

Dr. Joanne Sargeant

# PARENTING

*During COVID-19 Pandemic*

**Social  
&  
Emotional  
Wellbeing**  

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**For young people and  
their parents**



# **Social and Emotional Wellbeing for young people and their parents during COVID-19**

**(This resource is free for schools to distribute)**



*These are unprecedented times. The generation of parents who learned how to parent while technology is ever-present, are now having to learn to parent during COVID-19.*

*This book offers practical suggestions on how families might best function during the COVID-19 crisis.*

*Dr Joanne Sargeant (MBBS, FRANZCP) is both a medical doctor, and child, adolescent and family psychiatrist. She has decades of experience working with thousands of young people and their parents. She has parented her own 3 children, who are now adults/near-adults. Her no-nonsense suggestions are written with a kindness that comes from wanting the best for your family.*





## Introduction

Please take from this book what is useful for your own parenting, and leave the rest behind.

The opinions expressed here are my own, and not necessarily those of the professional College to which I belong.

I write with the knowledge that I have available in March/April 2020. Supported with years of experience with my beautiful patients and their families, my previous work in hospitals, and ongoing talks with a doctor working in a New South Wales Hospital Emergency department during COVID-19.

Young people are our future. I wish you all the warmest wishes for the best possible health.

Dr Jo

#Stay-Well #Wash-Your-Hands #Keep-Social-Distance.

**Please visit [Social & Emotional Wellbeing for Children & Adolescents](https://socialemotionalwellbeing.com.au) website for more information:**

**<https://socialemotionalwellbeing.com.au>**

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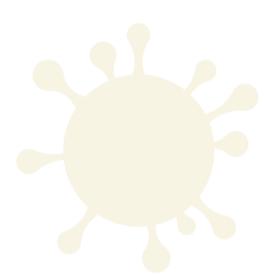
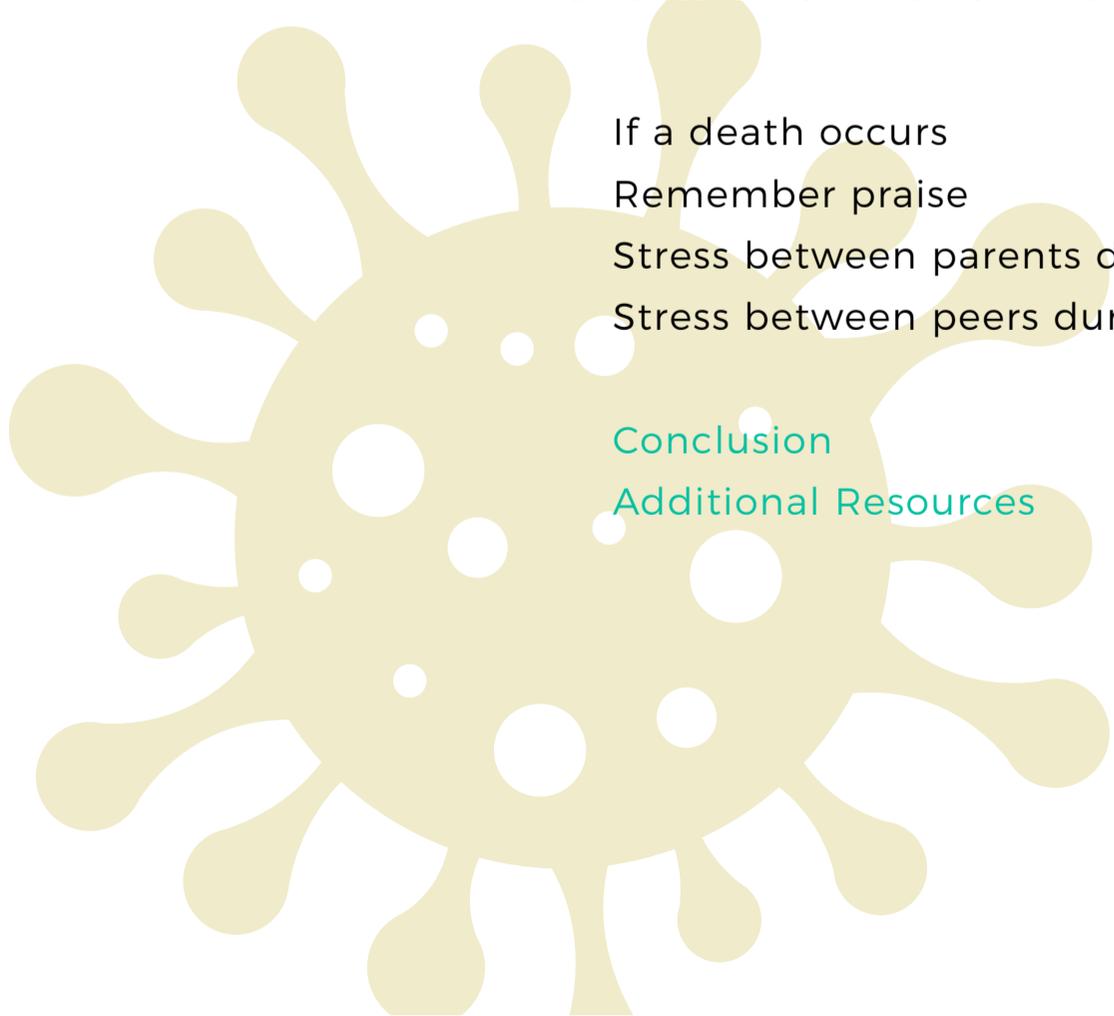
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1. COVID-19

