

Raising
RESILIENT
Children.

Overview



Older folk often say that the younger generations have a much tougher time of it than they themselves did when they were young and climbing trees, colouring in and reading Enid Blyton, and that as a result they face a far more challenging future as grown-ups.

Certainly there's no denying that girls and boys coming of age in the early 21st century live in a world very different to what even their parents experienced at the same age (never mind their grandparents), largely due to digital technology which is changing our lifestyles in an unprecedented manner, and not always for the best.

This coming on top of escalating global conflict, nuclear threat and climate change means that now more than ever, it's imperative we raise resilient children and teenagers.

What does that mean?

It means creating an environment in which the youth of today can thrive and grow, and reach their maximum potential as the adults of tomorrow; men and women with intelligence, wisdom and compassion, who can solve the complex problems of our brave new world in ways that are innovative and visionary.

Precisely how we do that is the *raison d'être* for our upcoming *Young Minds* conference. It's also a theme we'll be exploring at *Happiness & Its Causes* in June where, for example, Linda Lantieri, pioneering educator and international expert in social and emotional learning and resilience, will be presenting both a session and a post-conference workshop about building emotional resilience in children.

In addition, creating a wholesome environment for our children is the subject of this eBook. And because the topic of how best to promote healthy and happy minds has been a popular one in our [Happy & Well blog](#), we've decided once again to put together some of our best posts for your reading pleasure. These describe how through education, meditation, play, praise and other means, it's possible to raise resilient children. Here's what we need to do ...



IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION

1. IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION

A new kind of education

The online dictionary defines 'avid' as showing great enthusiasm for or interest in. Synonyms include enthusiastic, ardent, keen; devoted, dedicated; zealous, fanatic.

So it's perfectly fitting that AVID (Advancement Via Individual Determination) is the acronym for a college readiness system designed to improve the learning and performance of academically lacklustre school students.

William DeJean, an internationally recognised researcher, educator and consultant, presented at last year's *Young Minds* conference. Having witnessed firsthand the results of applying the AVID program in schools, he quite rightly believes education can change the world.

Read the full blog post [here](#). View William's presentation [here](#).



How children learn best

Increasing numbers of kids are being referred for conditions such as hyperactivity, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, petty mal seizures and staring and blinking. So much so that one neurologist, having assessed many of these children, felt compelled to visit schools herself to find out what was going on.

What she observed in many classrooms convinced her to change professions and become a teacher herself in order to apply her expertise in neuroscience to developing better learning strategies for children.

That neurologist was Judy Willis, a leading authority on brain research regarding learning and the brain, and an extremely popular keynote at *Young Minds 2012*.

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Judy's presentation [here](#).



1. IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION

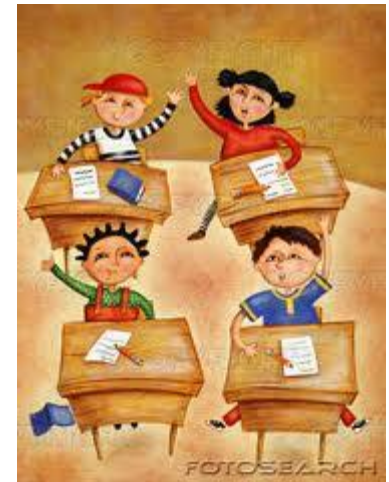
Bring on the education revolution

Most kids when asked, ‘what do you want to be when you grow up?’ will say something but only a lucky few ever really mean it. Sadly, it seems the vast majority never figure out what it is that lights their fire, and so end up wasting a significant portion of their precious lives doing jobs that bore them, or even worse, they hate.

Why is this? According to Sir Ken Robinson, a cultural leader who led the British government’s 1998 advisory committee on creative and cultural education, one possible explanation is that education dislocates many people from their natural talents. Robinson argues that what’s needed as a result is a revolution in education.

This would entail replacing our current industrial model of education based on “linearity and conformity and batching people with a new agricultural model that recognises human flourishing is an organic and not a mechanical process.”

Read the full blog post [here](#).



1. IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION

The rewards of mental effort

In her [presentation](#) at *Mind & Its Potential* 2011, educational reformer Professor Erica McWilliam describes an endemic problem in the education system, namely a tendency of teachers to “retreat from difficulty because we worry about whether [it] will lower kids’ self-esteem.”

