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A happy, healthy mob: raising confident resilient jarjums

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Widjabul is the tribal name for the Aboriginal people in the Lismore area, Northern New South Wales. Lismore is part of the Bundjalung Nation.

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The families whose photos appear throughout the book

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In Aboriginal families our kinship is strong. We learn our parenting and social knowledge from each other; from stories that we get from our mothers and aunties. It is a new idea to learn these things from books.

Raising children is not an easy job. No training manual comes with children so we all learn as we go. This book is a tool for families who have children in the early childhood group of 0–5 years.

In this book we have included parenting ideas and information around building your jarjum's self esteem and self worth.

Confident, resilient and happy jarjums make for happier parents. Enjoy.

Debra Rhodes
Widjabul Early Childhood Strategy
Bigungah (baby) steps

Here are some monthly milestones you might expect your bigungah to reach during their first year.

1. Bigungah watches your face
   Follows limited movement with geo (eyes)

2. Lifts bowrrd (head) momentarily when sitting
   Smiles responsively
   Makes noises to you when talking to bigungah

3. Lifts head a little when lying on tummy
   Laughs
   Rolls from side to back

4. Holds head steady when held upright
   Plays with hands together
   Goos and gurgles responsively

5. Rolls over
   Grasps objects
   Smiles spontaneously
   Begins to learn to crawl

6-7. Lifts bowrrd (head) forward when pulled to sitting position
    Passes things from hand to hand
    Turns toward voices
    Friendly and responsive
8-9  Sits up without support
     Repeats syllables
     Tries to get toys that are out of reach

10-11 Stands holding onto something
       Says mahmi (mum) or marrum (dad)
       Becomes shy with strangers
       Plays peek-a-boo

12   Walks holding onto furniture
       Grasps with fingers and thumb
       Imitates speech sounds

Remember, every bigungah develops at their own pace – some will reach these milestones sooner, some later.
Persistence ~ creating a positive jarjum

The ability to persist at a task and see it through to the end is one of the most important success skills that you can teach your jarjum.

Jarjums need to be able to persist when things get hard or life gets tough. They need encouragement to work through difficulties and hang in there when things don't go their way.

Parents can be a sounding board for jarjum's gripes but should show confidence in their jarjum's ability to cope and get through difficulties.

"You can do it," is far more powerful in promoting an attitude of persistence than saying "If it is a little too hard then try something else."

Being able to persist in the face of difficulties may be an old fashioned quality but it is one of the best success attributes that jarjums will ever develop.

Remember not to judge your jarjum's skills by others. Children are different in their abilities.
You can help your jarjum to gain persistence by ~

Encouraging them to continue even when things are too hard

Not allowing them to stay home from pre-school or school for a minor reason

Not allowing them to give up on sport or a project because they are not succeeding straight away
In a family ~

~ with two parents you'll need to work together to make sure you both respond in similar ways with jarjums.

~ as a single parent you need to be consistent with how you react when jarjums moogul (misbehave).
Consistency ~ how we respond

Consistency is both the key to effective discipline and an essential element in our relationship with our jarjums.

One of the simplest ways to improve a jarjum's behaviour is to give lots of encouragement and praise.

Jarjums love their parents to be consistent as they are able to predict how they will act. A consistent approach to discipline helps put jarjums in control of their own behaviour.

Consistency means ~

~ following through and doing as you say you will
~ not giving jarjums a second and third chance
~ not allowing jarjums to get away with misbehaviour two or three times, then coming down hard the fourth time they misbehave

Difficult jarjums need consistency. Limits and boundaries provide jarjums with structure and teach them how they should behave.

Remember the word NO carries a lot more meaning when spoken by a parent who also says YES wisely.
Fatherhood

A marrum’s (dad’s) involvement is important in a jarjum’s development and learning process.

Marrums are encouraged to spend time with their young jarjum to help the relationship between both to nurture and grow.

Marrums can do this by:
- helping with feeding and bathing
- playing with jarjums
- encouraging jarjums to join in with their activities
- storytelling and reading stories
- being a good role model
- supporting mahmi (mum)
Feelings

When you help children to learn, make friends, feel like they belong, have fun, understand their heritage and culture, you are helping them to get a good start in life.

Helping them to understand their feelings is a really important part of your jarjum's development too. You can do this by ~

~ listening to them quietly when they have a problem
~ encouraging them to give their feelings a name
~ suggesting they draw pictures of faces to show how they are feeling
~ showing them positive ways of dealing with strong feelings like fear or anger

Bigungah will always let you know how they feel by the way they cry. By spending time with them, and learning to understand their feelings, you will be able settle them down quickly. You can’t spoil a baby by responding to its needs.

Always try to remember that,

“Children need love, especially when they do not deserve it.”

—Harold S Hulbert
Doing your best as a parent

As a parent you will feel scared, frazzled and overwhelmed at times. Being a parent is something that you grow into. You learn as you go.

You must care for your own needs in order to be able to care for your jarjum’s needs. When feeling as though you need help, learning to ask for and accept support from outside the family network is an essential element to good parenting.

There are some really wonderful people and services out there specifically developed to help families. All Aboriginal families are encouraged to access any of the services listed below ~

- Jarjum Preschool 6621 9203
- Goonellabah Transition Program 6624 6744
- Aboriginal Health Lismore (Gurgun Bulahnggelah) 6620 2741
- Child & Family Health, Goonellabah 6625 0111
- Child & Family Health, Lismore 6620 7687
- Family Day Care, Lismore 6621 6437
- Family Support Network – Aboriginal Playgroup 6621 2489
- YWCA Community Services Centre, Goonellabah 6625 5800
- Indigerelate Family Counselling Service 6624 7166
- Department of Housing, Lismore 6623 2424
- Men & Family Centre 6622 6116
- Rekindling the Spirit 6622 5534

Remember, there is no such thing as a perfect parent ~ but our jarjums deserve the best possible start in life.
Other resources

Parenting Resource Collection ~ over 50 new DVDs and books recently bought through the Parenting Lismore's Way strategy, available in Lismore and Goonellabah libraries

www.parentingideas.com.au ~ a comprehensive website designed to help you bring out the best in your children

raisingchildren.net.au ~ a great "first stop" from the Raising Children Network for parenting information and ideas
The Gurrumbil (Hoop Pine) is the totem of the Widjabil Tribe of the Lismore area.