



# Many coloured days – helping children to cope with their feelings and emotions

## As Dr. Seuss says...

Some days are yellow.  
Some are blue.  
On different days I'm different too.  
You'd be surprised how many ways  
I change on different coloured days.



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is a Child Psychiatrist, and has worked in the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service for over 25 years. She and her team have collaborated with Perth Children's Hospital Foundation on the development of The Big Splash WA, and have written the content of The Big Splash WA School Resource Kits.

In my last blog, I talked about the key importance of social and emotional learning to children developing resilience and empathy. Children's feelings are so important and developing emotional skills is fundamental to the way a child learns to cope with the world. Fostering this ability to regulate, manage and shape feelings is a critical part of our parenting and the source of so much angst. As parents we can delight in our children's positive emotions, but often struggle to help our children manage difficult or negative emotions.

Learning about coping with emotions is a life long journey that starts when a baby cries and a parent responds. A parent's task is to help decode the cry, to identify the need and respond. As time goes by it is then to help a child label and express their feelings.

When children's feelings are heard and understood by their parents, emotions become less overwhelming and behaviour settles. As children's language develops, parents help develop their emotional understanding and vocabulary through connection, understanding and activities. A larger, more complex emotional vocabulary enables better communication with others and improved emotional coping skills.

Research shows that likewise, when teachers help children learn to manage their feelings

in the classroom, those children become better problem solvers when faced with an emotional situation, and are better able to engage in learning tasks. They are better able to resolve conflicts with their peers and show lower levels of physiological stress.

The Big Splash WA School Resource Kits have a range of age appropriate information, activities, games and resources that are all designed to help children and teachers express, understand and manage feelings. There is also information and tips for parents along with activities that can be done at home to help build on what is learnt at school. Ask your child's school for your copy!

Parents often ask me what they can do to help their children manage feelings. As parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents, we need to prioritise time to be with our children and listen to their concerns. It is so easy to let this go past when we are too tired, preoccupied or busy to create the space.

It is important to communicate our awareness and acceptance of different emotions as it builds our child's understanding that all emotions are okay. It is in these moments of connection with us that children will learn that their bad feelings, although painful, will not last forever. Through your support and their own efforts they can make things better. This may be our greatest gift to our children.

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## Many Coloured Days by Dr. Seuss

Some days are yellow.  
Some are blue.  
On different days I'm different too.  
You'd be surprised how many ways  
I change on different coloured days.  
On Bright Red Days how good it feels  
To be a horse and kick my heels!  
On other days I'm other things.  
On Bright Blue Days I flap my wings.  
Some days, of course, feel sort of Brown.  
Then I feel slow and low, low down.  
Then comes a Yellow Day and wheeee  
I am a busy, buzzy bee.  
Grey Day... Everything is grey.  
I watch but nothing moves today.  
Then all of a sudden I'm a circus seal!  
On my Orange Days that's how I feel.  
Green Days. Deep, deep in the sea.  
Cool and quiet fish. That's me.  
On Purple Days I'm sad. I groan.  
I drag my tail. I walk alone.  
But when my days are Happy Pink  
It's great to jump and just not think.  
Then come my black days.  
Mad. And loud.  
I howl. I growl at every cloud.  
Then comes a Mixed-Up Day.  
And WHAM!  
I don't know who or what I am!  
But it all turns out all right, you see.  
And I go back to being... me.

