **FUN** ?

If the answers are 'Yes' you can be assured that your Playgroup is providing plenty of opportunities for learning through play.

- Ruth Kernick

References :

Playgroup Victoria Playgroup Manual 4th Edition pg 39
I want to thank Jan Bangay, Rhonda Parkinson and Miriam Schmidt for their willingness to share their knowledge and expertise in effective program planning for playgroup sessions.



UNDERSTANDING

disruptive behaviour

The sun can't always shine at playgroup. Some days we are going to experience behaviour from children that makes things look a little bleak. When those days come along, there are some ways to keep things in perspective and this article helps us take a look at what that may mean.

The obvious is to reinforce the facts. There is problem behaviour, our infants/toddlers are not problems. There is disruptive behaviour, our infants/toddlers are not disruptive. Nevertheless when problem behaviour or disruptive behaviour

becomes part of your playgroup sessions experience, it doesn't go unnoticed.

Generally these behaviours are simply indicative of age appropriate responses. When a child pushes through the line to get to the slide, they are showing that they are unable to wait or are yet to understand the process of turn taking. What is required is direction in 'how to wait'. They are not deliberately causing harm to their peers.

Dr Christopher Green talks about the 'non-problems'. Essentially these are the behaviours which would not arise if we had more enlightened expectations of our little ones.

A baby who reaches out and grasps a hand full of hair from the head of the baby beside them on the floor mat, is initiating social contact. They are using their newly acquired 'palmar grasp'* to do so. They are not pulling hair with intent.



When a toddler in our playgroup is struggling with socialisation for whatever reason it is a sensitive issue. Behaviours often seen where there are low levels of social skills present:

- Disruptive and awkward responses to others.
- Physical force used to get own way.
- Pushing others out of lines/order.
- Snatching items and unrealistic demands to have needs met.

Gonzalez-Mena & Eyer say socialization is the learning process by which we become acceptable members of our society. Social skills foster cooperation and interdependent relationship. Human beings have to learn social skills; we aren't born with them and they don't just unfold as do gross motor and language skills. Understanding the huge learning ground our playgroups offer for infants/toddlers in their journey toward socialization might help us view some of the difficult behaviours we face with a new perspective. Our playgroup environments can provide experiences for our babies, infants and toddlers to foster the social skills we value as a culture. Our babies, infants and toddlers will learn these skills from responsible adults who care about them and consistently show them respect.

'I wonder if I would be able to help you 'wait' for your turn on the slide. Sometimes waiting can be hard but I'd be happy to stand beside you and help you wait.'

There is another area of problem behaviour that occurs in our playgroups. This happens when your group may experience consistent disruptive behaviour from a child within who for whatever reasons continually behave in ways that are unacceptable.

- Physical threats to others are common. Biting, pushing, hitting.
- They may scream through story time, every week.
- They may run around like a hurricane through singing time, every week.
- They may be in a habit of 'spoiling' the time for others.



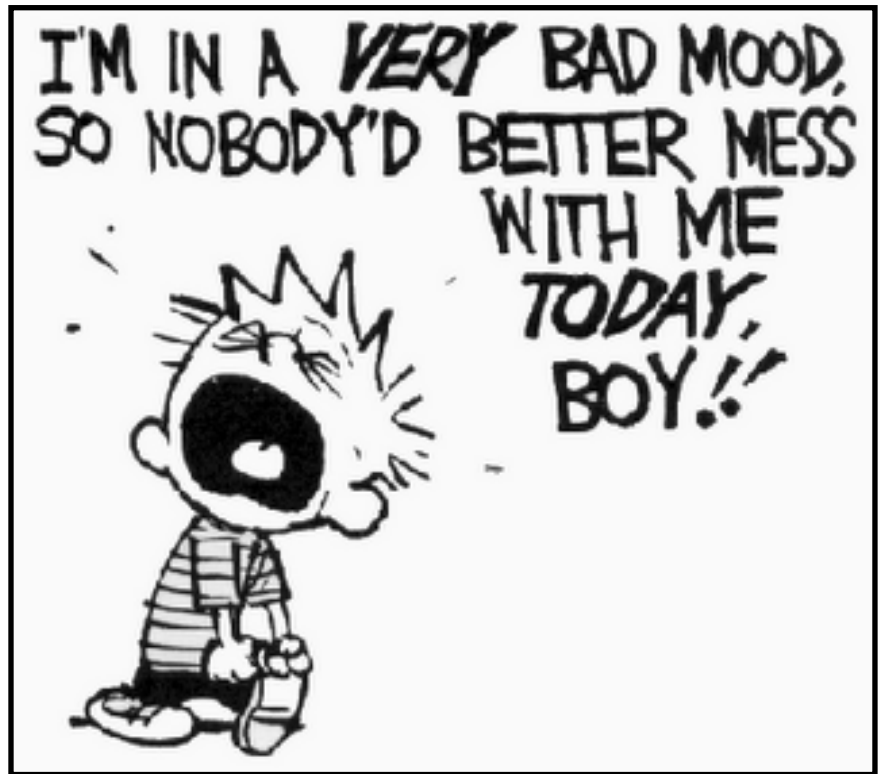
Here is a situation that needs to be handled well. In determining the best way forward it is helpful to identify who's involved: there are at least 4 groups to consider;

