

contributions that Australians of all backgrounds have made to the creation of our nation. Stories such as the Eureka Stockade and the Snowy Mountains engineering project.

Like putting more Asian, Aboriginal and Muslim faces in our media, so that we might all see a better reflection of our true community and so that these faces are no longer just associated with takeaway food shops, petty crime and suicide bombers.

This is all part of the dynamic process of forming a modern Australian identity and culture. These are conversations in which there should be no barriers to all Australians lending their voices.

We live in a great nation – the best in the world. We need to work together always to

keep it that way. And we, the second generation migrants, have a role in breaking down the barriers that still remain.

To show that you can be Australian and yet still have deep cultural roots in other places. To show that Australian identity is not a closed door, but an ongoing conversation. Rather than being ‘new Australians’, I believe this is the new Australia and the true Australia, a nation where we are in fact united by the fact that we are all different and where this difference gives us strength, vibrancy, resilience and cultural depth.

To break down barriers, we can’t just rely on laws. We need to rely on ourselves, our votes, our actions, our values and the very way we lead our own lives. ■

#### AUSTRALIA: A THING UNDER MY SKIN

*I came here from England with two capped front teeth, one gold and one silver, and a thick cockney accent. I wasn't exactly the toast of the cool circles at Katoomba Primary School. For weeks I walked to school with my dad and brother – him, tall, skinny, warm and curly-haired, and little three-year-old Joe on his shoulders, laughing and brave in his Batman cape. I would cry when I got to the school gate, because it was time to leave my people and walk through to the other people. But slowly I made friends.*

*Katoomba is so much a part of me that I cannot say what is special about it in one key phrase. My family lives here, gentle, soft-spoken, generous people. My first sweetheart lived here; tall, bronzed, ocker, passionate man. My childhood spaces exist here; warm, smooth rocks, and spindly trees. My memories reside here, and I will continue to return here all my life.*

*Australia has become a thing under my skin, and a force exploding through my laughter, anger, and love. Australia flickers in my memory and future – a trip around Australia in a ute, expanses of untouched beach, and the deep silent undergrowth of the bush. Australia is land and people, memory and now. It is special to me because I identify with it in a purely subjective way, and it sublimates my ego in turn.*

*By Jess, British Origin. From 'Voices of Australia: A collection of real-life stories about Australians living together. Published by the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission. October 2005*

## Who am I?

In the beginning a foetus, safe, secure in the dark warmth of the womb.

At birth I became a daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, niece and cousin.

A brother was born and I became a sibling, sister was added to my status.

When school began I became a student and play-mate.

In childhood I gave my life to Jesus and so became a child of God.

At high school I joined the choir, becoming a chorister.

Leaving school I became a shop assistant while waiting to enter my chosen profession as a trainee nurse.

When training finished I was ward sister and registered nurse.

I met a special man and became his sweetheart, fiancée, then wife. I was now a daughter-in-law, sister-in-law and aunt.

In time children came, making me a Mum. When they married I became mum-in-law and later, Grandma!

Sadly, divorcee was added to my list of identities.

I have been: a cleaner, cyclist, debutante, patient, bridesmaid, canteen assistant, unofficial taxi, Sunday school teacher, traveller, and live-in carer/companion.

I am: an Australian, home owner, motorist, friend, dog owner, Christian, gardener, neighbour, presenter at a community radio station, crochet-er, mentor and honorary aunt.

I would like to be: a painter of landscapes, more proficient with my computer and piano, the owner of a small cottage in the country where I could live as much from the land as is possible.

So, who am I? A complex personality, with each ‘identity’ adding to a rich and satisfying life. If you pass me in the street you won't be aware of the above, but will see an older, overweight lady with a limp, who is reasonably content with her lot.