# How to Minimise COVID-19 Stress

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# What's COVID-19?



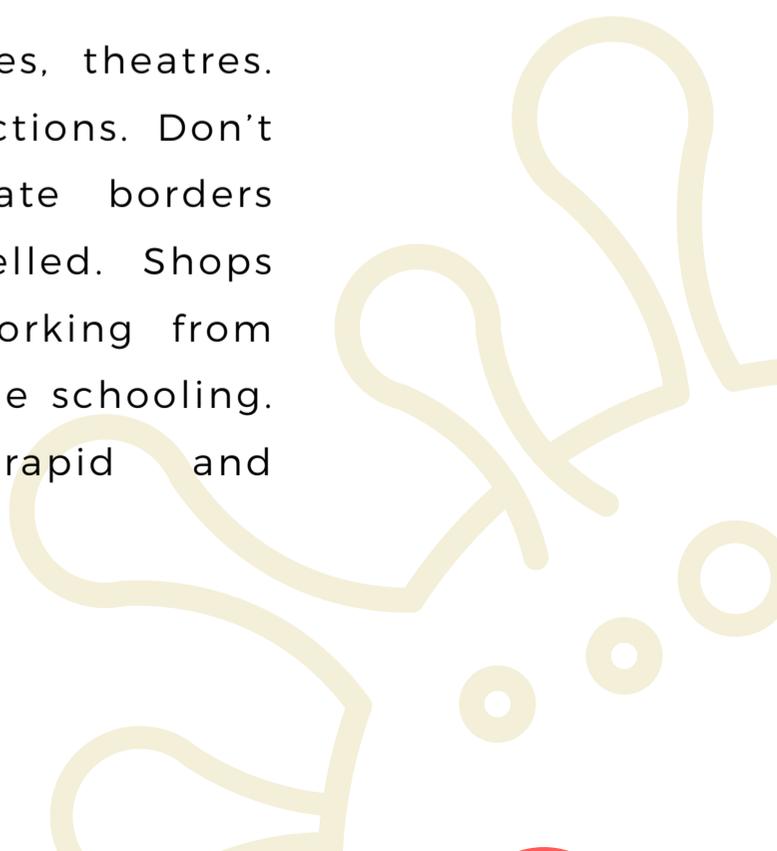
COVID-19 is a virus, not responsive to anti-biotics. There is no likelihood of a vaccine this year. COVID-19 can survive on metal surfaces (like doorknobs) for 12 hours or more. It enters via the eyes, mouth or nose. The average incubation period is 5-6 days ([www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)).



# Changes **During** **COVID-19** So Far

(as at April 2020)

Don't go to pubs, concerts, cafes, theatres. Don't hold parties or family functions. Don't shake hands. Beaches and state borders closed. Sport and school cancelled. Shops mostly closed. Parents often working from home, while trying to juggle home schooling. The changes have been rapid and unprecedented.



# Coping with Change and Stress



Change and stress are a part of life, and not inherently bad. However, we cope best when the rate of change and stress are moderate.

Most school and work changes are outside our control. Trying to keep private routines close to normal, can increase the ability to cope.



