

Interception parent and caregiver booklet webinar

Ian May: Morning, everyone. Welcome to the third term parent forum that we're having online. This is really exciting event for us because we've got a range of presenters that will be talking around some topics that you've raised, and you'd like to go into with a bit more depth. My name's Ian May and I'm the Director of Disability in the Department for Education.

I know quite a few of you and connect again with you and to the people I don't know, I'm looking forward one day to be face to face. Because we should be having a conference in Adelaide right now, but for now we're online and we'll continue to be online with some other events as we go forward this year.

I'd like to acknowledge the land that we made on his Kurna land and the importance of it.

And we acknowledge the custodians of this land past, present and emerging. But I know this webinar is going across South Australia, so wherever you are and whatever Aboriginal lands, I acknowledge those as well.

Before we talk to some of our presenters today, I'd like to talk about some of the things that have been happening in education.

So, as we go forward in this webinar, it's going to be online and it's going to be a video, so you can have an opportunity to do, view it in the future. We also are live. So if there's questions or comments that people make. Please send them in and we'll be able to respond to them. And if we can't, right at that point, we'll go offline and respond as well.

So we're hoping this is interactive and informative. So. One of the things I'd like to just give you an update around is some of the things that are happening at the really big level, at the national level. Just want to talk around the Royal Commission into Disability and how as a parent, you can have a voice.

A lot is online. And so if you look at the Royal Commission and Disability website and we'll have the links on the SERU, the Special Education Resource Unit, webpage. That's where there's a lot of information about the Royal Commission and how you can have a say, because it's a really important focus about, making our society as inclusive as possible and providing best practice.

So that's the first big, national way of having a say as a parent. The other one is the Disability Standards for Education. Now they're reviewed every five years. And so 2020 is a time that we're actually having a review. And once again, the link be on the Special Education Resource Unit webpage and you can have a say around what you're thinking around the standards. It's, you know, what's the content.

Do you think they're active? Do you think they're being upheld? What are some of the opportunities for making the standards alive and well, within our education system, because it was all around access and participation on the same basis and including students with

disability? So two big national events that are taking place for parents to have a say. And last forum, we really talked around transition and there was a lot of questions around that.

And there was a lot of questions about support services and what they offer. So today our second presenters are going to follow that up. But to talk around, high school focus, which is mostly happening for 2022, we've had, we have a lot of questions after the forum about those. So. For students with disability, there's going to be a range of supports put in place and support services will be working with schools for all children with disability, whether they're in a mainstream classroom or in a specialised education option.

One of the questions we've been asked is, in preparation for 2022 is the department creating more specialised options at the high school? And, and the answer is yes, we are. What we've done is we've tried to look at all the scoping of predicted numbers and the demand and already a number of schools have been highlighted as requiring additional options.

And I've just got some of the list to give you a bit of an idea where, where, and what's happening. So already at Wirreanda and John Pirie secondary schools, we've increased the special options, with special classes and children and students have, commenced there already. But the rest commencing in 2022 are Parafield Gardens, Mount Barker, Le Fevre, Seaford, Kadina, Grant high school, Ocean View and Nuriootpa. So you can see that across the state, in metropolitan and regional areas we've identified that we really do need increased places for students with disability. So, and we're working with the principals and asset services about refurbishing some classrooms.

And, but in, in other cases actually, have a new builds. So combination of both. On top of that, we've got, three new schools that are underway, Aldinga, Angle Vale and Whyalla for 2022, and they'll incorporate options for students with this disability. And on top of that, again, we're also looking at, at demands for next year, and I know that at Para Hills and Golden Grove we're actually commencing some additional options with special classes.

So that gives you a bit of a taste of ok, some new facilities and availabilities are going to come on board. So that means you can, think about those if it, you're in that zone and support services will be working with you around the placement process. But then there might be individuals and you say well, I'm not in those proximity to those schools. So that's a conversation what we'll need individually with you. So, all of those, activities are underway right now in those constructions and builds. The other thing that I'd like to really talk around is introducing, Caitlin Lean.

Caitlin is one of our Senior Advisors in Disability and for the last two, two, and a bit years, we have been supporting our preschools and schools with an approach to supporting students with their self-regulation. And I'm going to use a word that you might know and you might not know it's called interoception.

So today we're going to go and have a deeper dive into interoception, what's happening in some of our schools and have a discussion with Caitlin all about it. So, welcome Caitlin.

Caitlin. I have used the word interoception. Yes. What is it? What's this all about?