*By Barbara Gregory, Coffs Harbour*

# The good life is your choice

By Ian Hutchinson, Life By Design. Website: [www.lifebydesign.com.au](http://www.lifebydesign.com.au)

**Retirement should be a vibrant stage of our lives where new found freedom allows us to enjoy life to the fullest and live the life we deserve. Yet, research suggests that three-quarters of retirees will face uncertainty, fear and loss of purpose when they retire. The reason? Lack of lifestyle planning.**



We associate retirement with freedom of choice, a time to stop working so frantically and do those things we've always dreamed about but never got around to. But ironically retirement is the 11th most stressful event in peoples' lives. Rather than being an exciting time of opportunity and renewal, almost 75 per cent of retirees feel ill prepared for this new phase in their life. Some studies have indicated a link between retirement and death and even suicide. This means that the vast majority of people approaching retirement are poorly prepared for the freedom they inherit and risk losing their direction and vitality.

The new retirement era  
For today's retirees, retirement means something completely different from that rosy notion that they were brought up to believe in. In previous generations, retirement meant taking it easy, maybe taking an overseas holiday and pottering around the garden. It was seen as a short haul to the ultimate exit of life, given that the life expectancy in retirement was about 5 years for men and 12 years for women.

Today, men and women are living longer and most retirees are looking at a 30 year retirement. That's a lot of time to potter around the garden! Expectations are also vastly different today. There's greater

social pressure on retirees to live the good life and be more adventurous in experiencing everything that life has to offer.

Peace of mind has a lot to do with peoples' perceptions of retirement. We need to view retirement as a phase of life, not simply an exit door. Retirement shouldn't be an excuse to simply drop out. In fact, this behaviour, driven historically by social norms, is precisely why premature death and stress rates are not predominant among retirees.

The new retirement era means thinking about not just finances and basic needs like housing, food and shelter, but more vital life-fulfilling issues such as purposeful contribution to

the community, part-time or voluntary work, social networking, personal interests and family. Retirement is an opportunity for many people to fulfil interests they have been unable to experience during their 'paid' working life. Think of these as your areas of happiness.

Lifestyle planning gives you focus

Typically, people focus on the financial aspects of their retirement. Sure, having peace of mind that your nest egg will support you when you stop full time work is important, but what happens when retirement day comes and you have to decide how to spend that nest egg? How do you live a fulfilling life? Most people

## AGSTART – HELPING YOUNG PEOPLE PURSUE A CAREER IN AGRICULTURE

AgStart is a NSW Government initiative designed to address the impediments young people face in identifying and developing their career interests in the agricultural sector. The program aims to help young people make well informed decisions and includes targeted training and expert advice and support from key stakeholders in the agricultural sector.

Research suggests that key challenges for young people wanting to enter the agriculture sector include a lack of understanding about the range of career paths; the financial risks associated with these paths; and their inability to tap into potential investors.

As part of the new AgStart program, applicants will first undertake a Career Options Workshop where they will be exposed to a range of potential career paths, including farm ownership, leasing or share-farming, as well as involvement in one of the many agribusiness sectors.

Participants will then develop a Career Plan, which will be assessed by AgStart Board members. From there, participants may be eligible for further assistance, based on their career goals and financial situation.

This additional assistance would come in the form of training and skills development grants, mentoring programs, financial management workshops, traineeships or assistance with farm finance. Relevant assistance options will be determined by the AgStart Board, and administered by the NSW Rural Assistance Authority.

Young people interested in starting a career in farming or agribusiness should visit the Rural Assistance Authority website at: [www.raa.nsw.gov.au](http://www.raa.nsw.gov.au) or contact the RAA on Ph: 1800 678 593 for AgStart applications and additional information.

would struggle to say they have really thought sufficiently to create a lifestyle plan or vision.

It has been proven in numerous studies that by having a clear focus and vision for the future gives you a sense of purpose, direction and meaning which reduces stress in life. Olympic athletes who have a clear vision for their future after sport perform better athletically than those athletes who don't.

Research suggests that only 27 per cent of retirees feel they have planned properly for retirement. And most of the planning for that 27 per cent has been financial planning. But have you thought about what your life priorities will be in retirement? Like sound financial planning, lifestyle planning is all about diversity and balance. Here are what I believe are the key areas to consider in planning your future life:

**1. Health** – Looking after ourselves continues to be a priority for people in retirement. Part of any lifestyle plan should be a clear strategy for staying active and healthy. Think about what type of regular exercise activity you can plan to keep you in good shape.