McWilliam says she is concerned that teachers, especially those just starting out, are assuming a more therapeutic role, and as a result failing to help young people access “the pleasure of the rigour of thinking” for fear of damaging their self-esteem. Never mind that it’s well established self-efficacy doesn’t come from compliments, or being spared failure; it comes from evidence of achievement.

Read the full blog post [here](#).



1. IMPROVE THEIR EDUCATION

Developing a culture of thinking

In many schools, it's assumed that teachers are the source of all information and should be largely responsible for interpreting and giving material to students to prepare them for doing well in their examinations.

Wendy Barel, the Principal/Head of Senior School at Masada College and a presenter at last year's *Mind & Its Potential* conference, explains her school takes a different view, and regards lessons not as the end point but as the starting point for learning.

So, what are the measures in young people's minds of a good education? Barel says it's not their ability to remember every mathematical equation and historical date they were ever taught, which anyone can now Google anyway; rather it's the life skills they acquire including "their ability to be curious, independent, skeptical, creative, open-minded, imaginative, strategic, meta cognitive, reflective, truth seeking, empathetic and responsible."

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Wendy's presentation [here](#).



2



TEACH THEM TO MEDITATE

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Peace in the classroom

Meditation used to be a pastime strictly reserved for Indian mystics and hippies. Few teachers ever talked about the importance of trying to still the mind, or how to deal skillfully with disturbing emotions in a way that would help kids better navigate the trials and tribulations encountered at home or in the school yard.

These days, it's a very different story. Mindfulness practice has become mainstream and that means even school teachers are now using it in their classrooms.

One person who's had considerable experience teaching these practices to school children is holistic physician and mindfulness coach Dr Amy Salzman, a presenter at last year's *Mind & Its Potential* conference who defines mindfulness as "paying attention to life here and now with kindness and curiosity."

When Salzman directs kids in a guided meditation, her aim is to give them tools they can use in their everyday life. "What mindfulness makes possible is choice. This awareness of our internal environment is what allows us to choose how we interact with our external environment."

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Amy's presentation [here](#).



2. TEACH THEM TO MEDITATE

The mindful child

It used to be that your youth protected you from fast paced living and chronic distractedness. Not so today. Sadly, many young people are just as busy and preoccupied as their parents, juggling crammed school curriculums, endless after school activities and technologies that voraciously demand their attention.

Which is why the mainstreaming of mindfulness practice and the implementation of meditation programs in schools should be heartily applauded.

Janet Etty-Leal is one of a growing band of mindfulness instructors for children whose [presentation](#) at *Young Minds 2012* was all about her own experience working with primary school kids to help alleviate some of the problems associated with too-full young minds including stress and “black and white thinking”.

What’s so transforming about mindfulness, says Etty-Leal, is that it “offers children the opportunity to pause and notice, and as this starts to happen, the mind begins to clear... then there are possibilities and there’s even space for seeing things differently, hopefully for inspiration and maybe even for revelation.”

Read the full blog post [here](#).



3



**HELP THEM AVOID THE DOWNSIDE OF
TECHNOLOGY & POPULAR CULTURE**

3. HELP THEM AVOID THE DOWNSIDE OF TECHNOLOGY & AVOID POPULAR CULTURE

Talking 'bout the generations

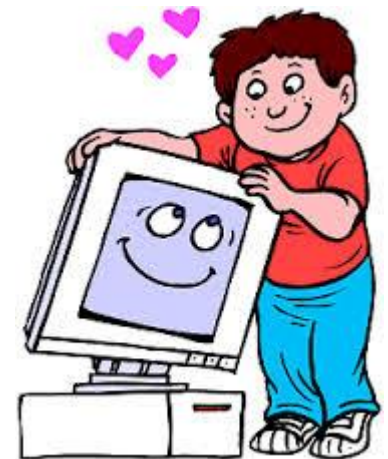
Digital technology has created big differences between the generations in terms of how they communicate. The nature of these differences and whether they're something we as a society should be worried about was the subject of a [talk by](#) Dr Larry Rosen, an international expert in the 'psychology of technology', at last year's *Young Minds* conference.

Just in case we're in any doubt about how much and indeed how quickly our environment is changing in this regard, Rosen reminds us that iPhones, Wii, MySpace, Skype, Google+, Twitter, Facebook and so much more that we now take for granted didn't even exist before the year 2000.