# Routines for Home



Try for the same time to bed. This will be easier if a house keeps a similar wake-up time.

Try to eat meals at consistent times. Watch for boredom-related snacking (consider locking up some foods in a suitcase).

Try to keep the pre-COVID-19 screen time rules similar - the weekday rules, and the after 4pm rules.

Consider booking in regular technology contact times with the broader network (like grandparents).



# Routines for Home Schooling

Helping young people adopt a 'learning attitude' for home schooling means getting everyone dressed (out of pyjamas!), brushing their hair and cleaning their teeth. Some schools have encouraged young people to wear a comfortable version of their school uniform (perhaps the sports uniform?).

Aim to keep the usual school start time - even if the home-school day is going to be shorter. Most young people will do better learning in an open, easily supervised space like the kitchen or dining room. This helps keep focus and engagement. Older teenagers may be ready to use the study, but ask that the door be left wide open to reduce loneliness.



# Routines for Exercise

Brief physical activity in the morning can help the body settle down to learn. Try *Joe Wicks PE* online.

Afternoon or early evening exercise should become a routine for every day of the week. This is especially the case since young people have lost their incidental exercise of walking between classes, school physical education classes, and lunch-time games (such as handball, football and 'tiggy').

Exercise reduces the frustration of being cooped up, and allows an outlet for anger (see Section 2, chapter 4). Especially important from puberty, exercise is also the most powerful prevention for depression.

# Boredom Busters



The internet is abuzz with boredom-busting ideas. Cooking can be used to teach maths concepts. Puzzles teach problem-solving. Board games, gardening, and household/pet chores all teach team-work.

Ultimately, boredom is an opportunity to explore and think independently. See the additional resources in the final section for more boredom-busting ideas.

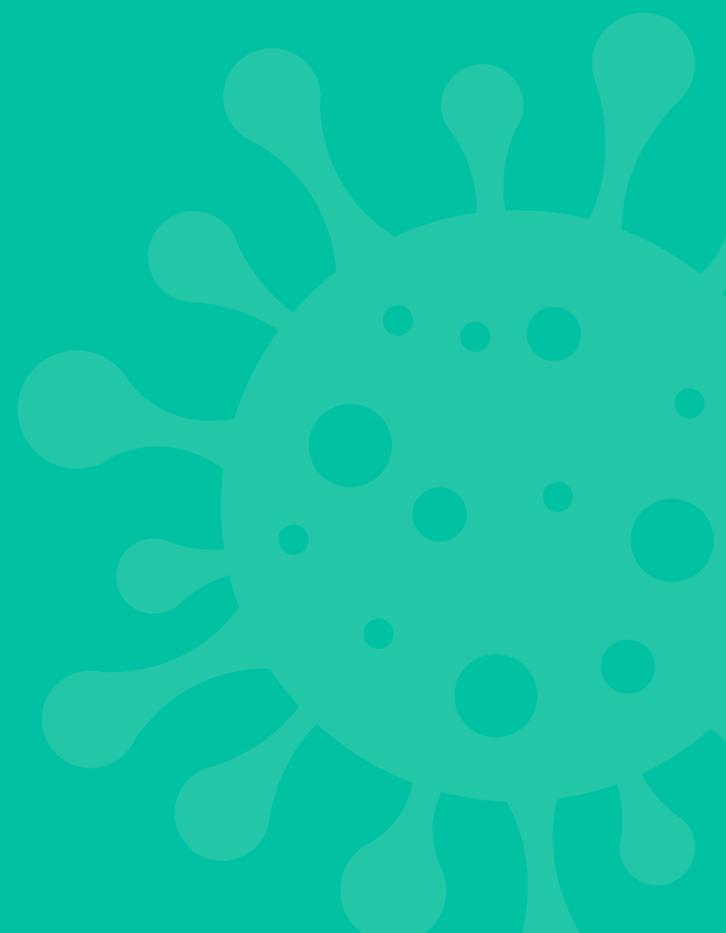


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**2**. Managing  
**COVID-19 Stress**



# Suggestions for managing poor sleep



Routine and a regular bedtime are the best ways to improve sleep.

Encourage keeping the bed for sleeping only. If necessary, use a pillow on the bedroom floor for social media or to watch TV.

When your young person cannot sleep, try to help them accept the opportunity to rest. Though sleep is preferable to rest, rest-time does help the brain. A brain that is frustrated at not being able to sleep, is no longer resting.