**2. Purposeful work** – 50 per cent of retirees expect to do some sort of work, if only on a part-time voluntary basis. This can be great for mental stimulation, social interaction, purpose and giving people a sense of belonging. But make sure the work fits your values, skills, interest and personality type. Work gives us a sense of structure, identity and status in life which can be lost when we finish working full time. If we lose this security,

our motivation to live can subside dramatically. This is a particularly critical issue for workaholics who have lived their whole life around work. For these people retirement can be a nightmare.

**3. Family** – 75 per cent of Australians rated 'being able to spend more time with family and friends' as very important to increasing quality of life. Family support can assist emotionally, financially and practically – and these things can be lost or undervalued if retirees sell up and move to the country or coastal living. Perhaps try allocating a regular day per month or more often to spend time with the grandchildren as part of your plan.

**4. Love and relationships** – for many couples retirement can mean re-discovering their relationship, without the pressures of work. But gradual adjustments are needed. For instance, men can't assume that they can rule the roost at home after 40 years or so of the woman being the home maker. Try planning some weekends away together early in the retirement period or buying season tickets to the theatre.

**5. Social** – Men are traditionally poor at maintaining relationships outside of the workplace, so in retirement, cultivating new friends is often a challenge. A proactive strategy for men is to start developing some personal relationships outside of work now to ensure in retirement you have some established relationships to rely on.

**6. Spiritual** – retirement can provide the time to discover new meaning in life, as we have greater time to think more deeply about the world. Even the most ardent workaholics

will benefit from exploring spirituality in retirement. This isn't necessarily religious either. It can simply be a time for personal space, like meditation or tai chi.

**7. Contribution to society** – For many people, retirement is a time to give something back to society. The experience and wisdom built up in the lives of retirees has enormous benefit for society. If you want to make a contribution, don't be backward. Develop a target list of causes and the skills you could offer these worthy organisations. A friend of mine, a successful chartered accountant, is only 45 years old and won't retire for probably 15 years yet, but he's got a plan to drive a truck for the Salvation Army. He's visualised that goal and feels confident that this role will give him great satisfaction in later life.

**8. Hobbies, interests and creativity** – Developing interests or hobbies is a real growth area for retirement. Society has given permission to retirees to try their hand at virtually anything that their health will allow, from art classes, to outdoor rock climbing and even learning to fly aircraft. The skill here is to identify your full range of potential interests and build a plan that allows you to experience many different activities without necessarily locking in to one, as our previous generations have. Variety really is the spice of life!

**9. Intellectual growth & learning** – Why does society con us to believe that in retirement our brains go dead? Thankfully, social changes have confronted this appalling untruth. I know a 60 year old lady who has gone back to

University to study law. She may not finish until she is 65, but she is going to be 65 anyway. Maybe a full blown university course isn't you but there are many ways of remaining intellectually stimulated and contributing to intellectual life. Build a plan!

**10. Financial** – Now to the inevitable – money! Every lifestyle plan needs to be based on a sound cash flow to ensure that your expectations can be met. This is where your financial planner should be proactive and specific in helping you define your lifestyle goals and relative costs. This is an area few retirees ever address and is probably part of the reason why 75 per cent of retirees are concerned about funding their retirement.

Summary

In conclusion, ask yourself if you are prepared to throw enough of your retirement time and energy into achieving your top life priorities. Set some short, medium and long-term goals for each of your top 5 areas of happiness from the list above. Also, ask yourself 'what is successful retirement to me?' The answer will be vastly different for most people if they've thought through their lifestyle priorities and interests. Finally, enjoy your freedom. You've earned it and deserve to lead the life you've chosen. ■

*This article was written by Ian Hutchinson from Life By Design. Email: [info@lifebydesign.com.au](mailto:info@lifebydesign.com.au) or Visit the following websites: [www.lifebydesign.com.au](http://www.lifebydesign.com.au) [www.goalsunlimited.com](http://www.goalsunlimited.com) [www.meCentral.com](http://www.meCentral.com)*

# Accepting difference

Information from Kids Count ([www.kidscount.com.au](http://www.kidscount.com.au))

They may look different, sound different, dress differently. They may have different customs, cultural backgrounds, beliefs or religious practices. They may have different abilities. They may live in different houses or in different families.

Children need to learn that being different is OK.

