

# From the Desk of the Executive Head...

7-10-2021

Dear PEPPS Community

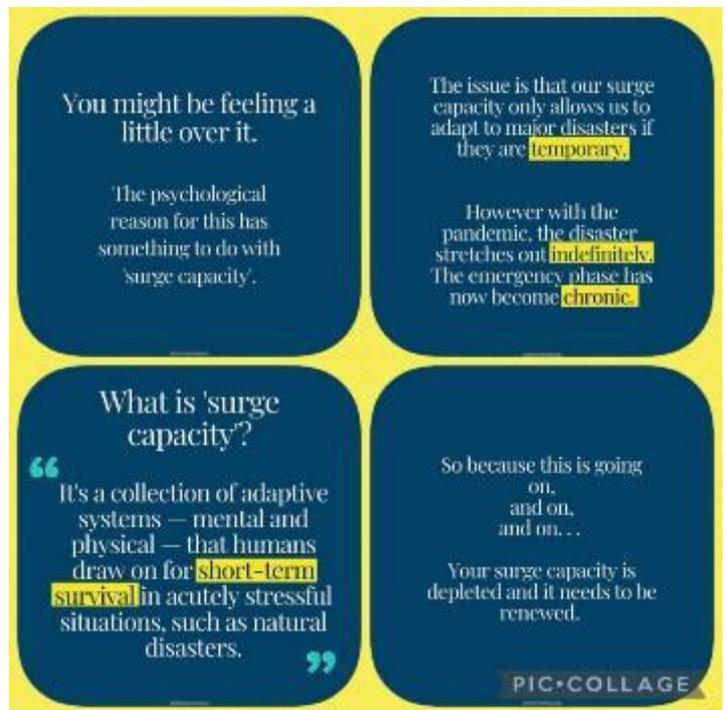
Father Thomas Keating, who was a developer of contemplative prayer, reminded us that, 'God is not just with us, not just beside us, not just under us, not just over us, but within us, at the deepest level, and, in our inmost being, a step beyond the true self'.

The last 18 months have often tested our understanding of the world. Many of us have been ill or watch loved ones suffering. Too many of our community have lost precious souls and had to continue with a void in their lives. Yet we are encouraged to have hope, even if we are weary, since God dwells within us.

It is not surprising that many of us and many of the children are feeling fatigued.

**We have operated in 'crisis-mode' for well over a year and our 'surge-capacity' is depleted.** Yet we must move forward in such a way that sets up the children in our care for success, since in the words of Whitney Houston, *'I believe the children are our future. Treat them well and let them lead the way.'*

*Let us unify in prayer for the well-being and emotional safety of all of our children, and also for the adults, who have been carrying a heavy load for a long time. We pray God's compassion, healing and strength for all those who are finding life difficult at this time. Amen*



I have been reading and studying extensively on childhood trauma over the last few months. Trauma can be very wide-ranging, from witnessing a heinous crime, to habitual fighting in the home, to being humiliated in front of a class, to being ignored and neglected, to the deprivation due to poverty and a multitude of experiences in between. This wide variety of events is **interpreted and experienced differently by all children** so it is difficult to predict the impact of trauma on any individual. We are often unable to prevent a traumatic event from taking place, however, research does show that **adults are in a position to assist a child in healing** from the effects of trauma.

Traumatized or not, **every child benefits from calm and emotionally regulated adults around them who show them, abundant love.** This is the happy and hopeful message that I want to share today. PEPPS staff have all been trained in social and emotional regulation and our explicit intention is to create happy, calm and safe places so that children can thrive emotionally while at school.

# DE-ESCALATION techniques for defusing meltdowns

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. DON'T YELL TO BE HEARD OVER A SCREAMING CHILD | 2. AVOID MAKING DEMANDS   |
| 3. VALIDATE THEIR FEELINGS, NOT ACTIONS          | 4. DON'T TRY TO REASON    |
| 5. BE AWARE OF YOUR BODY LANGUAGE                | 6. RESPECT PERSONAL SPACE |
| 7. GET ON YOUR CHILD'S LEVEL                     | 8. USE A DISTRACTION      |
| 9. ACKNOWLEDGE YOUR CHILD'S RIGHT FOR REFUSAL    | 10. REFLECTIVE LISTENING  |
| 11. SILENCE                                      | 12. BE NON-JUDGEMENTAL    |
| 13. ANSWER QUESTIONS + IGNORE VERBAL AGGRESSION  | 14. MOVEMENT BREAK        |
| 15. AVOID THE WORD 'NO'                          | 16. DECREASE STIMULATION  |
| 17. DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES                     | 18. CALMING VISUALS       |

Less EXTRAORDINARY  
SCHOOL FOR RAINBOW ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT

