

Connections 104



Dyspraxia Support Group of New Zealand Inc
Recognising Developmental Co-ordination Disorder

Connections 104

Welcome

It is hard to believe we are nearing the end of yet another year.

2020 has presented lots and lots of challenges for many people worldwide. Everyone has been impacted in one way or another.

We remember the people who have caught Covid-19 and their whanau as they cope with the ongoing effects.

People who have lost employment or job security and the ongoing stresses that brings. Plans for the future disrupted.

Hopefully we can find, at least one, positive from all of this—whether it is having more family time due to lockdown restrictions or a re think of a career path. Looking for the joy in the things we do.

This will be our last “printed” newsletter run as we finally join the world of technology! We will be sending our newsletters electronically from 2021. If you wish to join this service please either phone or email on 03 358 3249 or dyspraxia.centre@xtra.co.nz.

We look forward to the upcoming holidays and hope you all have a relaxing and happy time.

Jacqui—CEO DSGNZ

**DIFFICULT ROADS
OFTEN LEAD TO
BEAUTIFUL
DESTINATIONS.**

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Patrons Dr Amanda Kirby & Dr Susan Foster-Cohen
Editor Jacqui Scott
Address P O Box 20 292
Christchurch New Zealand
Phone 03 3583249
Email dyspraxia.centre@xtra.co.nz
Editor jacqui.dyspraxia@xtra.co.nz
Website www.dyspraxia.org.nz



Regional Contacts

Bay of Plenty—Joanne Adams

Waikato—Karina Johnson

Whakatane—Sue Crarer

Tauranga—Stephen Macartney

Hawkes Bay— Carleine Receveur

Gisborne—Jennie Law

Wellington—Laura Roberts

West Coast—Miriam Rees

Marlborough—Nadine van Rensburg

Christchurch—Dyspraxia Centre

Timaru—Stephanie Batchelor

Otago—Susan Procter

Dunedin—Karen Keppel

If you would like to become a regional contact, for an area of New Zealand we don't already have covered, please contact the Dyspraxia Centre either by phone 03 358 3249 or email dyspraxia.centre@xtra.co.nz for information on the role of a regional contact.



National Staff and Board Members

Jacqui Scott—CEO/ National Fieldworker jacqui.dyspraxia@xtra.co.nz

Sue Hammett— Office Administrator dyspraxia.centre@xtra.co.nz

Frank Sharpe—Chairman of the Board

Mardy Kelly—Treasurer

Tania Hodgson Val Coleman , Christine Lake, Craig McGavin, Mardy Kelly, Sarah Rusholme



DSGNZ OFFICE WILL BE CLOSED
FOR THE HOLIDAYS

LAST DAY
16TH DECMEBER 2020

FIRST DAY BACK
27TH JANUARY 2021

Earlier this year we farewellled Greta Spearing from our staff.

Greta was employed as our National Fieldworker for 5 years and was a valuable member of our close knit team.

I recently sat down with Greta to discuss her time with the Dyspraxia Support Group of NZ and what exciting things she is up to now.

Jacqui: What drew you to apply for the job with DSGNZ?

Greta: I was keen to get back into the workforce but with young children I wanted to have the flexibility that the role offered. I felt it would work better than going back to a traditional teaching role.

I also liked the idea of extending my knowledge and using my qualification in special education to support both teaching staff and whanau.

As I said, the flexibility to work around my own family commitments, my therapy training and the organic way the organisation works, were big draw cards for me.

I really enjoyed working with the small passionate team at DSGNZ. I learnt a great deal and extended my knowledge and skills. It was a pleasure sharing this knowledge and empowering families and schools to build on their understanding of Dyspraxia and what it means for their children.

It wasn't easy making the decision to leave DSGNZ and I was sad to go.

Jacqui: We all loved having pre-schoolers in the office, as our children were much older, and loved watching your two grow. Now they are at school what direction have you taken since leaving DSGNZ?

Greta: I am working for CMM as a Mana Ake Kaimahi in a cluster in south-east Christchurch.

(For readers unfamiliar with Mana-Ake this is from the website: Mana Ake – Stronger for Tomorrow provides mental health and wellbeing support for children in primary school years 1-8 across Canterbury.