If necessary: Melatonin (2-4mg) - bought online. Melatonin is best taken an hour or more before bed. Any benefit from Melatonin is reduced if eyes are exposed to blue light from technology after sunset.

## Preparing the body for sleep:

- Turn off all screens the hour before trying to sleep.
- No exercise in the hour before sleep.
- Avoid caffeine from 3pm - and sugars from 5pm.
- Try a warm bath or shower.

## Going to bed:

- Expect the mobile phone be handed to an adult. They can instead use an old-fashioned alarm clock (which faces the wall to avoid clock watching).
- Encourage rituals - such as reading a book, singing a song, saying a prayer, having a short head massage.
- Allow music - either relaxation or the young person's favourite 3 songs on repeat (their familiarity will make them like a nursery rhyme).
- Try lavender (spray or infusion).





# Sadness



Many young people are grieving the cancellation of their sport, music, school camps, youth group/scouts/guides, family holidays, formals, and face-to face contact with peers. These opportunities are not always replaceable.

On top of their own losses, young people may be absorbing the stress of those around them.

Discuss with your young person that sadness is a normal part of life. It is okay to be sad. But also encourage the 'glass half full' attitude with some 'gratitude therapy'. The teenage website [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com) uses the 'thank tank' concept. A Chinese proverb states that 'if you want happiness ..., help someone else'.

Remember that exercise is powerful prevention and treatment for depression. If you are worried about your young person being significantly sad, please seek professional help. See the additional resources in the final section.





#### Some helpful websites for teenager

- [www.biteback.org.au](http://www.biteback.org.au)
- [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)
- [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)

# Anxiety



Panic attacks may be expected to involve shortness of breath, and a lump in the throat.

If a young person is worrying about their parent dying, it may be helpful to explain who you would plan to care for them in the unlikely event of your death (another parent, aunt etc).

Remind them that COVID-19 death rates are low in healthy adults under 60 years old. The average lifespan in our country is still 80. Ask them how old they will be by the time you turn 80?

If they wish to sleep on a mattress in the parent's bedroom, this will not harm them (though not ideal for



# Anger



Reduced opportunities for exercise will cause a build-up of natural body energy. Reduced exercise combines with stress and sadness, which can then be externalised as anger.

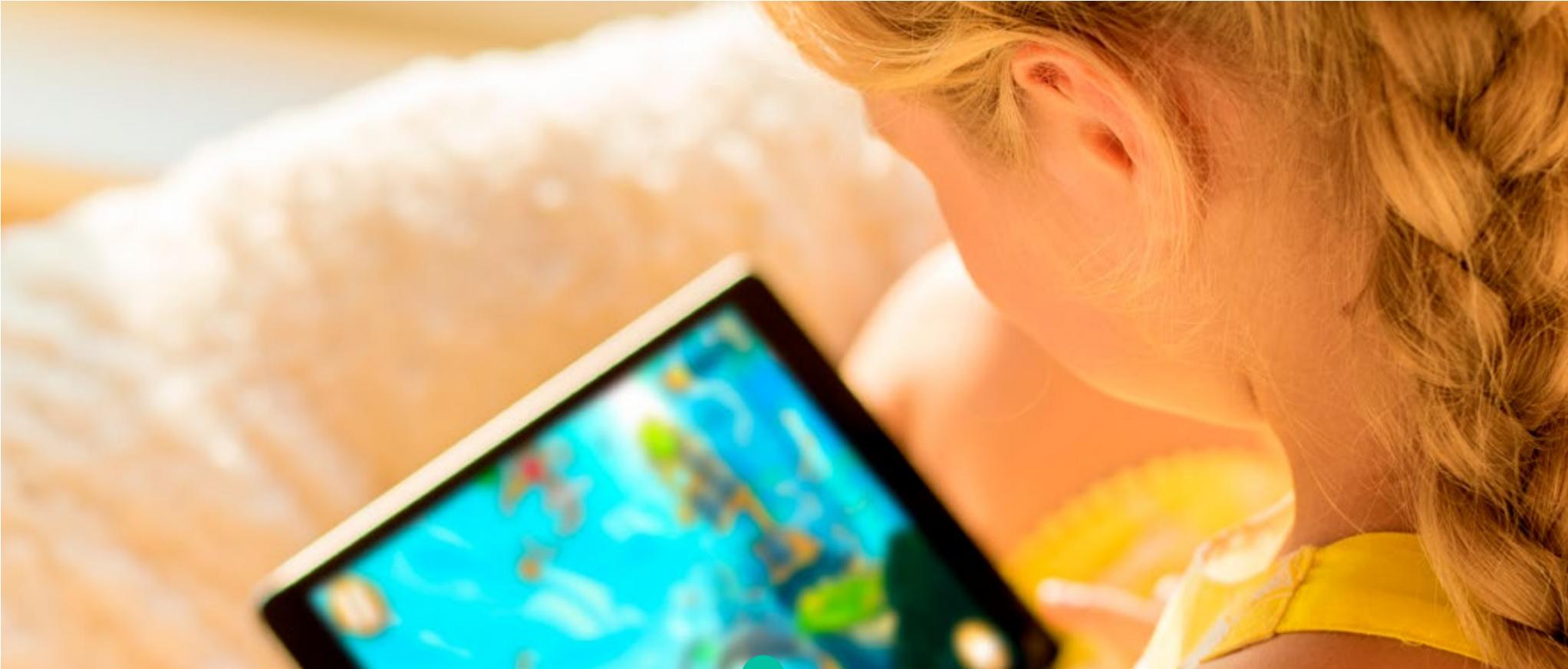
When you notice your young person clenching their fists, or the side jaw or neck muscles twitching, or their face is going pink... Do not attempt to communicate with your young person when they are angry.