Children will often ask about differences they observe between themselves and others. Some examples include questions like: 'Why is that person in a wheelchair?' or 'Why does that person have different skin to me?' or 'Why does that person wear those funny clothes?'

Young children tend to accept difference in others without question. They make friends with children from a range

of different backgrounds or abilities or from a range of different types of families.

As children get older they learn to value difference from their parents. Your attitudes towards cultural and other differences will have a big impact on the way your children treat others who are different to them.

Reflect on your own acceptance of difference. How tolerant are you of the points of view of other people? How patient and flexible are you in accommodating different customs, beliefs and cultural traditions? How much do you respect and value individuality? How do you talk about and describe others who are different from you?

Accepting difference means understanding how we are

alike, how we are different and treating everyone with respect and understanding regardless of the differences.

## PROMOTING ACCEPTANCE

- Help your child understand your own family history and background.
- Talk with your child about the ways in which people within your own family are different from each other – they each have their own likes and dislikes, interests, and things that they are good at.
- Encourage your child to talk to you about their observations, questions or concerns.
- Help your child to consider the feelings and opinions of others – to put him or herself in the other person's shoes.
- Help your children to see that differences are to be

appreciated and celebrated. You can do this by exposing them to other cultures and people through watching television programs or reading books about other people and places and participating in local community cultural events and festivals.

*This article is part of a free booklet for parents called 'Every Child is Important'. To order your free copy Ph: 1800 176 453. For this and other parenting information, visit the Kids Count Website at: [www.kidscount.com.au](http://www.kidscount.com.au)*



## VIEWPOINT: REBECCA, NSW YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

### Competing cultures

Australia is labelled as one of the most multi-cultural nations in the world and while we pride ourselves on having this status, many do not acknowledge the difficulties that are faced by those who make it possible.

Young people, often second and third generation immigrants, deserve special recognition, as everyday they must silently struggle to balance the competing cultures in their lives.

Firstly, there is the external battle that is faced by young immigrants. Past and present cultural and religious conflicts around the globe have generated numerous negative stereotypes about a vast multitude of cultures.

It is immigrants who must shoulder the burden of the negative stereotypes that are associated with their culture. However, what people often don't realise is that first generation immigrants choose to leave their country with the understanding that discrimination and isolation is a problem that they may have to face, while their children and grandchildren (young people that surround you everyday) have this choice made for them. Therefore,

many face discrimination, exclusion and racism in the community without any understanding of why they are subjected to it because they, like others around them, have grown up in Australia.

This is not the only unjust struggle that young immigrants must deal with. Naturally, when immigrants leave their home nation to come to Australia, they maintain a great deal of their cultural values and practices in all areas of their lives. Therefore, inevitably their children are touched, influenced and brought up by these values and traditions. However, often many of these values are completely different to those which operate in Australian society and therefore they are not easily accepted by young people.

Many young immigrants are torn between trying to be what their parents and family want them to be and what Australian society and their friends want them to be. At the end of it all the questions remain, how do young people resolve the contradictory demands placed upon them by the cultures of their parents and Australian society, without an overwhelming sense of betrayal or isolation?

Researchers at the Men's Health Information and Resource Centre have spoken to many men about their health and wellbeing. Men of all ages say that they are interested in their health but don't know where to go to find out more information.

There are some great examples where men are working to help their mates get fitter and healthier, including The Department of Veterans' Affairs Men's Health Peer Education volunteer program where volunteer facilitators work with fellow veterans to provide information about men's health and lifestyle issues. They also organise stalls at men's health expos and join with community health services to run Pit Stops where men can get free health check-ups.

There is also a range of alternatives for men who are not veterans including joining clubs like Rotary and Probus. Others find men's groups – like Older Men: New Ideas (OMNI) – are good places to meet new mates and talk. Men's sheds are also popular. At last count there were more than 100 across the country where men get together to work on their hobbies, develop new interests, get out of the house and socialise.