1. The child who behaves disruptively
2. The child or children who this behaviour affects
3. The mother/caregiver of the child with the disruptive behaviour
4. The other mothers and caregivers.

1. The child who behaves disruptively needs you. Whatever the reason for the child's behaviour and we could suggest a myriad of them, tired, ill, bored, unhappy, insecure, a product of permissive parenting... they need our support. We can assist them by providing an environment that minimises the opportunities for inappropriate behaviour. Have an adult buddy come along and just be with them during the playgroup session. Use inappropriate behaviour as an opportunity to teach them another way. Provide reasons for rules and your intention to keep them in place. Encourage positive behaviour. You will be modelling important social skills if you are calm and gently persistent and above all accepting.

2. The children who are on the receiving end of a lack of social skills need to be protected. We do have to protect children who are at risk because of another's disruptive behaviour. Stop the hitting before it occurs. Catch the biting before the teeth sink in. It's important that our playgroup environments make the children feel safe. Interventions allow the child who is 'at risk' to feel safe and valuable. It will also send the message to the child showing disruptive behaviour that you don't like it and will step in to stop it. You might like to redirect the behaviour. 'I won't let you bite Michael. Can you tell me some things that are ok to bite into?' (hopefully you start discussing fruit time!)

3. The mother/fathers/caregiver of the child with the disruptive behaviours needs support. I'm yet to meet a mother who is happy with their child hurting others. It's often excruciatingly awkward for them. It is also isolating for them. There is a tendency to keep your distance, but freezing them out or inferring with body language that they are



responsible for their child's behaviour is not helpful to anybody. Genuine care and empathy are required and will both build relationship and can prepare the ground for the gentle suggestions of interventions that might help when the time is right.

4. Other mothers/fathers/caregivers. Stay calm. Identify the behaviours for what they are. Have protective measures in place so that everyone in the playgroup can feel safe. Build networks of support for each other. Remember every infant/toddler has 'off days' or 'out of sorts' moments. Behave in a way that you would want others to behave towards you when the inevitable happens.

The sun can't always shine. However, bleakness can be kept to a minimum so that a little bit of the sun always shines through at your playgroup.

*palmar grasp: grasps objects using the entire hand.

- Roslyn Elms

Resources:

Janet Gonzalez-Mena & Dianne Widmeyer Eyer. Infants, Toddlers, and Caregivers. 7th edition. A curriculum of respectful, responsive care and education. Mc Graw Hill, 2007.

Laura E. Berk. Child Development 7th edition. Pearson Education, Inc. 2006.

Dr Christopher Green

GOOD IDEAS TO HELP INTRODUCE PLAYGROUP FAMILIES TO GOD

Here are some ideas from participants at a recent Playgroup conference in NSW. You may be doing some of these, or there may be some ideas that you would like to try!

Have a Playgroup session on a Saturday close to Father's Day for dads.

Run 2-3 special services per year at 5pm, offer a sausage sizzle & child friendly activities (the Messy Church training on 29 July will equip you for this – see Event Calendar, p.3).

Have a 30-45 minute mum's café occasionally during Playgroup, with childminding while mums listen to a talk over a special morning tea. Choose topics that are relevant to parenting and family life.

Have a good ratio between community and church mums.

Offer Christianity Explained, Alpha, Introducing God or

Journeys to the community parents and carers.

Some women make a commitment, but not necessarily the husbands. Important that they are not pressured to come to church, especially if the husband is 'anti', but encourage them into a bible study group through the week (provide free childminding).

Hold bridging events such as Family Conference, Jewellery nights, Gingerbread nights, etc. Group invitations DON'T work, but personal invitations DO work.



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FEEDBACK

We would appreciate your feedback on the website, and suggestions for helpful links and material. You are invited to submit your suggestions to:
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