As Rosen says, such technology is changing how we function in the world although it's the younger generations who've grown up with touch screens and multiple ringtones for whom these changes are most marked.

Fortunately, it is possible to counter what are undoubtedly some potentially adverse effects. Given the technology is mostly impacting on our kids, Rosen says "an authoritative parenting style" is key. He advocates use of the TALK model: T for trust, A for assess, L for learn and K for 'kommunicate'.

Read the full blog post [here](#).



3. HELP THEM AVOID THE DOWNSIDE OF TECHNOLOGY & AVOID POPULAR CULTURE

What's happening to our boys and girls?

Once upon a time, there was no Internet, no Facebook, no mobile phones, no texting, no Lady Gaga, and no video games. There was much less pressure to look a certain way and own certain things, and there was a lot more privacy.

But that time has passed and now young people have to contend with all of the above, not easy according to writer and social researcher Maggie Hamilton, a speaker at *Happiness & Its Causes 2011*. Hamilton has researched this issue of how our boys and girls are faring in the digital age, and is concerned they're growing up in a 'performance culture'.

She suggests this has come about due to a number of intersecting influences: consumer capitalism, mass media and popular culture, and that living in such a toxic and dysfunctional environment is taking its toll on the mind, body and spirit of our young people, undermining their growth and happiness.

But Hamilton remains hopeful. "We've allowed this toxicity to creep into our culture. And we have to be courageous enough to stand up and say this isn't what we want for our beautiful boys and girls. It still takes a village to raise our children. So the big question is, 'what sort of village are [we] creating for them?'"

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Maggie's presentation [here](#).



4



TAKE CARE OF OUR PLANET

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The future is in our hands

There are many environmental problems in store for tomorrow's generations, most notably around violent disruption of a climate that's remained stable and relatively benign for the last 10,000 years, the time taken for civilisation as we know it to rise.

That today's children and teens face certain upheaval due to extreme and unpredictable weather is the reason NASA scientist James Hansen continually speaks about climate change. In a recent public talk, during which he shows the audience pictures of two of his beloved grandchildren, Hansen explains his motivation. "It would be immoral to leave these young people with a climate system spiralling out of control."

He says governments must implement appropriate energy policies, including pricing carbon emissions, to ensure fossil fuels pay their true social cost.

Read the full blog post [here](#).



4. TAKE CARE OF OUR PLANET

Eco-parenting: growing greener children

Jane Hanckel, a presenter at last year's *Young Mind's* conference has a passion, and that is creating environments conducive to children's potential for growth.

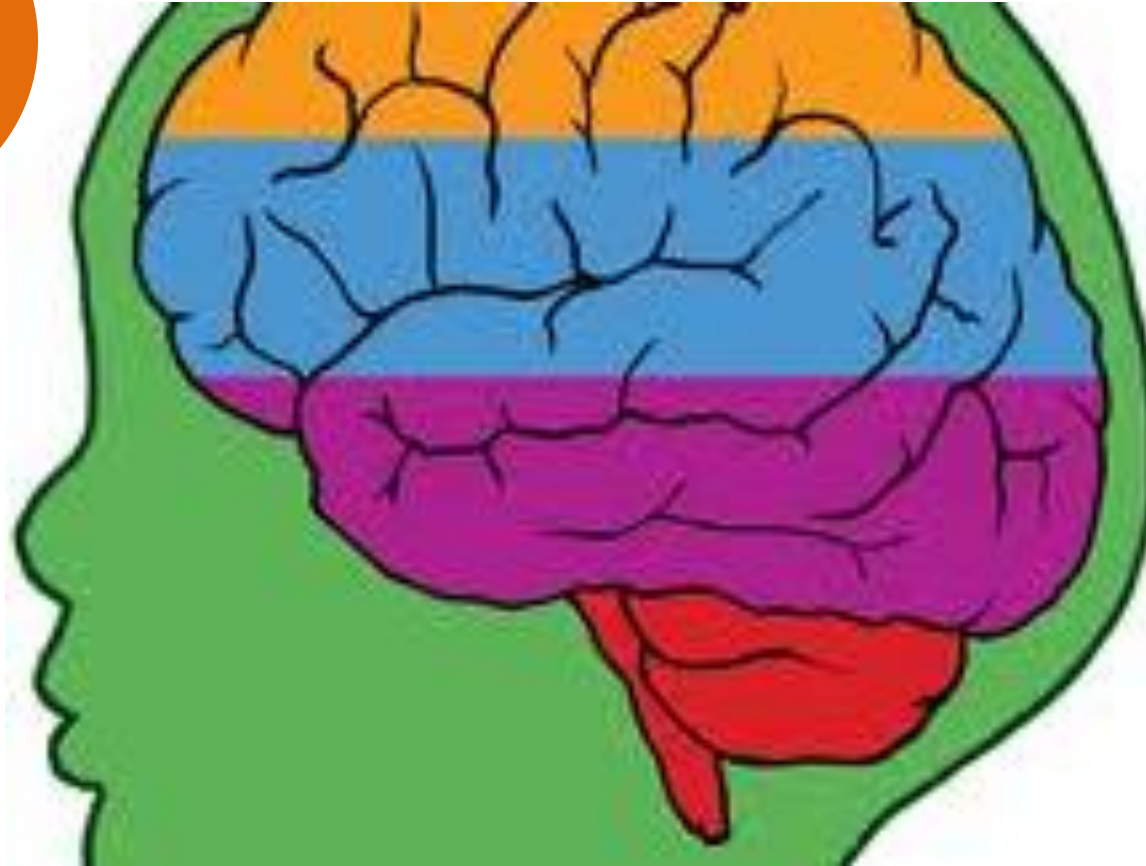
In her work with communities and organisations, an important focus has been on the urgent need to reduce our dependence on harmful plastics and other pollutants, no mean feat given that since World War 2, over 80,000 chemicals have been released into the environment, and that every year 1500 new chemicals are added to the mix.