Encourage them to jump on the trampoline, run laps around the house, throw a ball vigorously. Leftover emotions can then be put into an angry drawing or letter - which can then be ripped up.

If things escalate, excuse yourself to your bedroom. I suggest investing in a lock on the parent bedroom door. If necessary, younger siblings can also go the parent bedroom, and be occupied with a card game.

The golden rule is: Keep hands and feet to yourself.





# Screen- addiction

Teenagers value their privacy. But with school cancelled, sitting alone in one room for hours on end is a recipe for depression.

Walk past your young screen user regularly and wave. Offer them a drink of water. Ask them to share their favourite memes or watch a movie, or game together for a few minutes, to be a part of their lives. Police officer Brett Lee teaches Internet safety in a 30 minute online session, suitable for both parents and young people.

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WILD

# 3 • Other Parent Survival Tips

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# If A Death Occurs



If a COVID-19 related death occurs, it does not allow warning time. If a death occurs in your young person's network, encourage them to attend the funeral via videoconferencing. Shared grief is generally supportive. Suggest that your young person write a letter or draw a picture for the deceased person, or collect memories or photos. Encourage talking about the dead person, to reduce unresolved emotion or prolonged grief.



# Remember Praise

Praise is hard to do when you feel exhausted. Try to catch your young person doing something good (or not doing something bad?). Top up your optimism for your young person by watching them briefly while they sleep. Or look at a favourite childhood photo to remember the positive times. In the evening quiet, write them a 'love note' saying that you care about them always, and maybe that you're sorry you are tired and cranky. Post your note under their bedroom door or cereal bowl.