Caitlin Lean: Yeah, that's a great question. So it is actually our 8th sense. So we all have interoception. So we do have the five senses and our sixth sense is proprioception, so where your body is in space. Our seventh sense is vestibular, so our balance and movement. And our eighth sense is interoception. So interoception is the conscious perception of our internal body cues. So all of the body signals we get and we get thousands a day. So it might be for instance, the body signals we get when we're hungry. So what body signals do you get when you're hungry Ian?

Ian May: Well, I didn't know I had eight senses!

So when I get hungry I do sometimes hear the rumble and sometimes I might get a bit irritated so I do something about it.

Caitlin Lean: So even we might feel sick in the stomach. We might get a headache. So that's interoception. So identifying those body signals and from that identifying, we're then able to put that strategy into play. So obviously once we identify those body signals, we would be able to go and eat some food. So, yeah. So it's all of those body signals.

Ian May: Are some children better at identifying interoception than other children?

Caitlin Lean: Yeah. So we have noticed and from all the research and probably the research has really caught up in probably the last two years, but we do have some children that do have that atypical interoception and they can be children that have autism.

So you can have two different types of atypical interoception. So you can have a muted state of interoception. So where the child doesn't feel any body signals whatsoever or doesn't feel certain body signals. So some examples of that muted state could be they might not feel pain, so they may have broken their arm but have walked around for a week with a broken arm. Or they might be late toilet training. So they don't feel the body signals telling them that they need to go to the toilet until it's too late. So you might have that muted state or you might have that heightened state of interoception. So I like to think of that, like mini fireworks going off inside your body and you can't understand or identify what those body signals are telling you.

So some examples of that could be once again pain. So a child that gets a very small paper cut for them, it feels really extreme pain. Or they might be constantly feeling hungry throughout the day, or constantly asking to go to the bathroom. So you can be that muted or that heightened state, or you might have a blend of both muted and heightened states as well.

Ian May: So that makes me think. Can you, teach children about an interoception? How to for them to be able to read their body senses in an improved way? Can you do an activity around that?

Caitlin Lean: Definitely. So part of the approach that we're implementing in our preschools and schools is kind of that two-part approach.

So we teach our staff to be doing regular interoception activities with their students and children to start developing that awareness and that connection to their body signals. But also having rich discussions with their children and students about what are the body signals of hunger. Just like we had that conversation before.

So starting that rich conversation. But I will now if you don't mind, we're actually doing interoception activity and for those watching, we'd love you to join in as well. So interoception activities, they can be an activity using our muscles, breathing, our temperature or our pulse. So I'm just going to do a breathing activity with you.

So Ian, if you mind, I want you to put your hand out like this, like giving someone a high five, we're going to put out a hand out and have our pointer finger. So we're going to trace each finger. So you're going to go up each finger. You're actually going to take a really big, deep breath in, through your nose.

And then when we go down the finger, we're going to breathe out through our mouth. So off we go.

Great. So now that we've done it, the first time, I'm going to ask you where in your body did you notice that? I was actually still very much concentrating on my hand. So it was the connection of my finger on my other fingers. Yes, ok great. So we always do interoception activities twice. So we do the exact same activity, but this time I'm going to redirect you to really focus on your breathing. So what I'd like you to do is that when we go up each finger we're going to take that really big, deep breath in, through our nose and we're just going to hold it for a second at the top. And then we're going to take that really big, deep breath out. So off we go again.

Ok so now we've done it for the second time. What did you notice about your body when we were doing it for the second time?

Ian May: For me the second time, it was more focused on the breathing, deeper and probably a little bit more rhythmic.

Caitlin Lean: Yeah, definitely. So when we are doing interoception activities, we're getting our children to identify that change in body state.

So the difference in our body state after doing that breathing activity is we felt calmer, we now feel more relaxed and there was a change in our body state, and we noticed it. So yeah, if you don't mind, I'd like to do one more with you. So we'll do a muscle activity now. So once again, we always follow that same structure and the same language when doing an interoception activity.

Okay. So with the muscle activity, we're just going to put both of our feet flat on the ground. We're going to sit nice and tall in our chair...

Ian May: and I'm hoping. I'm hoping now everyone who's online because if I'm doing it I hope you're all doing it too.

Caitlin Lean: So what we're going to do is just pull our shoulder blades back and we're just going to hold the position for 15 seconds, off we go.

And release. So once again, same structure, same language. Where in your body did you notice that? What body parts?

Ian May: Well, upper shoulders.

Caitlin Lean: Yep, upper shoulders, anywhere else?