Jane hopes her quest to educate parents about the “eco principles of creating wellbeing” in their kids' lives bears fruit.

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Jane's presentation [here](#).



5



LOOKING AFTER THEIR LITTLE BRAINS

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Looking after little brains



Many children experience considerable trauma in their early years. Worse, this can have such a negative impact on a child's developing brain that it reshapes their destiny.

According to Dr Bruce Perry, a neuropsychiatrist who's researched childhood trauma, including what we can do about it, what makes the first three to four years so important in terms of brain development is that "the micro architectural changes that create the neurobiology of the brain take place in early life; if you disrupt that process (through trauma), you end up with altered biology and altered function."

Perry defines trauma as any traumatic experience including physical and sexual abuse, tremendous chaos and instability, unpredictability and neglect.

The systems involved in thinking and processing information are especially vulnerable in this regard. Those affected may struggle with speech and language difficulties, regulating their impulsivity and paying attention. This in turn impacts school work, ability to connect with others and eventual employability, in other words a "cascade of problems that originate from these early developmental insults."

The good news is that due to the brain's plasticity, these developmental insults can be overcome. Perry says providing patterned, repetitive, rhythmic stimulation is "one of the most powerful and direct routes to those parts of the brain influenced by trauma."

But if there's one thing that above all facilitates recovery from trauma, it's the sustained presence of one or more loving and attentive individuals who "literally provide a relational milieu that has a neural biological impact" on a child's brain.

Read the full blog post [here](#).

6



ENCOURAGE THEM TO PLAY

6. ENCOURAGE THEM TO PLAY

Child's play



If you grew up in the 1970s or earlier, you most probably have very fond memories of your childhood. Back then, parents were much more hands-off, and kids would spend the whole day until sundown, when they were called in for dinner, outdoors and far from the family home having Famous Five inspired adventures, riding their bikes and building cubby houses.

It was also the case that until they hit their teens, most wore permanent scabs on their knees, needed scissors to cut out hair knots, and considered it a badge of honour to turn up to school sporting a newly stitched wound or a broken limb in plaster.

But times have changed. Lamenting just how much is Marylou Verberne, a presenter at *Young Minds 2012*, where she described the work she's doing in schools through her organization Play for Life to promote "happier, healthier lives and communities through play".

That play activists such as Verberne even exist is due to the sad fact that in just a few decades, as the freedom and autonomy of yesteryear have given way to home centred and adult supervised play, children's lives have altered dramatically and many would argue, for the worse. As a result, many kids are suffering. There's even a term for what ails them: 'play deficit disorder'.

Which is where Verberne and her PODs come in. Although play everywhere is at stake, Verberne is concentrating her efforts in schools "because that's where the play is and children are."

