



# Early Start Newsletter

VOLUME 17

NOVEMBER 2010

Merry  
Christmas  
&  
Happy  
New Year!



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HOW TO GROW SUNFLOWERS	2
MORGAN'S STORY	2
CAITLYN'S DIARY	3
CHRISTMAS CRAFT	3
CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS	4
AUNT SALLY	4

PO BOX 22146  
CHRISTCHURCH 8142  
PH: 03 365-9087

## Christmas Survival Kit

Christmas can be a stressful time of the year for some families. Financial pressure, having lots to do at the last minute and expectations of friends and family members can all combine to contribute to us feeling very stressed. Below are some practical suggestions that can help reduce or prevent "Christmas Stress" and enable you to experience some "Christmas Joy" as well.

### Budgeting

If you haven't started saving for Xmas —don't panic. Start by counting how many weeks there are until Xmas and how much money you will be able to save each week to cover the extra costs of food and presents. This total amount will show you how much you will realistically be able to spend. Help your children to make homemade gifts for extended friends and family where possible such as baking or artwork. Remember that expected bills such as power and phone and all other debts will still need to be covered each week. Although it may be tempting to use the credit card or get a loan remember that you will be paying it off for months next year so it is better to stick to the budget. Remember that young children are easily pleased with some yummy treats and a few well chosen inexpensive presents.

### Avoiding Last Minute Stress

Write a Xmas to-do list with the things you need to do—be realistic. Try to avoid last minute food and present shopping as much as you can. Remember malls and shops are going to be extremely busy and a lot of items may be sold out limiting choice. Talk to friends and family about that you will be expected to contribute to the Xmas lunch/dinner and buy non-perishable food items gradually in your weekly shopping. Set a portion of money aside for any perishable food items that needs to be bought closer to Xmas. Write a list of the gifts you need to buy and shop early. Remember to stick to your budget!

### Managing Family and Friends

Prioritise to spend you time with people that you love and care about where possible. Be realistic about your expectations of family gatherings and of the holiday period as a whole. Know your limits and how long you want to spend with people. Try to avoid arguments with friends/family and seek a more appropriate time to resolve issues. As we know people in Canterbury have had a lot to deal with recently, so remember to look after yourself.

If you feel like you cannot cope—ask for help. Talk to friends, family, someone you trust, your GP or make use of the help lines. Ask your Family Support Worker for additional earthquake information contact numbers if you need them.

- ◆ Depression Support Line 0800 111 757
- ◆ Youthline 0800 376 633
- ◆ Alcohol & Drug Helpline 0800 787 797

Lifeline 0800 543 354

Healthline 0800 611 116

Women's Refuge 0800 1733 843.

## Family Interviews

We have introduced a new regular feature in our newsletter—check it out on page two.

We will be interviewing one Early Start family for each newsletter, with an inspirational story of how they have worked hard to improve their family's future. If you have a story you would like to be included in a future newsletter ask your FSW.

Remember that we only have space for one story each newsletter so the first suitable interview completed will be printed. If you miss out we will save your story for future newsletters.

## 0800 Hungry Update

Early Start no longer has an agreement with 0800 Hungry. This means we are no longer collecting and delivering food parcels to Early Start families.

If you would like a food parcel you can still call them yourself to arrange it. Be aware that they deliver in certain areas on certain days so plan ahead to avoid disappointment.

Parcels are \$5 and you will need to be home and have the correct money there and then to get a parcel delivered.



# How To Grow Sunflowers

Sunflowers are one of the speediest plants you can grow—they can grow up to 3 metres tall in 6-months! Below are instructions so you can plant your seeds which are stapled onto this newsletter.

## Planting in the Garden

Sunflowers should be grown in full sun. As they grow taller they will need to be tied to something to keep them from blowing over and breaking in the wind. Choose a spot in the garden against a wall or fence if possible. Alternatively, you can put a stake in the ground behind the sunflowers and tie them to the stake.

When you have chosen your spot, place your seeds in holes 2cm deep with 40cm between each seed.

Continue to water the sunflowers so the soil remains moist. Allow 5-10 days for the seeds to germinate and 12-weeks for flowering.

## Planting in Pots

If your home has with little or no garden area you can plant individual sunflower seeds in large pots (old recycling bins would be ideal). Measure your sunflowers each week to keep track of how fast they grow!

## Morgan's Story:

\* Morgan is attending the Pivot Point Hairdressing Course at the Avonmore Tertiary Institute\*

**Why did you decide to go back to school?** I wanted a better life for myself and Riley ( Morgan 's 2-year-old son ). I wanted something for "me ". I love being a Mum but I don 't want that to define me. I want to gain confidence as well as job skills.