Mana Ake kaimahi (workers) are employed by one of 13 NGO providers and support schools, families and whānau when children are experiencing issues that impact their wellbeing such as managing emotions, friendships and bullying, parental separation and grief and loss)



Greta Spearing, Alison Schroeder from Socially Speaking and Jacqui Scott at a DSGNZ presentation.

Jacqui: What skills have you taken from DSGNZ to Mana Ake?

Greta: I gained experience using the qualifications I already had and learned more about empowering people to trust their parenting and make the right decisions for their tamariki. I also made some great networking partners while at DSGNZ who continue to be resources to sharing information and learning. Looking at our tamariki from a strengths based model is so important for their development and wellbeing.

I have also started a private practice using my experience and knowledge and my feelings based therapy training to support children and their families as well as individuals with their well-being and mental health. This works in and around the kids and my other role.

Jacqui: That all sounds like a great use of your skills and whilst we were sorry to see you leave DSGNZ we are so pleased you are working in such a worthwhile area. Thank you for your time.

Greta remains a great supporter of the Dyspraxia Support Group of NZ. We appreciate and value both the professional relationship and also the ongoing friendship with her.

(The role of National Fieldworker has been combined with the CEO position currently filled by Jacqui Scott)



Greta Spearing (3rd from left) with Jacqui Scott (far right) and staff from Otago University

Christmas and the overloaded child

Christmas can be a stressful time of the year.

The busy malls; the bright, flashing lights; the constant Christmas carols; Mum and Dad out more at Christmas break ups; Christmas Parties to attend; the expected Santa photo and constant questions from friends and family about what they want for Christmas.

It can be a wonderful time of year but can also be a nightmare for parents/caregivers of some with Dyspraxia/DCD.

If your child has sensory overload at quieter times of the year, the malls at Christmas is not a place they are going to enjoy!

It may be difficult to get a child to concentrate on what to buy Grandma when they are trying to process all of the sensory input around them.

If you do have to take them, or they want to go, putting some work in ahead of time is a good idea. Have a plan, do some research on-line, plan the best time of day for your child, talk to them about what to expect and what happens if they can't cope, try to stick to the plan as constantly changing the day out can lead to an undesired outcome. This is an issue in my house as I'm not very good at staying on task and get distracted by the pretty shiny things!

Plan the Santa photo for a time when the line is likely to be at it's shortest. If the wait appears too long suggest coming back or abandoning it all together. Talk about the possibility that plans may change. Some malls offer Sensory Santa sessions. These are held at quieter times, often before the mall opens, and are sensory friendly. Check with the malls in your area if this is a service they offer or if they would consider offering. Some malls require you to book a time to help manage the numbers and further reduce the noise levels so enquire early.

Christmas Parties and gatherings pre-Christmas can add stress and anxiety to an already fragile child. Remember that the last term of school is often busy with a lack of structure to the timetable. For some children this can increase their anxiety and ability to cope with other things.

If they have parties to attend, perhaps going for a shorter time, so they enjoy the experience and leave before things start to deteriorate for them and for you. If the parents want to stay arrange a sitter to collect the child/ren after a shorter time or one parent goes home and the other stays on.

This can also apply to Christmas Day. We can sometimes either, have huge expectations of others or, have other's expectations thrust upon us.

Limiting the time spent at Christmas Day gatherings can make the day far more enjoyable than a whole day that doesn't go well. Be realistic about how much you and your child can cope with.

If you are unable to modify the day, talk to your host and your child, about somewhere they can go if they are overwhelmed and need a safe, quiet place to go to regulate themselves. If you are hosting Christmas giving your child permission to remove themselves when they are overwhelmed can help reduce their anxiety.

If you have more than one place to go at Christmas can a compromise be reached to take the emphasis from Christmas Day?

Celebrations could happen on Christmas Eve or Boxing Day or the days after, as well as on Christmas Day.

This could make for a more relaxed time without a big rush on the one day.

Remember to talk to children about appropriate responses to presents they may be less than chuffed to receive.

Explaining about hurting someone else's feelings and unrealistic expectations before Christmas can help on the day.

This year Christmas may not follow the usual patterns from past years as we deal with the ongoing affects of Covid-19.

Extended family gatherings may not happen as people reduce costs by not travelling.

Reduced disposable income may impact on the presents our children receive. Talking with family members openly about the possibility of reducing gift giving may make it less stressful on everyone. Talking to your children about adjusting expectations early will help them too.