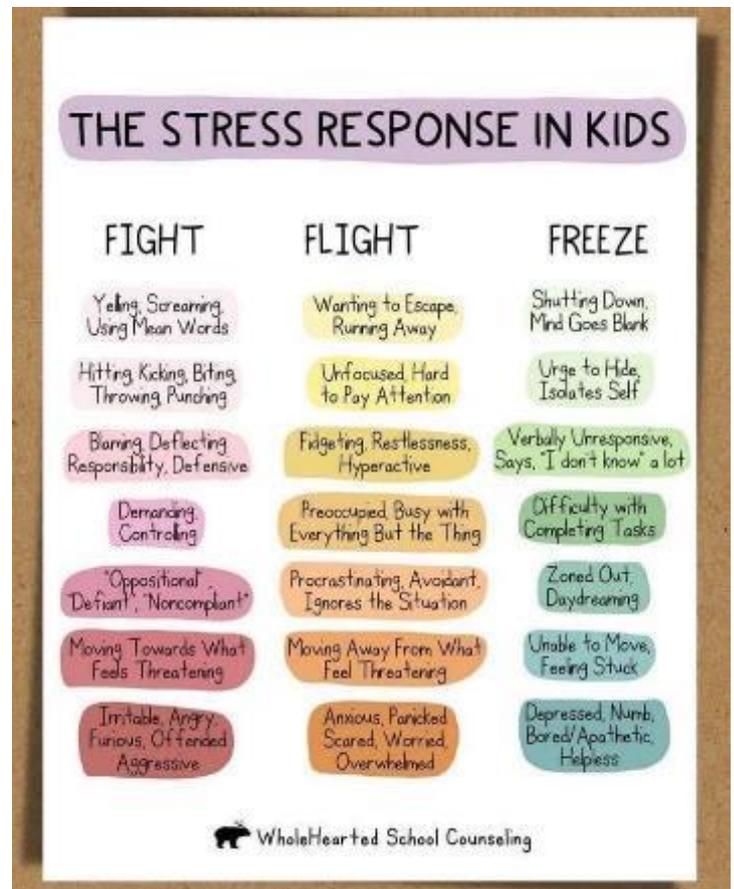
Emotionally healthy children have been shown to perform better academically and socially, which is surely what we all want for the pupils in our schools. If, in your home, you are finding everyone a little more emotional and reactive than usual, here is a list of ways to de-escalate the heightened emotions.

I have to say that perfect parenting, along with perfect teaching, are unattainable dreams, but they are worthy goals to strive for. As parents and teachers, **we should always be striving to create safety and security for the young people in our care.**

In previous newsletters, I have mentioned that if home is a safe physical and emotional space, where children feel that they can share their fears and possible mistakes, without being shamed, they are less vulnerable to seeking safety in unsafe circles of friends and they are less vulnerable to risky choices.

The balance is hard to strike. As parents and teachers, we are expected to teach children discipline and good behaviour while not being too harsh. Key skills to practice include being interested in your child's stories. **Listen and respectfully hear their perspective.** Try to **love your children with your time** and avoid spoiling them too much with more things.

Children who do not feel calm, safe and loved will begin to feel stressed. Stressful behaviour often presents as fight, flight or freeze. None of these responses allows for optimum learning, which is a large part of what a child should be doing, so it is helpful if an adult can re-centre a child who is feeling stressed.



The most universally helpful technique that can be used if you notice that a child is overwhelmed by the world around them is to **help them to breathe deeply and rhythmically**. The scientific research around the benefits of deep regulated breathing on the body's biological systems is enormous and it is easy and free to implement as a routine in your child's life.

What I have written above may suggest that we should eliminate all risks and stress from children's lives. This is not the case. In fact, **all learning takes place when a child is exposed to new circumstances and unknown**

**experiences**. By definition, these can be mildly risky and stressful. So again, balance is key. We cannot overprotect our children. They need to play and engage with other people and various obstacles (physical and psychological) in order to develop, learn and grow. And through all the challenges of life, **home should be their safe place to land**.