Ian May: No, I don't think that I felt it anywhere else.

Caitlin Lean: That's completely fine. And we all want to feel it in different body parts and that's completely okay.

So once again, we always do interoception activities twice. So we're going to do the exact same activity, but this time I'm going to redirect you to really focus on what you notice about your shoulder blades. So once again, pull your shoulder blades back, off we go.

And release. So what did you notice about your shoulder blades?

Ian May: I think they actually went a bit further. It, also feel I sat up, probably posture wise a little bit differently the second time.

Caitlin Lean: Right. So once again, we're looking for that change in body state. So when we're sitting, normally our shoulder blades are relaxed.

They're not tight, they're not stretched. When we did that activity, there was a change and we noticed it. So that's how simple and easy the activities are.

Ian May: Actually, they are quite simple. I was just thinking that you don't need a heap of resources that they're actually more process than needing equipment around you.

So, you know in schools and for, for families that are home, when should you do these sorts of activities? When, when will they have a benefit for, for the child?

Caitlin Lean: Yes. That's a great question. So probably a great time would be when you first start to notice those first body signals that your child is becoming dysregulated.

This is a perfect opportunity to do interoception activity to regulate your child. You could also do it, before you jumped in to the car for school, before they go to bed or any of those transition times, before they go to their weekend sport. So any time is fantastic, but definitely the most beneficial is when you first notice those first body signals or dysregulation, perfect opportunity.

Ian May: And I picked up a word that you said earlier, regular. So I'm thinking the frequency of it is an important part of the interoception approach?

Caitlin Lean: Yes, definitely. So the more regular you do, interoception, they're going to be able to develop that awareness. And that's what we say to our preschools and schools as well.

So for a classroom I'm actually suggesting to teachers, they should be doing interoception activities minimum twice a day.

Ian May: Okay. Some schools are having a go at this. And so, so what is sort of, sort of feedback you're getting from the schools and the preschools and any of the parents, if they're doing it at home, what sort of comments are you getting? Is it working?

Caitlin Lean: Yeah, definitely. So it's very exciting. We now have 242 sites across South Australia implementing interoception and it's growing by the week. The feedback we are getting from preschools and schools is that it's helping to decrease challenging behaviors. But also the students who identify their body signals and then they can put a self-regulating strategy into place.

So a child might be sitting there and it's now able to identify, oh I'm starting to get that sick feeling in my stomach. I'm starting to sweat. I might be feeling anxious about an upcoming test. I remember from doing interoception that I can do the hand breathing activity underneath my desk, and that's going to help me feel better, before I do my tests.

So that's the impact we've been seeing and especially we're having the same impact, well the same feedback from our parents as well. That students are able to have that identifying their body signals and putting something proactive and positive into place.

Ian May: Some schools, I know, do other programs, they might not call it interoception like, I have visited some schools and they do some terrific mindfulness activity, whole school strategies around positive behaviour. So what's the alignment regarding interoception with those sorts of approaches? Other schools may or may not be calling it interoception.

Caitlin Lean: Yeah. And that's the feedback I get from a lot of teachers.

They may already be implementing something like this, but they didn't have the name for interoception, but they were doing a strategy like this and yes, you're right. Schools might be doing mindfulness or breathing activities. So this is really easy for them to just tweak and put into that interoception structure.

So they definitely might be already doing interoception without calling it interoception.

Ian May: So as, as we continue to support it, as a strategy, for improvement of children. We obviously want learning outcomes for children. Are you seeing improved results for children? Their well-being their achievement in the curriculum?

Caitlin Lean: Yes, definitely. I've just been looking at our data recently. So, not only are we seeing improvements in behaviour data, but we're seeing improvement in attendance data, which is really exciting. Engagement in learning and then obviously learning outcomes as well. So recently a site was saying to me that they've seen improvements in NAPLAN and

their PAT data because their students are able to be regulated, which obviously means they're going to be more engaged in their learning, which is really exciting.

Ian May: So it is probably part of the whole school strategy about trying to make a difference for children. That sounds exciting. So what resources, like if a parent said that's given me a taste, I want to learn a bit more, or I'd like to read something, where can we direct the next step for parents?

Caitlin Lean: Well, it is really exciting because we've actually launched a parent and caregiver booklet. So this will be your opportunity to read up on interoception, but also have a look at the activities as well. So the activities are really great structure. They just have, a script which you'll be able to read out, there's photos of real children doing the activity so you'll be able to see that demonstration as well. And also at the back, we've got some incidental learning activities as well. So if you're baking a cake with your child and you're mixing the ingredients in a bowl, how could you turn that into an interoception activity? So it's all in there for you.