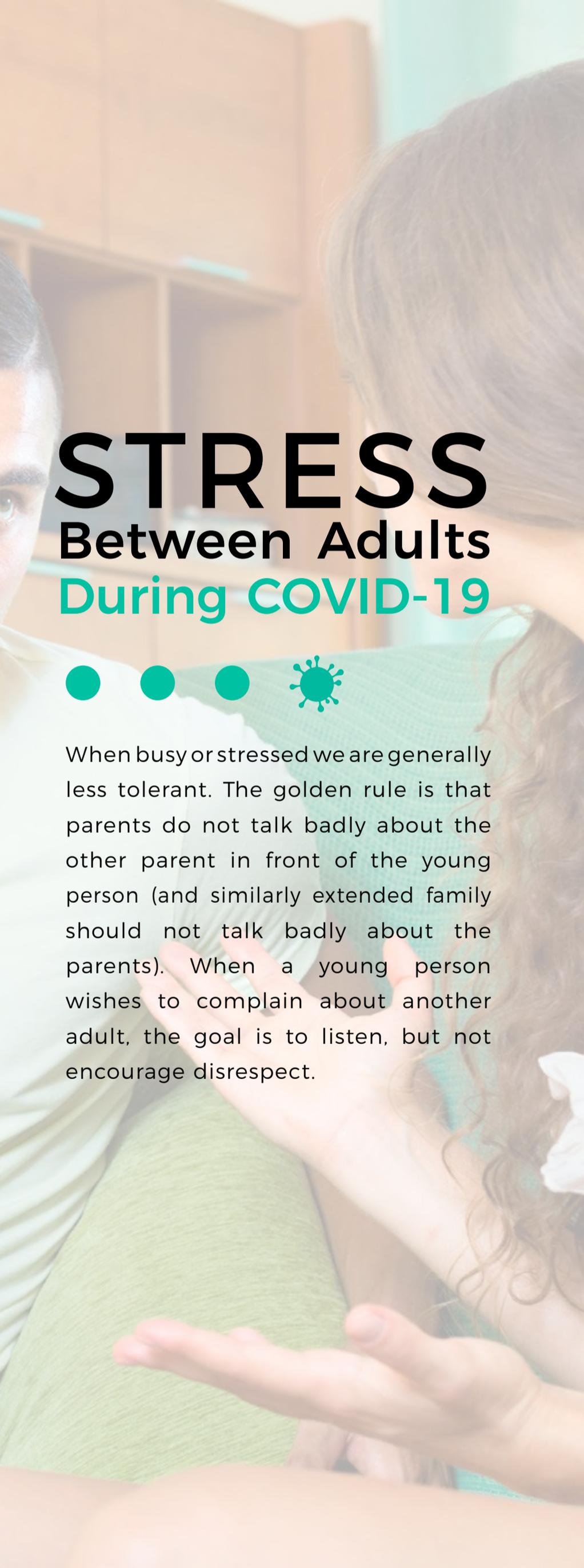
# STRESS

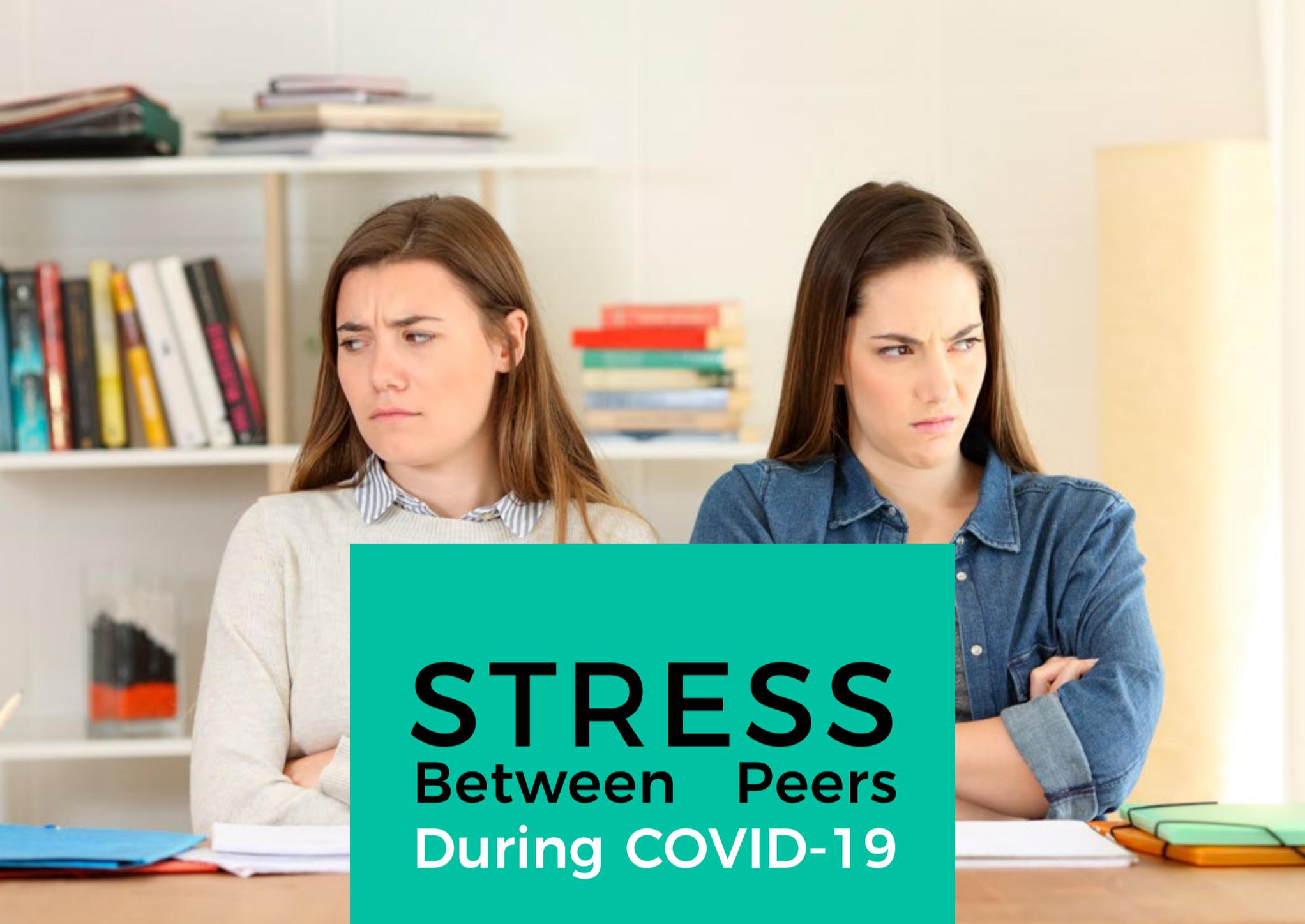
## Between Adults

### During COVID-19



When busy or stressed we are generally less tolerant. The golden rule is that parents do not talk badly about the other parent in front of the young person (and similarly extended family should not talk badly about the parents). When a young person wishes to complain about another adult, the goal is to listen, but not encourage disrespect.





# STRESS

## Between Peers

### During COVID-19



This will likely be online during COVID-19. A peer situation may provide you with the opportunity to insist on screens now staying in the living space - or for the study door to be left open, for senior high school students. Screen-shot any inappropriate content (however, note that Snapchat will notify the user that a screen-shot has been taken. So, using a second device (eg phone) to take a photo may be more appropriate).

Generally aim to mentor your young person to attempt to resolve their conflict themselves (with a non-inflammatory response, or ignoring or blocking). Every situation is different, but be careful about initiating direct contact with your young person's peer, or peer's parent. Emailing a school staff member may be appropriate.





*Stress, in moderation, is not bad. Having routines at home, helps cope with external stresses. Showing kindness to others, is good for happiness.*