**Why hairdressing?** I looked into a few different things. I liked the idea of it being both academic and creative. I needed it to be feasible in terms of time commitment. I wanted something that would lead to job opportunities. The course is 9-months full time. Students then complete their apprenticeship with a Salon to gain a National Certificate in Hairdressing. The course appealed because you gain NCEA credits along the way plus Pivot Point is an internationally recognised standard in hairdressing.

**What was Involved in getting started?** Along with applying for the course and for a Student Loan, I had to increase Riley 's preschool hours and apply to WINZ for a Childcare Subsidy to help with the cost ( Riley has 15 hours childcare through the Early Learning Payment ).

**What are the challenges of being a fulltime student and a mother?** It 's challenging trying to spend enough time with Riley while also fitting in all the other daily tasks in a single parent family such as cooking and housework. I also have to find time to study at home. It 's difficult if Riley is sick because I have to miss classes to take care of him and find a way to catch up. Even small jobs like going to the bank require planning as my schedule is tight. I also had to withdraw from the course after breaking my leg and start again with the next intake. No need to mention the challenge of parenting a 2-year-old with a broken leg!

**How will completing your course benefit you?** It will help me gain financial security and I will also have skills to take into the workplace. I want to show Riley what can be achieved if you are committed. I want Riley to value an education like I do.

**What would you say to other parents considering study?** Research the options thoroughly and make sure you know what the qualification will lead to in terms of employment. Check out the costs and your eligibility for a Student Loan and Childcare Subsidy. Once you are all set to go, be focused and determined and stick with it!



Morgan and Riley

# Caitlyn's Diary!!!!

Well it's that time of the year again—not long until Xmas. Can't believe it's a whole year since Brittany's baby, Sophie, was born. I'm finished Polytech for the year now—only one year left and then I'm finally finished! They'll be some big celebrations then that's for sure!

So what's been happening for us? The earthquake caused a few dramas for us - our rental had some damage—cracks in the bedrooms and a broken chimney but we were lucky and could stay living there. We didn't have power and water for a while so we had to stay with my sister and her kids which drove me mad. Luckily it was only for a few days. The kids sleeping patterns were totally screwed up but I worked on it with my FSW and now we are pretty much back to normal!

There have been big dramas with Wayne and I - if you remember he left me and moved in with someone else awhile back. Anyway, after about a month she must have realised he was an idiot and threw him out so he came home begging me to take him back. I told him no way of course but he hasn't got the message yet.

He keeps calling and texting me, and showing up all the time to see the kids but he ends up ignoring the kids after awhile and starts going on about us getting back together until I threaten him with the police and he goes. It's not nice for the kids to see us fighting like this.

My sister says I should sort something out through the courts so he can see the kids but I don't have to put up with his rubbish. I think she might be right as he certainly isn't listening when I tell him it's over for good between us. I am getting legal aid and have made an appointment with my lawyer so hopefully things will improve soon!

Buffy and Jey are doing well. Buffy is still a little madam at times but she knows if she wants pocket money she has to behave. She has started coming to zumba with Brittany and me and loves it. She thinks she would like to do some sort of dancing after school next year so I told her she will have to get a job delivering pamphlets (with me of course!) or something to help pay for it.



Brittany and Sophie are doing well - Brittany did have a boyfriend but they split up. He got bored as Brittany has Sophie and can't go out socialising with him much. It's a shame but like I said to her— she needs to concentrate on making a good future for herself and Sophie at the moment and forget about men!

Brittany will be going to Polytech next year to do vet nursing. She says I am not allowed to speak to her at Polytech because I embarrass her. Sophie will be going to the crèche with Jey.

I am so glad I did that budgeting course earlier in the year as I feel like I can manage my money even though it's been harder since Wayne left. I have been saving money for food for Xmas through Pak 'n Save vouchers and getting presents on lay-by one at a time. It isn't easy, but at least I'm not going into debt.

Merry Xmas everybody!

## Christmas Craft

### Christmas Snowmen

#### Materials

- ◆ Toilet roll tube
- ◆ White paper
- ◆ Egg carton
- ◆ Paper or red ribbon
- ◆ Black paint



#### Instructions:

- ◆ Cover the toilet roll tube with white paper
- ◆ Draw a snowman on a piece of paper – make it easy and draw one small circle on top of one bigger circle
- ◆ Draw eyes, mouth, nose and buttons and cut out.
- ◆ Use a thin piece of paper for the scarf (or a piece of ribbon.)
- ◆ Stick the snowman to the tube.
- ◆ Cut a circle from paper, a bit bigger than the top of the toilet roll and colour black. Stick to the top of the roll.
- ◆ Use one egg carton section for the top of the hat. Paint it black and glue it upside down to the black circle.