*International Men's Health Week will be held from 12-18 June. To find out what's happening in your area, Ph: 02 4570 1713 or Visit: [www.menshealthweekaustralia.org](http://www.menshealthweekaustralia.org)*

*Information from News For Seniors, Autumn 2006, A Centrelink publication. Reprinted with permission.*

# Rural men and identity

By Jeremy Hearne, Crisis Support Services Inc

***Life for rural Australians has always included its fair share of hardship and difficulty. For men living in rural Australia these hardships are often compounded by prevailing images of what it is to 'be a man' and having to live up to these ideals.***

Changing beliefs within society suggest that men are now expected to behave in ways that are different to previous generations of Australian men. These new job descriptions can create conflict for those men who are influenced by traditional notions of male identity.

Men often define their primary role as being the breadwinner of the family; when the capacity to fulfil this role is impacted by environmental change, feelings of powerlessness, shame and anxiety may prevail. Drought conditions in rural Australia have served to highlight the increasing burden on rural men and their families. Images of rural Australian men as resilient to hardship and impregnable to some of the harsh realities of living in remote regions still dominate the psyche. The conflict for many men is that in drought conditions they are unable to provide for their family, are at risk of losing the family farm and no matter how hard they try they are unable to fix the situation. This can create dangerous feelings of hopelessness and inadequacy. Further, impacts on men of such psychological stress include the tendency for men to neglect their physical health

impeding their capacity to look after themselves and continue to contribute positively to the needs of their family.

Men are often reluctant to seek help and this is compounded by living in remote areas where services are limited anyway. Mensline Australia is able to offer telephone counselling, information and referral for men in crisis in rural and remote regions for the cost of a local call. Men often prefer to discuss their problems over the telephone as they can remain anonymous. As well as providing telephone counselling support Mensline Australia is working on another initiative with funding provided by Telstra.

**Taking Fathering Further** is a new fathering program for rural and remote fathers with children under the age of seven years. The primary focus of this program is to provide long-term support for dads, helping them to stay connected with their children and family. Mensline Australia works with fathers to adequately equip them with the skills required to manage the stresses associated with parenthood, improve their fathering and the relationships



they have with their young children as well as reduce the level of conflict they experience with their partners or ex-partners.

Mensline Australia is available 24/7 anywhere around Australia for the cost of a local call. We encourage rural and remote men who are facing crisis to call the line any time from anywhere. ■

**Contact Mensline Australia on Ph: 1300 78 99 78 or Visit: [www.menslineaus.org.au](http://www.menslineaus.org.au)**

**A SHEARER'S MOMENT**  
*He packs his swag each Sunday,  
 The start of another week.  
 Clouds forming overhead,  
 The weather looks quite bleak.  
 Dungarees are folded,  
 All singlets washed again,  
 Kids have all been scolded,  
 His face showing much pain.  
 Old fan put into a box,  
 No guard is ever needed.  
 One day he'll cut himself,  
 The warning never heeded.  
 Combs and cutters his pride,  
 All oiled for the test.  
 Ready for his run now,  
 a shed, way out West.*

© JUDITH HARLAND, BOURKE

## DROUGHT

The sun burns down on  
the dusty plain –  
The hot winds rip and tear.  
With years since rain  
The paddocks are brown  
and bare.  
She stands with head bent  
low  
And licks her new born calf.  
In the distance the cry of  
the vicious crow  
And the kookaburra's  
laugh.

The wind blows with  
relentless force  
The dust across the  
stricken land,  
And misses nothing in its  
course  
As nature deals her  
unforgiving hand.  
The mob has left the  
feeding ground –  
Their will to live decreasing –  
In search of feed they  
forage around –  
Their chance of death  
increasing.

With hope in your heart  
you pray  
That rain will fall again  
And that each will be a  
better day  
On this drought stricken  
plain.  
And when the soaking  
rain does fall  
Around the bleached white  
bones that lie,  
The grass will grow lush  
and tall  
And those will prosper  
that did not die.

© MAY MCKEOWN,  
COME BY CHANCE

# Simple first steps if you are considering leaving the farm

By Sonia Muir, RWN Coordinator

**While there are a number of responses farmers can make to manage change, perhaps the most traumatic is leaving the farm, which will most likely involve a sense of loss, making grieving necessary. How you react to this loss will depend on many things.**

It is important to work through feelings as they are likely to get in the way of sound decision making and clear thinking. These emotional reactions can also change over time. You and members of your family may feel sad, angry, frightened, relieved or even guilty. This is all normal.