Below are additional resources both for boredom busting, home schooling, and further advice managing sleep, sadness, anxiety or anger. If you feel that your young person is having significant issues, then please seek help from your general practitioner or professional.

Our beautiful young people are the future of our world.... Go Parents!

#Stay-Well #Wash-Your-Hands  
#Keep-Social-Distance.



# CONTACTS & RESOURCES

When involving children, please view any website first to ensure it is appropriate for your child.



## Website

- [www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au)
- [www.headtohealth.gov.au](http://www.headtohealth.gov.au)
- **National Corona Virus Information line: 1800 020 030**
- [www.KidsHelpLine.com.au](http://www.KidsHelpLine.com.au)  
**Ph: 1800 55 1800**  
(received increased funding with COVID-19)
- [www.biteback.org.au](http://www.biteback.org.au)  
(improving the overall wellbeing for young people 13 to 16 years old)
- [www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)
- [www.youthbeyondblue.com](http://www.youthbeyondblue.com)
- [www.kidshelpline.com.au](http://www.kidshelpline.com.au)
- [www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)
- **Keeping Kids Active at Home**  
[https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-pe-classes/?utm\\_content=1584828120&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0qoSjz-IAA0RQIW\\_\\_ZYDTq\\_WuYRzqS9E4VmznG-FiXqNkaSLOtxh7mCEcJM](https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-pe-classes/?utm_content=1584828120&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0qoSjz-IAA0RQIW__ZYDTq_WuYRzqS9E4VmznG-FiXqNkaSLOtxh7mCEcJM)