### Christmas Crackers

Find a small gift and place it in a toilet roll tube. Roll wrapping paper, slightly bigger than the toilet roll around the tube and glue in place. Twist both ends and decorate as desired. You could use brown paper and get the children to decorate it first.



# Things to do in the Christmas Holidays

It can be hard keeping children entertained for the long holiday period—below are some suggestions from FSW 's. Remember that children don't need to be taken on expensive outings to have fun. It's nice to do this occasionally, but remember that children can have fun without you leaving home or spending a cent!

## Transport

If you don't have transport consider getting a metro card. You will get a generous discount (\$2.30 for 2-hours unlimited travel or a maximum of \$4.60 per day). The card is free but you need to load \$10 on for it to work.

## Be Sun smart

Your children are more likely to get sunburned between 11am and 4pm so remember to slip, slop, slap and wrap at these times. However, don't go overboard and keep children out of the sun altogether. Children need short periods of sunlight daily to make vitamin D.

- ◆ Check out different beaches/Bays/ivers/pools/ playgrounds/gardens/parks/libraries/markets
- ◆ Visit the Museum, art centre or art gallery
- ◆ Play with the paddling pool/sprinkler or make a sandpit and make rivers in it with the hose
- ◆ Go on a picnic or have a picnic at home
- ◆ Do some gardening or baking
- ◆ Play shops/libraries/restaurants etc
- ◆ Play dress-ups and have a tea party
- ◆ Make a treasure hunt/scavenger hunt
- ◆ Play board games on wet days
- ◆ Make an obstacle course or waterslide out of black plastic



## Dear Aunt Sally ....

### Dear Aunt Sally

*Ever since the earthquake, my twenty month old has been really dingy. He used to play by himself for short spells, while I did the dishes or the laundry. Now he won't let me out of his sight, cries whenever I leave the room and stands under my feet whining. He wants to be picked up, and if I'm busy he stands there and dings to my legs. At pre-school, he has been crying every time I put him down and try to leave. It's really wearing me out. What can I do? I have tried to give him lots of extra cuddles. I have tried to ignore him. Help! From a distressed Mum.*

### Dear Distressed Mum

It is really hard to cope with a child who is really clingy. They demand a lot of attention and can tire you out. Remember though, that we have all been through a stressful time since the earthquake. This is most likely your child's way of showing that stress. No doubt you yourself have had some stress effects since 4 September – all of Canterbury has! The continuing aftershocks don't make it any easier! Common post-disaster stress signs for adults are things like difficulty sleeping, not wanting to be alone, trouble concentrating, difficulty making decisions, replaying events in your mind, feeling fear, anxiety or using substances (alcohol, tobacco, drugs) and more.

After something like an earthquake, kids are naturally afraid that a scary thing like that might happen again, especially if their home has been damaged. They may feel that life isn't safe. They are also really sensitive to their parents' worries so that if they sense your fear, they can pick up on that. The clingy behaviour that you are struggling with is a pretty common reaction after such an event. Your little chap is clinging to you because you are the person he feels safest with!

Probably the best thing you can do is to carry on with life as normal. He probably does need extra cuddles, but generally kids do better once they are back in their familiar routine. If he ended up sleeping in your bed during the earthquake, get him back into his own bed. Also, the next time he hangs onto your legs while you are trying to do the dishes, see if you can use distraction – give him a tea-towel and ask him to 'help'. Pass him something plastic to 'dry'. If necessary, ignore the whining. Once you have started ignoring, continue ignoring until the whining stops then praise him for waiting nicely till you have finished what you are doing.

If he cries when you leave the room, set him up with an activity that he enjoys

before going out, keep talking to him so that he knows you are not far away, and when you come back in try to be cheerful and happy to see him. If he sees that you are frustrated by his crying he will feel more stressed. Another thing to try, is let him stay close to you so when you go to the laundry take him with you and offer him something to play with. Smile and talk to him while you get your chores done.

As far as pre-school drop off goes, it would probably pay to allow a bit more time for drop off for a little while, to give him time to feel comfortable there, before moving away. Usually the teachers are really good at helping with this and it is often good to let them know if your child is going through a clingy patch. Plus it is often a good time to take along your child's favourite cuddly toy or blanket to help him feel safe and secure when you aren't there.

When you first try these steps you won't necessarily see immediate change. However, if you persist you will see results. Remember that this stage won't last forever!

Best of luck,

**Aunt Sally**

