

Young children need to be taught coping skills

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(Medical Xpress) -- Children should be taught coping skills the same way they are taught to hold a pen or ride a bike, according to experts from Melbourne University's Graduate School of Education.

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Director of the University's Early Learning Centre Janice Deans, and educational psychologist Erica Frydenberg, have released a 'how to' guide to teaching coping skills to [young children](#).

Developing Everyday Coping Skills in the Early Years draws on over twenty years of research in coping to offer practical hints and tips for parents of young children and early childhood teachers.

According to Associate Professor Frydenberg, it is increasingly important children are taught how to cope with everyday stresses like saying goodbye to a parent, being scared of the dark or feeling left out of a group of friends.

"Learning coping skills at a young age means children can be equipped for optimal growth and development," she said. "This is increasingly important in Western communities, where depression and other mental health issues are being experienced in epidemic proportions."

The authors' suggestions for helping children learn coping skills include:

- Asking children to draw a difficult situation, like being left out of a group of friends, and then to discuss their feelings in groups.
- Using dance for children to interpret their feelings and ideas, by matching body movements to coping images. For example, being scared of the dark can be matched with shivering, shaking and quivering, and coping can be matched with skipping, swinging, sliding and leaping.

Associate Professor Frydenberg said children are spending longer than ever in organised care, so early childhood teachers have a particularly important role to play in teaching young children [coping skills](#). “Those children that need additional social and emotional support demand a significant amount of teacher time. Teachers need to be supported to provide for these children,” she said.

Research conducted by the authors also found that a substantial proportion of young children do not deal with separation anxiety, and teacher and peer issues, in a productive manner.

“Developing a positive orientation, where the child is able to focus on coping rather than on distress, can help children develop skills they can take with them throughout their lives,” Associate Professor Frydenberg said.

Provided by University of Melbourne

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