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Marylou's presentation [here](#).

7



GIVE THEM THE RIGHT KIND OF PRAISE

7. GIVE THEM THE RIGHT KIND OF PRAISE

Developing a growth mindset

If you're a parent, you can be forgiven for thinking your child is brilliant. After all, that's what mums and dads are supposed to think and it's why they praise little Ethan or Ella to high heaven whenever they get something right, be it solving a maths problem, playing a piece of music, or colouring within the lines.

But how many parents stop to consider whether the way they praise their kids actually helps or hinders them? If you've always thought that any praise at all is positive then think again.

Professor Carol Dweck, a presenter at our upcoming *Happiness & Its Causes* and *Young Minds* conferences in June is an acclaimed psychologist and researcher in the field of motivation, whose groundbreaking research has major implications for how we encourage, challenge and praise our children.

Dweck's major finding is that there are two different mindsets: a fixed mindset and a growth mindset. The former is the belief that intelligence is innate and can't be changed. The latter is the belief that success is the result of practice, effort and hard work. Both can profoundly influence behaviour.

Dweck's research has been to examine how we can best promote a growth mindset in our kids to help them become more confident and enthusiastic learners.

Read the full blog post [here](#).





**TEACH THEM ETHICS, CULTIVATE THEIR
GRATITUDE, AWAKEN THEIR HEARTS**

8. TEACH THEM ETHICS, CULTIVATE THEIR GRATITUDE, AWAKEN THEIR HEARTS

Can we teach ethics?

Sue Knight is curriculum writer for Primary Ethics, the organisation delivering Ethics classes as an alternative to Scripture in NSW public schools. In her presentation at last year's *Young Mind's* conference, Knight examined the question of how to teach ethics in schools.

This included demonstrating how she uses a variety of real-life scenarios to highlight some important discussion points that might arise in a typical ethics class such as the different moral values espoused by different cultural groups, the virtue of tolerance, whether morality is relative to culture and if there's a culturally independent or objective yardstick upon which to base moral judgments concerning, in particular, harmful actions and social practices.

Knight says, "by engaging children in this sort of ethical enquiry, and supporting them as they discover for themselves the foundations of moral reasoning and how to apply these fundamental moral standards in the consideration of the complex issues they will face in their lives, we can help them strengthen their logical and moral reasoning skills."

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Sue's presentation [here](#).



8. TEACH THEM ETHICS, CULTIVATE THEIR GRATITUDE, AWAKEN THEIR HEARTS

Gratitude in education

Dr Kerry Howells presented at last year's *Mind & Its Potential* conference on the subject of gratitude, specifically how to cultivate it in the classroom and the transformative effect that doing so has.

Howells tells us that since 1999, about 640 papers have been written about gratitude and that the majority conceptualise gratitude as an emotion that leads to other emotions of a positive kind. But Howells is more interested in defining gratitude as “an expression towards another” which in the context of education means encouraging students and teachers to think “about [gratitude] as a practice, as an action.”

Howells is all about finding simple solutions (i.e. the practice of gratitude) to complex problems in education, one being a lack of ‘awakeness’ in the classroom, a state of affairs that seriously impacts on learning. Here she paraphrases philosopher Martin Heidegger who once said we can't truly think until we learn how to be present.

Gratitude is the perfect antidote to student distractedness because it means “they come into the class with an awareness of what they've been given and wanting to give back.”

Read the full blog post [here](#). View Kerry's presentation [here](#).



8. TEACH THEM ETHICS, CULTIVATE THEIR GRATITUDE, AWAKEN THEIR HEARTS

Awakening our children's hearts

Every generation hopes that the next generation will be better somehow: kinder, wiser, less inclined to repeat the mistakes of the past. And yet parents of children, teachers of students, despite their best intentions as mentors, educators and role models sometimes can't help but fall short as life distracts with its endless demands and worries.

Which is why Lama Surya Das' reminder of just how important it is to prioritise the wellbeing and wisdom of our young people as they grow up to inherit a planet plagued by problems is so timely. Surya Das is one of the foremost Western Buddhist meditation teachers and scholars, and he presented very inspiringly on this topic at last year's *Young Minds* conference.