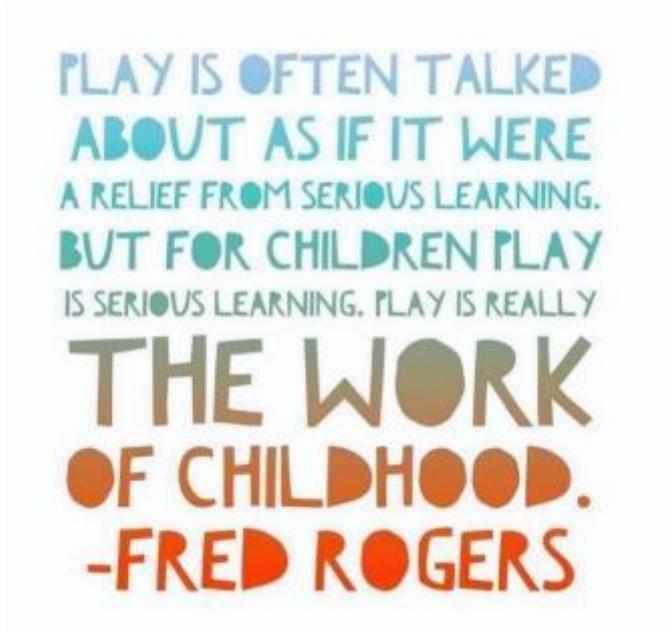


**I never want my kids to mess up and think, "Dads gonna kill me!"**

**I want their first thought to be "I need to call my dad"**

While home needs to be welcoming and comforting for young people, what also has become very clear over this year is that for the vast majority of children, **school is a good place to go to daily**. Routines and predictability are regulating and help children's emotional well-being. **The patterns of school set up a healthy rhythm in a child's life and school also allows a child to feel that they belong to a community. A sense of belonging is one of the most important human needs.**

PEPPS remains committed to offering an excellent educational experience and we really intend to be on campus as often as possible during this pandemic. To this end, we encourage all family members over 18 to be vaccinated to safeguard our community against serious illness and to minimise the spread of this dangerous disease among our families.



PLAY IS OFTEN TALKED ABOUT AS IF IT WERE A RELIEF FROM SERIOUS LEARNING. BUT FOR CHILDREN PLAY IS SERIOUS LEARNING. PLAY IS REALLY THE WORK OF CHILDHOOD.  
-FRED ROGERS

It takes a  
village to  
raise a child....



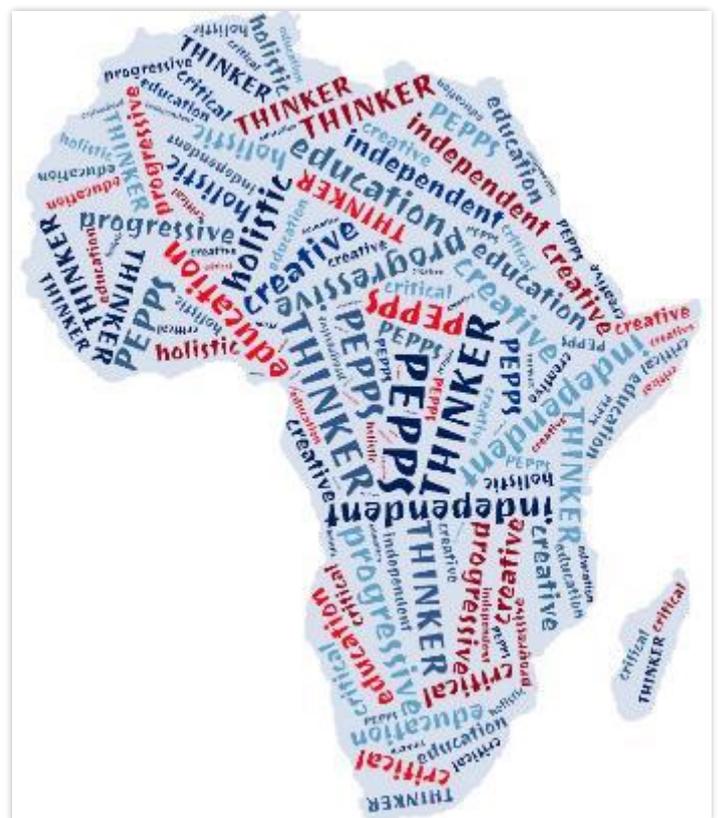
I have been distressed to hear some of the societal problems that have arisen from children being out of school. I am going to focus briefly on childhood pregnancy which has increased by 60% in South Africa during this year while children were inconsistently in school. Adolescents are more likely to suffer pregnancy complications and their babies are more likely to be stillborn or die within the first 28 days of life. Often these babies are born into a life of deprivation and hardship. The Daily Maverick ran an article by An Wentzel on 22 September 2021 stating that by age 18, more than 30% of South African girls are reported to have given birth at least once. Unintended pregnancy was 20% higher among survivors of sexual violence compared to those who never experienced sexual abuse.

When I read this horrific news, my heart aches at the suffering and trauma that so many South African children experience and how blessed our PEPPS community is that these tragic statistics are not true among our pupils. With great privilege comes great responsibility and I sincerely hope that we are creating the kind of leaders among our pupils who will be empowered to change the hardship endured by so many in South Africa.

Sir David Attenborough in his book, 'A Life on our Planet – My Witness Statement' suggests that **education, particularly of girls, could be the single biggest factor to reverse the population explosion that is killing our planet.** With this in mind, I am so proud of the work that we are doing in education.