Even though you and your family are going through the same changes, be aware that individuals will cope in different ways because everyone has different levels of life experience and coping thresholds. It is important that you involve everybody affected by major decisions such as leaving the farm, so their ideas and feelings can also be considered. Speaking with other professionals can also help.

## A USEFUL CHECKLIST BEFORE MAKING ANY MAJOR DECISIONS

- Have you discussed the issues and options with

everyone involved (including the children) to find out what they think or feel?

- Have you agreed on some options to explore further?
- Have you considered the financial, health, environmental, personal, family, relationship and happiness aspects of these options?
- Have you sought out professionals who have expertise concerning the options you are considering?
- Have you developed a clear decision which everyone understands and agrees to follow through? If not, are you prepared to carry the burden alone?

If you do decide to leave the farm it can be useful to spend some time in favourite places on the farm, either alone, or as a family and say 'goodbye'. Perhaps take photographs of

special places to later prompt happy memories.

Remember that things beyond your control may have contributed to thinking about this decision, so you are not to blame and you need to give yourself time to accept any changes.

## FORMAL RECOGNITION OF YOUR SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

For people wanting to explore off-farm work opportunities, or perhaps study or retrain through TAFE, a college or university, it is important to know about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC). RPL and RCC mean you don't have to go through the process of learning things a second time, and you can get credit for what you already know. You may have been in charge of the books and the budgeting in your family



PHOTO BY ELLA DREYFUS

farm business, yet have no formal business management qualifications; or you may have maintained all the farm machinery but you don't have formal qualifications or a certificate. By getting these skills recognised you can expand your future career and employment options.

Going through RPL and RCC is a straightforward process to recognise the skills and knowledge you have gained in one or more of the following:

- formal study through education or training;
- informal study for fun or personal interest;
- life experience;
- work experience;
- company-based training;
- industry-based training.

To gain RPL or RCC you usually have to pay an assessment fee or administration charge and provide evidence of knowledge and skills, usually by completing some paperwork. It may also involve attending an interview. Remember that you will probably have lots of skills gained both on and off farm over the years which can be recognised and used in other areas, so seek advice about RPL and RCC and collect information about the job or course you would like to do. Some places to start are:

- **Myfuture** – Helps you make career decisions, plan your career pathway and manage work transitions. It provides a range of information on career options, education and training, work, contacts, funding and more. Visit: [www.myfuture.edu.au](http://www.myfuture.edu.au)
- **Department of Primary Industries** – Visit: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au) or

**CB Alexander Agricultural College** – Ph: 1800 025 520

- **TAFE NSW** – Ph: 13 16 01 or Visit: [www.tafensw.edu.au](http://www.tafensw.edu.au)

- **Community College** – 12,000 courses available throughout Australia. Visit: [www.course.com.au](http://www.course.com.au)

- **Australian Association of Career Counsellors** – For counsellors in your area Ph: 1800 222 390 or Visit: [www.aacc.org.au](http://www.aacc.org.au)

- **Rural Financial Counsellors (RFCs)** – Assist farmers and small rural businesses seeking confidential, free, independent financial advice and information.

They can help with government and non-government assistance schemes and referrals to other services. RFCs are found across NSW. To locate a counsellor near you, visit: [www.ruralcounselling.org.au](http://www.ruralcounselling.org.au)

- **Australian Government Fishers and Farmers Assistance Line** – Provides advice on a range of programs and services offered by Centrelink. Ph: 1800 050 585
- **AAA Farm Help: Supporting Families Through Change** – Helps farm families in financial difficulty plan for the future. The program

emphasises the use of strategic information, analysis and advice to support decision making. The assistance provided is flexible and can be tailored to meet the needs of each family. Ph: 1800 686 175 or Visit: [www.daff.gov.au/farmhelp](http://www.daff.gov.au/farmhelp)

*This information was prepared by the Rural Women's Network and is part of NSW Department of Primary Industries 'Primefact' series. Additional titles include: Simple first steps to managing change; and Simple first steps to help others suffering from stress. Download this and other Primefacts at: [www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/factsheets/primefacts](http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/aboutus/resources/factsheets/primefacts)*

## Welcome to Holland

*Written by a Mother. Source Unknown*

*I am often asked to describe the experience of raising a child with a disability – to try to help people who have not shared that unique experience to understand it, to imagine how it would feel. It's like this...*

When you're going to have a baby, it's like planning a fabulous trip – to Italy. You buy a bunch of guidebooks and make your wonderful plans. The Colosseum, Michelangelo's David – the gondolas of Venice. You may learn some handy phrases in Italian. It's all very exciting.