## Website

- **The Big List of Children's Authors Doing Online Read-Alouds & Activities**  
[https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-author-activities/?utm\\_content=1584565321&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0ISFs8hBu5z3Vs-Sv0faVNOt-G7cMMUNBKta2bb3w560BMelnmS-fYHqjaM](https://www.weareteachers.com/virtual-author-activities/?utm_content=1584565321&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0ISFs8hBu5z3Vs-Sv0faVNOt-G7cMMUNBKta2bb3w560BMelnmS-fYHqjaM)
- **Audible Is Offering Free Audiobooks for Kids**  
[https://www.weareteachers.com/audible-covid-19-closures/?utm\\_content=1584751200&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0HmjrGh1tD2QtGMMH-lwUoh95I9par1ozoHqbSxjKM4zMTTn-Fmf13x9FRM](https://www.weareteachers.com/audible-covid-19-closures/?utm_content=1584751200&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0HmjrGh1tD2QtGMMH-lwUoh95I9par1ozoHqbSxjKM4zMTTn-Fmf13x9FRM)
- **25 Ways Kids Can Read Free eBooks**  
[https://www.weareteachers.com/download-free-ebooks/?utm\\_content=1584734581&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR20WRj1-aA-QCuKp9OnBMH7yPfdYUH18S-Lx6yPS3OMWt1o51hYR1uSMnRal](https://www.weareteachers.com/download-free-ebooks/?utm_content=1584734581&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR20WRj1-aA-QCuKp9OnBMH7yPfdYUH18S-Lx6yPS3OMWt1o51hYR1uSMnRal)
- **35 Must-Watch TED Talks for Kids and Teens**  
[https://www.weareteachers.com/ted-talks-students/?utm\\_content=1584648481&utm\\_medium=social&utm\\_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3Xzc1Kh3IH4nawWf4206QOjn-fIW5S9iaOQh6m-tjPgNPqnXjU1wvZ-wJY](https://www.weareteachers.com/ted-talks-students/?utm_content=1584648481&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR3Xzc1Kh3IH4nawWf4206QOjn-fIW5S9iaOQh6m-tjPgNPqnXjU1wvZ-wJY)

## Free Educational Websites

### Math

- Prodigy
- Math Playground
- splash Learn
- Math Game Time
- Khan Academy

### Science

- Discovery Mindblown
- NASA Kids Club
- mazing Space
- Code Academ
- How Stuff Works

### Social Studies

- Crash Course (YouTube)
- Who Was? (app/site)
- Nat Geo Kids
- Google Earth
- Time for Kids
- Smithsonian for Kids

### Other

- Brain Pop
- Ted Talks
- PBS Kids
- Duolingo
- Hello Kids (drawing)

We would like to thank and acknowledge W.A.G Therapeutic Services for the list of resources above.

# Social & Emotional Wellbeing

# PARENTING

*During COVID-19 Pandemic*



**Dr Joanne Sargeant** graduated from the medical school of University of Queensland in 1994. She completed post-graduate studies in adult psychiatry with the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatry in 2003. She achieved her Advanced Certificate in Child, Adolescent and Family Therapy. She lectured medical students in Child and Adolescent psychiatry for many years.

Since 2003, she has run a busy private child and adolescent practice in Brisbane, and later also in Rockhampton. She is the author of 4 books for parents.

Her passion is preparing young people for contented and competent adult lives. She is married, and the parent of 3 children who are now adults or near-adults.

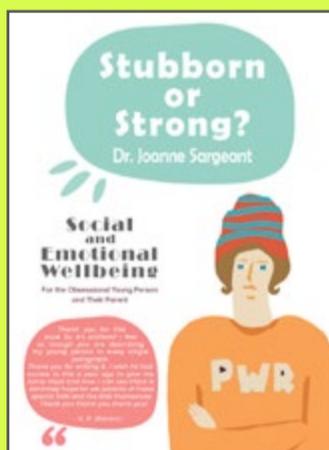
## About the AUTHOR



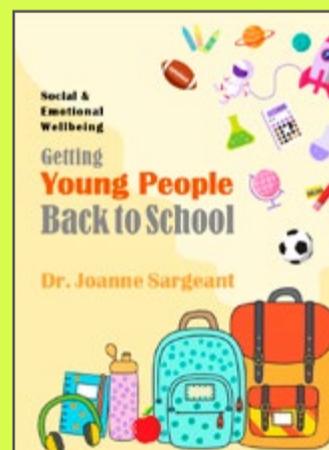
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Social & Emotional Wellbeing: Stubborn or Strong?  
Coming in May, 2020  
(Only available as an ebook)



Social & Emotional Wellbeing: Getting Young People Back To School  
Coming Soon

Contact us

[admin@socialemotionalwellbeing.com.au](mailto:admin@socialemotionalwellbeing.com.au)

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