So we have put up a link where you'll be able to click and download the brochure. But the other thing that we're more than happy to do is we do have hard copies. So if you email, the SERU email address with your email address we'll be actually able to send out to you a hard copy. So you can be able to have the hard copy like this and be able to implement it with your child as soon as possible.

Ian May: Well, it should be the Royal Adelaide Show right now so this is perfect. This is like the giveaway. But we've got some live questions that have been coming through now. So one of the question is: Interoception, could it be used for any age children? Like younger middle primary, is it suitable for older children? And any gender does it, you know, what's right?

Caitlin Lean: So we have resources that can be from preschool or younger, primary school. And then we also have resources for high school as well, because they were looking for those different types of activities. So we've got some more challenging ones, like one legged squats, wall squats all of that. And the feedback from our high schools, are they finding those activities really engaging and useful?

Ian May: Yeah. So. If a parent wanted to talk and see it in a school, how did they know if interoception is happening? What do they sort of see in a school?

Caitlin Lean: Yeah, so we do have three models of implementing interoception at a school. So the main model is we want it to be that whole school approach. So they implement it in their classrooms.

So doing the activities. Minimum twice a day. And usually for instance, for a primary school, they would be doing the activities after recess and after lunch. So straight in from the yard, they'll be doing an activity with their whole class. The next model might be that whole school does interoception activities and also having those rich discussions.

But we know for some of our students, they might need that more intensive interoception approach. So we do have some schools that have small groups of students and they're really working on those skill building opportunities. So more that intensive approach. And then the last model could be that they do a whole school approach, but they also might have an interoception room or space somewhere in their school. So you might notice that extra space being set up in a school. And that space is used for that when, if a student's required that they are starting to feel those first body signals of that dysregulation that they are able to go and visit the space. Do an interoception activity and then go back to class. So we see some great success with that as well.

Ian May: So a question has come in. Can parents, in addition to the resources, can they actually be face to face training or online training? What what's training support exists let's say if they wanted to sort of do, not a course, but deeper, richer understanding of it?

Caitlin Lean: So that is part of my role. So usually when I am working with schools, they do actually request that they have got a group of parents that would really love you to come in and train them. So I have done training, obviously that has been put on pause this year, but online training is something we can definitely look into for that next step.

Ian May: And the next question that's come in from a parent, is where are the resources kept and are they online?

Caitlin Lean: Yes. So that link that was put up and we might put that up again. So all of the interoception resources are located on the one page on the public department website. So whenever we upload new documents, it goes on to that one page.

So you can download anything. So all online.

Ian May: Well, I've known about interoception for a long time, and I really appreciate you working at our schools and preschools, but every time I listen to you, I get inspired about the whole concept of it, because it just seems really smart and, and, a good approach because we want our children to be in a zone for learning and a zone to be self-regulatory.

Do you want to end off with a last, can I put you on the spot and do one more with us? Just to zone us?

Caitlin Lean: Sure! Oh we have one more question.

Ian May: Do we or can we ran upskilling for parents and small groups?

Caitlin Lean: I would, I would love to. So if there's interests, we can definitely set that up. Yes. Ok one more activity we might do once again, one sitting in our chair.

So once again, both feet planted on the floor, we might actually just go up onto our tippy toes. So we're just going to hold that position for 15 seconds. So off we go.

And release. So where in your body did you feel that Ian?

Ian May: I felt it towards the rear of my leg calf.

Caitlin Lean: Yes. So did I. So once again, we do it again, same activity, but this time I'm going to redirect you to really focus on what do you notice about your calf muscles? So off we go again.

And release. So what did you notice about your calf muscles?

Ian May: For me, it was really at the top of the calf.

Caitlin Lean: Yes.

Ian May: That was probably where I felt it most intense.

Caitlin Lean: And what did it feel like? Was it tight?

Ian May: Tight.

Caitlin Lean: Yeah. So great. So once again, we're looking for that change in body state. So when our feet are planted on the ground, they're not tight, they're not that burning sensation you might've got.

So there was a change in our body state and we noticed it.

Ian May: I really like how children are asked to notice the difference. And it's quite open-ended because we feel different things at different times. So I really appreciate you coming along, sharing the information around interoception, because that's often being asked from parents.

So once again, as a community of parents out there, I just hold up the resource again. That's available, training is available and it's all online. And so really tap in to Caitlin and the support material that's available. Great, thank you, I feel calm.

Caitlin Lean: Thank you.