



APP OFFERS SUPPORT AND IDEAS FOR PARENTS DURING THE COVID-19 CRISIS

Embargoed until Saturday 18 April 2020

Engaging activities to help families keep kids happy and healthy during social isolation are available in an Australian app underpinned by the latest child development science.

The Bright Tomorrows app offers a customised library of tips and moments to help parents and carers build their children's life skills from birth.

A new campaign promoting the app will hit screens next week featuring a lovable furry creature – nicknamed Bobbie – that represents activity in a child's brain, encouraging parents and carers to use this time at home to develop their children's life skills.

Developed by Telethon Kids Institute and Minderoo Foundation through their CoLab partnership, the app translates groundbreaking early years research into tailored tips for parents, grandparents and those who care for children under the age of five. It was made possible through collaborations with the Bezos Family Foundation, Raising Children Network, Better Beginnings, and Michigan University,

The Bright Tomorrows app, which is free to download, now prioritises tips that are ideal for social isolation, such as activities to help children burn off excess energy indoors and ideas to help both children and parents manage difficult emotions.

CoLab director Professor Donna Cross said the Bright Tomorrows app was a valuable tool for families during this unprecedented time.

"As researchers, we know this is an exceptionally challenging time for many families, with changes in routines and much uncertainty about the future," Professor Cross said.

"One of the things we can positively influence during this time is our children's development. In fact, this period of social isolation provides a unique opportunity given the extra time we have with our children, to invest more in their growth and learning.

"The Bright Tomorrows app offers ideas about ways parents, grandparents and carers can support children's brain development and influence their emotional, social and physical wellbeing at a time when their usual support networks or routines might be unavailable. It's a trusted, science-based tool that fits right in your pocket."

Research shows the first five years of a child's life are crucial to their development of core life skills, including attention and focus, responding to emotions, communication and relationship building, planning and routines, and taking on challenges.



These skills are important for children at any time, but their importance is magnified now during the COVID-19 crisis as kids manage emotions like feeling anxious, frightened or frustrated.

The Bright Tomorrows app includes a range of suggestions on physical activities parents can undertake with children to keep them actively engaged and developing their life skills while at home.

“Being socially distant doesn’t mean we have to feel isolated or alone,” Minderoo Foundation Co-chair Nicola Forrest AO said.

“Tools like the Bright Tomorrows app can help us to remain connected, informed and motivated during this challenging time.”

The app includes over 1000 easy to use activities or ‘moments’ to build children’s life skills while parents and children are doing everyday tasks, such as gardening or cooking. These moments are customised to ensure families are receiving advice that is relevant to them and their children. Beautifully designed and animated, the app centres on Bobbie, who represents a child’s brain and demonstrates how their brain actively responds to meaningful moments. It also gives families a brief scientific explanation of why these activities are helpful to brain development in a section called Brainy Background.

“Think of the app like your friendly local librarian,” Ms Forrest continued. “Instead of searching through a library for advice or ideas, the friendly librarian meets you at the door and offers you ways to engage with your children based on their age and interests and your priorities and values as a parent or carer. The app learns as it interacts with you so, as you continue to visit, the recommendations, or ‘moments’ as they are called in the app, will feel even more personalised to you and your family.”

The Bright Tomorrows app is free to download from the App Store or Google Play.

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