After months of eager anticipation the day finally arrives. You pack your bags and off you go. Several hours later the plane lands. The stewardess comes in and says, 'Welcome to Holland'.

'Holland!?' You say. 'What do you mean Holland? I signed up for Italy! I'm supposed to be in Italy. All my life I've dreamed of going to Italy'.

But there has been a change in the flight plan. They have landed in Holland, and there you must stay.

The important thing is that they haven't taken you to a horrible, filthy place, full of famine and disease. It's just a different place. So you must buy new guidebooks. And you must learn a whole new language. And you will meet a whole new group of people you would never have met.

It's just a different place. It's slower paced than Italy, less flashy than Italy. But after you've been there for a while, you look around, and you begin to notice that Holland has windmills, Holland has tulips, Holland even has Rembrandts.

But everyone you know is busy coming and going from Italy, and they are all bragging about what a wonderful time they had there. And for the rest of your life, you will say, 'Yes, that's where I was supposed to go. That is what I had planned'.

The pain of that will never go away, because the loss of a dream is a very significant loss. But if you spend your life mourning the fact that you didn't get to Italy, you may never be free to enjoy the very special, the very lovely things about Holland.



Bullying is a common experience for many children and adolescents. Surveys indicate that as many as half of all children are bullied at some time during the school years, and at least 10 per cent are bullied on a regular basis.

Often, a bully will have a low self-esteem or has been a victim of bullying themselves, and they are using bullying as a way of making themselves feel better or more powerful. They may have been exposed to a lot of violence in the media (TV, books etc.), or their caregivers may not have taught them appropriate social skills. Bullies can also be motivated by jealousy, lack of knowledge, fear or misunderstanding.

Bullying behaviour can be physical or verbal. Boys tend to use physical intimidation or threats, regardless of the gender of their victim. Bullying by girls is more often verbal, usually with another girl as the target.

Children who are bullied experience real suffering that

can interfere with their social and emotional development, as well as with their school performance.

Being bullied can lower a child's self-esteem and they may feel alone, sad, depressed, angry, scared or confused. If your child is being bullied it is important to let your child know that it is not their fault and they don't have to face it alone.

#### THE SIGNS

If you think your child may be a victim of bullying there are certain signs to look out for.

- Bullying may show up in your child's school progress, either academically, socially, or both.
- There may be a decline in their academic results or a social problem may be detected if your child is constantly alone at school.
- A child who is being bullied may try to skip school or appear not to have the same circle of friends.

- At home, your child may be angry or withdrawn and they may have trouble sleeping or display radically different eating patterns.

- If your child is being bullied they may take their frustration out on other siblings while at home.

What can your child do to avoid bullying?

- Where possible ignore them (including mobile phone or email bullying). This may be helpful, particularly in one-off cases. Bullies are looking for a reaction and often lose interest if they aren't given the satisfaction of getting one.
- Hang around other people. Travel to school or social events in groups.
- If possible avoid the bully. This may mean travelling a different way to school or avoiding the places the bully hangs out.

#### WHAT TO DO IF YOUR CHILD IS BEING BULLIED

- Let your child know that it's not their fault and they don't have to face it alone.
- Talk to them about the bullying. Ask them how they feel, what they think, what happened, what they did, how they responded, what they can do now, if they want help.
- Talk to your child's teacher and school about the bullying. Find out what strategies the school has in place to deal with the situation. If you are unhappy with their response let them know.
- Help your child develop their own strategies to deal with the bullying including communication skills and assertiveness.
- Look at ways of building your child's confidence like sport, music or drama.
- Talk to other parents, or a support group, about strategies that might help.

*Information adapted from the Mental Health Information Service and the NSW Department of Community Services.*

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