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Prevention, the key to mental wellness, especially in the young, says pioneering ‘anxiety whisperer’

With the arrival of mental health week, Melbourne ‘anxiety whisperer’ Pauline McKinnon, says recognising mental illness is a good start, but not something to be considered for just one week!

“While a lot of awareness has been built in recent years about the state of our mental health, with many programs initiated for sufferers, not enough attention has been given to the root of the problem and preventative strategies, especially for children,” she says.

Pauline McKinnon stresses that, “as we know from all our medical evidence, prevention is always better than cure. We need to be planting the seeds for mind-wellness in our young, giving them the tools to face the increasing pressures and busy-ness of today and tomorrow. The pace of the world has quickened and it’s not likely to slow down no matter how much we try.”

Suggestions for mind-wellness and prevention of mental illness for children:

- Allow children to be children and young adults to be young adults, instead of mini grown-ups.
- Rather than keeping kids constantly occupied, we should be encouraging them to be taking time out ... from everything - especially from electronic devices and constant contact!
- While encouraging activities they love, like sport or creative pursuits, they are still ‘doing’ with the mind constantly functioning - evaluating, processing and reacting with the nervous system in a state of high function, too. They benefit from mental and physical ‘time out’.
- Habitually, in today’s society, the mind is never allowed to rest, never allowed to freely wander or wonder ... so the pressure, to do, to achieve, to succeed, is always present.
- Then in adolescence and adulthood, it may well assume goliath proportions that can lead to far more serious mental and physical health issues, such as depression, heart conditions, various intolerances and so on.

As founder of the Stillness Meditation Therapy Centre in Kew, Pauline McKinnon has been promoting ‘Stillness Meditation’ in schools for many years.

“Every school and every classroom should be teaching children to be still for a while – in Stillness Meditation in fact. This is not a type of meditation that asks them to imagine, or focus or concentrate or count their breath or similar; those processes just demand the mind

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to do more ... again! Instead, in Stillness Meditation, the mind is allowed to rest, to float freely for a while and to experience a more primitive 'mental' state which assists in restoring balance within the central nervous system, " said Pauline.

The flow-on effects will be evident for not only the children, but teachers and parents alike.

Pauline McKinnon speaks from over thirty years experience as a psychotherapist and meditation teacher; clients more often than not begin with "I've been feeling like this since I was a child"

Pauline first book "In Stillness Conquer Fear" pioneered public awareness of anxiety disorders. She has also published *Quiet Magic* (and accompanying CD) to assist children and their parents with anxiety and stress management.

Her more recent book "Living Calm in a Busy World" is a contemporary commentary on the work of Dr Ainslie Mearns, the originator of Stillness Meditation. In this book Pauline offers a practical guide to the Stillness approach and explains its difference from other forms of meditation.

www.stillnessmeditation.com.au

Pauline McKinnon is available for comment and interviews.

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