Thinking about gifts that encourage family time and a sense of belonging can be great alternatives to the piles of toys.

Gardening kits for the family to enjoy with gloves, tools and plants and can be put together fairly cost effectively.

Passes for the local pool or zoo or bowling alley or family attraction means a gift that is used into the new year and gives experiences to enjoy together.

Games like the "Getting Lost Game" make a great family gift that can be added to and used anywhere. You could also make your own game with different scavenger lists that you can pick up and use anytime. Digital scavenger hunts where you take a photo of the items on the list work really well at getting kids involved. You can have ones for both outdoors and indoors for when the weather is cold and wet.

Remember to be good to yourself, keep your expectations reasonable and enjoy time with family and friends.



Reviewing the year

As we come towards the end of another term, it can be easy, after the holidays, to get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the 4th term.

It is however important to review the year in a meaningful way. Talk to the key people at school, involved with your child, about having a meeting during term 4. If given enough notice this shouldn't be a problem to organise. Don't leave it until the last few weeks to bring it up and expect the teachers to have time!

Focus on the progress your child has made, from where they were at the start of the year, to the end.

Look at how your child has developed, in all areas, not just academically. Have they made progress with communication, peer relationships, taking on responsibilities around the school or shown an interest in the arts or sports? What have they enjoyed about school? Writing some of those things down now and looking over them during the holidays can help to give them positive feelings about returning after the holidays.

Look forward to next year.

Now is the time to gather some information about your child's diagnosis, but with specific information about how that diagnosis impacts your child, for the teacher for next year. As we all know, no two children are the same, and no two children with Dyspraxia are the same. Generic information is good but personalised information is great!

For some children with Developmental Dyspraxia/DCD, the Christmas school holidays, can be a time for "losing" skills. You could discuss with the teaching staff some key skills for next year and keep some level of practice with your child over the holidays. This, of course, will vary from child to child. You don't want to make the holidays a continuation of school but doing some reading, maths or creative writing could help to keep up those skills, making the start of next year a bit easier for them.

If your child is feeling anxious about moving to another school, or another area of the same school, you can do some things to help. Take pictures of the new classroom, where they will eat lunch, different areas of the playground etc. Get a map of the school or make your own. Go during the holidays and get your child to find their way around the school using the map. If they become anxious at home, you can bring out the photos or the map, and they will have a visual reminder of where things are around the school.

Remember to listen to your child, acknowledge their feelings and concerns and look for ways together to make it a positive experience.

By Jacqui Scott

Sporting Ideas

You may like to try sports where you compete against yourself, rather than team sports.

Whatever sports or activities you try it is important to have fun!

Below is a list of sports you may like to consider:

Horse riding – is great for balance, rhythm and stability.

Swimming – develops upper and lower body strength.

Bike Riding – activities such as Quad Biking or using a tricycle or scooter are easier to do than riding a two-wheeler as they have greater stability.

Sports for improving coordination

Badminton – is a good racquet sport as the racquet is light and the shuttle moves more slowly than other racquet sports.

Yoga, Alexander Technique, Pilates – these activities will develop balance, stability and promote relaxation.

Archery – this will develop hand-eye coordination and upper body strength.

Canoeing or Kayaking – is good for upper body strength and balance.

Golf – develops upper body strength and hand-eye coordination.

Martial arts such as Judo – develops balance and strength.

Trampoline – promotes strength, balance and fitness.

Gym – you may find it more helpful to get some advice from a personal trainer as to the best exercises or classes for you.

Indoor Rock Climbing – is great for strength and endurance.

Walking – is great for physical fitness and toning your body. It can also be a great time to socialise if you walk with a friend!

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Dyspraxia Support Group of New Zealand Inc
Recognising Developmental Co-ordination Disorder

Dyspraxia Support Group of New Zealand

P O Box 20 292
Bishopdale
Christchurch

53 Kendal Avenue, Burnside, Christchurch

Phone: 03 358 3249
E-mail: dyspraxia.centre@extra.co.nz
www.dyspraxia.org.nz

MISSION STATEMENT

Our organisation will empower, educate and support all people
impacted by Developmental Dyspraxia/DCD.

VISION STATEMENT

Those who are impacted by Developmental Dyspraxia/DCD will be empowered to engage in their life fully
through the resources and opportunities we provide.