Surya Das suggests the primary challenge is communicating via mainstream channels e.g. in schools and at universities, lessons of "emotional intelligence, not just intellectual intelligence. Not just IQ but EQ. And spiritual existential intelligence, some spiritual literacy about the big questions of life and how to find answers to life's essential mysteries."

Surya Das says the world is crying out for a critical mass for whom being present and compassionate are normal states of mind.

Read the full blog post [here](#). View his presentation [here](#).



Resources

OTHER BLOG POSTS ABOUT OUR CHILDREN

- A dubious diagnosis [LINK](#)
- Sad dads [LINK](#)
- A machine constructed for change [LINK](#)
- A digital divide [LINK](#)
- Helping schools affected by suicide [LINK](#)
- Reggio children [LINK](#)
- Technology in the classroom [LINK](#)
- The inherent power of young people [LINK](#)
- Judith Lucy remembers her childhood [LINK](#)

ADDITIONAL VIDEO PRESENTATIONS

- Prof Jake Najman, Dr Russ Harris, Maggie Hamilton, Eve Ekman and Lisa Backhouse: Panel: bringing up confident, happy children (*Happiness & Its Causes* 2011) [LINK](#)
- Prof Patrick McGorry: Young people and mental health (*Happiness & Its Causes* 2011) [LINK](#)
- Prof David Seedhouse: Ethical young minds – what might this mean? (*Young Minds* 2012) [LINK](#)
- Jennifer Cummins and Julie McCrossin: Personal stories: How do you give a child the best chance in life (*Young Minds* 2012) [LINK](#)
- Prof Patrick McGorry, Associate Prof Jane Burns, Professor Ian Hickie, Matt O'Connor and Steve Cannane: Panel: Is there a crisis in youth mental health today? (*Young Minds* 2012) [LINK](#)
- Dr Mark Greenberg: Nurturing mindfulness in education: advancing the science and practice of awareness and caring (*Mind & Its Potential* 2012) [LINK](#)
- Dr Michael Carr-Gregg: Living with teenagers: how to meet the challenges (*Mind & Its Potential* 2012) [LINK](#)
- Prof Ann Sanson: Growing up in Australia: unlocking the secret of child development (*Mind & Its Potential* 2011) [LINK](#)



Resources

FREE eBooks

- How to nurture teacher mindfulness in the classroom [LINK](#)
- Mindfulness in 10 easy steps [LINK](#)
- How to meditate [LINK](#)

USEFUL WEBSITES

- **MindMatters** - is a resource and professional development initiative supporting Australian secondary schools in promoting and protecting the mental health, and social and emotional wellbeing of all the members of school communities. [LINK](#)
- **Reach** - encourages young people, no matter what their circumstances, to believe they can achieve. [LINK](#)
- **YoungSocial Pioneers** - is a unique leadership program that is dedicated to unleashing and celebrating the brilliance of young Australian social change makers. [LINK](#)
- **Australian Childhood Foundation** - works to put a stop to child abuse and give children a life free from violence and trauma. [LINK](#)
- **Teach Positive** - is founded on the emerging science of Positive Psychology and is an exciting way for rookie teachers, experienced teachers and school leaders to think about teaching. [LINK](#)
- **SunnyKids** - aims to break the intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage, providing the hope and resilience to move forward, both as individuals and as a society. [LINK](#)
- **headspace** - is the national youth mental health foundation. We help young people who are going through a tough time. [LINK](#)
- **Young & Well CRC** - an Australian-based, international research centre that unites young people with researchers, practitioners, innovators and policy-makers from over 70 partner organisations explores the role of technology in young people's lives, and how it can be used to improve the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 12 to 25. [LINK](#)
- **BounceBack** – educational psychologists supporting children in developing a stronger sense of wellbeing and to be more resilient, confident and successful [LINK](#)
- **Meditation Capsules** - a consultancy created by Janet ETTY-Leal to connect people to the positive possibilities of Mindfulness. [LINK](#)
- **Primary Ethics** - develops and delivers philosophical ethics education for children who do not attend scripture classes in urban, regional and rural schools. [LINK](#)
- **AVID Australia** - their mission is to close the achievement gap by preparing all students for college readiness and success in a global society. [LINK](#)
- **Play for Life** - building happier, healthier lives and communities through play. [LINK](#)

Our events

HAPPINESS
& its causes

**THE
WELLNESS
SHOW** 

mind&
ITS POTENTIAL