**PEPPS remains committed to developing independent, critical and creative thinkers through progressive holistic education.**

We are incredibly proud to announce the opening of a College on our Mokopane campus in 2022 and our Polokwane campus now has a full Early Childhood Development School. In 2022 the Ga-Ledwaba campus will have a full Prep School up to Grade 7.



Our opportunity to educate more children is what the PEPPS Trust was established to do, so it is encouraging that our families continue to entrust children to our educational care. In order to protect all the pupils on our campuses, we ask that children are punctually collected from

school since loitering children can come to harm and we request that all those driving on our campuses do so with utmost care since children can behave unpredictably in car-parks.

We remain acutely aware that PEPPS continues to function effectively By God's Grace and we take time to give thanks for our blessings.

As always, I thank you, our community, for your continued support. Without the involvement and interest of parents and caregivers, pupils do not thrive. PEPPS is blessed and enriched by an actively engaged parent body who encourage their children to do their best and succeed.



Yours in healthy, safe and excellent education

*Annabel Roberts*

PEPPS Executive Head

## Happiness Chemicals and how to hack them

<p><b>DOPAMINE</b> THE REWARD CHEMICAL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Completing a task</li> <li>• Doing self-care activities</li> <li>• Eating food</li> <li>• Celebrating little wins</li> </ul>	<p><b>OXYTOCIN</b> THE LOVE HORMONE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Playing with a dog</li> <li>• Playing with a baby</li> <li>• Holding hand</li> <li>• Hugging your family</li> <li>• Give compliment</li> </ul>
<p><b>SEROTONIN</b> THE MOOD STABILIZER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meditating</li> <li>• Running</li> <li>• Sun exposure</li> <li>• Walk in nature</li> <li>• Swimming</li> <li>• Cycling</li> </ul>	<p><b>ENDORPHIN</b> THE PAIN KILLER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Laughter exercise</li> <li>• Essential oils</li> <li>• Watch a comedy</li> <li>• Dark chocolate</li> <li>• Exercising</li> </ul>

<p><b>WHAT AN ANGRY CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR</b></p> <p>I am here</p> <p>I see this is hard for you</p> <p>How does your body feel right now?</p> <p>It is ok to feel angry</p> <p>I will keep you safe</p> <p><i>MummyLyn</i></p>	<p><b>WHAT A SAD CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR</b></p> <p>I am here</p> <p>It is ok to feel sad</p> <p>Would you like to talk about what is making you sad?</p> <p>It is ok to cry. Would you like a cuddle?</p> <p>I feel sad sometimes too</p> <p><i>MummyLyn</i></p>
<p><b>WHAT AN ANXIOUS CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR</b></p> <p>I am here</p> <p>It is ok to feel like this</p> <p>How does your body feel right now?</p> <p>You can tell me</p> <p>Shall we come up with a plan together?</p> <p><i>MummyLyn</i></p>	<p><b>WHAT A DISAPPOINTED CHILD NEEDS TO HEAR</b></p> <p>I am here</p> <p>It is ok to feel really disappointed</p> <p>It is hard when things don't turn out like we thought they would</p> <p>I hear you</p> <p>Sometimes things do feel unfair</p> <p><i>MummyLyn</i></p>

## What society gets wrong about children:



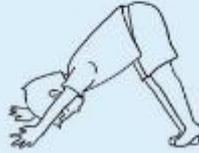
@BigLifeJournal

### SOCIETY SAYS:

Children should sit still.

### BRAIN SCIENCE SAYS:

Children need to move.



@BigLifeJournal

### SOCIETY SAYS:

Children should control their emotions.

### BRAIN SCIENCE SAYS:

Children need help learning to regulate their emotions.



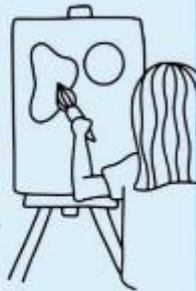
@BigLifeJournal

### SOCIETY SAYS:

Children should look but not touch.

### BRAIN SCIENCE SAYS:

Children learn through exploration.



@BigLifeJournal

### SOCIETY SAYS:

Children should be willing to share.

### BRAIN SCIENCE SAYS:

Children need help to understand the needs of others.



@BigLifeJournal

### SOCIETY SAYS:

Children should pay attention.

### BRAIN SCIENCE SAYS:

Children need practice to remember and master new skills.



@BigLifeJournal

Let Brain Science inform what we expect from children

The **decision-making** frontal lobe of the brain is not fully formed until age 25! The science is clear:

**CHILDREN ARE NOT MINI ADULTS.**



@BigLifeJournal

If we want our children to grow into happy, healthy, successful adults, first we need to give them the **space and support to be children!**



**PIC • COLLAGE**

@BigLifeJournal