



One-on-one time is a priority at Mindstretch.



Movement-based activities are a Playshed speciality.



We all enjoy imaginary playtime at Mindstretch Preschool.

## 2019 Unfolding Nicely

Here we are, halfway through 2019, and it has been wonderful. Most recently we put on the community lecture *Who is the Boss?* Our guest speaker, Jeanette Hille, has written us an article on the subject; please see page 2. I thank her.

Our next lecture will focus on how to promote brain interhemispheric integration. Good right-left brain balance is essential for proper functioning on all levels. And movement-based exercises are powerful tools for achieving such balance. For example, the simple act of learning to ride a bicycle can lead to major improvements in information processing and word retrieval.

This is one reason why Mindstretch preschoolers visit *The Playshed* or *Gordon's Gym* a few times a year, as we did this past term and will next term too. Many of their activities promote gross motor skill development, while keeping it fun.

On this theme, Mindstretch has recently invested in a new jungle gym and giant exercise balls. The balls are especially effective for those children who require a brief movement break during the course of the school day.

*The Playshed* also specialises in fantasy play, so essential for creativity. In line with this, Mindstretch Preschool's new dress-up clothes have proven to be a big hit with everyone.

Please join me at my upcoming lecture, and many thanks for your ongoing support.

My best, Jennifer

*Mindstretch Founder and Preschool Principal*



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### Join our August Community Lecture

## Integrating for Learning Success

Promoting brain interhemispheric integration and how to go about it

PRESENTED BY **Jennifer Southgate**  
 BA, HED  
 Certified HANDLE® Practitioner

- Sat Aug 17, 9.30-11.00am, Methodist Church, 16 Ridge Street, Pinelands
- Free attendance, but please register with: [colleen@mindstretch.co.za](mailto:colleen@mindstretch.co.za)



Jeannette Hille is a Registered Counsellor providing play therapy, parent guidance and support.

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## Who is the Boss?

*By Jeannette Hille, BEd Psych (Hons)*

Two questions are increasingly on my mind as I work with young children and their parents:

**Who is the boss?** and **Who is in the driver's seat?**

Being of an older generation, I tend to compare how we were brought up to what goes on now. This is a bit unfair, I know, as parents today face many more and different challenges.

There is the terrible traffic, the financial and political stresses, and the resultant pressures on the family. Both parents often must work, sometimes for long days. And there is the ever-present social media and technology.

It is a stressful world where children increasingly experience FOMO (Fear Of Missing Out). Parents are not immune: they also often feel pressured to remain current and relevant, and to stay in touch.

This can all negatively affect parent–child communication. It can be difficult to find time for calm conversation with a child about their school day. Parents are often tired, with little energy left for connection or discipline. Sometimes it seems easiest to simply meet a child's demands.

Of course, many parents try to make time to talk to their child, and to do activities together. When a child feels safe and calm, with a sense of belonging, it is easier to teach them life skills and to instil good life discipline. Here are some tips to help you achieve this.

### How to Help Your Child Feel Secure and Valued:

- **Praise your child when they are good.** Use positive affirmations and identify the behaviour you like. For example: 'Well done, I like it when you share nicely with your friends'.
- **Prioritise dedicated parent–child activity.** This will help your child feel important. Make time every day. Play a ball game, bake, colour in, or simply read a story together. The options are endless. But note that TV watching and technology do not count!

- **Boost your child's self-esteem** and acknowledge their strengths. Ensure that any compliment is sincere as a child will know if it is phony.
- **Be a good role model.** Children learn from what they see. If you value kindness, model that behaviour. If you do not approve of bad language, then do not use it yourself.
- **Teach your child to express his or her feelings.** If children are not yet fully verbal, have available pictures with faces showing different emotions: happy, angry, etc. You might then ask the child to point to the picture that represents their feelings.

### How to Practice Positive Discipline:

- **Use 'I' messages.** For example, 'I feel sad when you do that'.
- **Set limits and boundaries.** For example, you may allow your child a special TV programme.
- **Be consistent** and stick to the rules, and always show your child **unconditional love**.

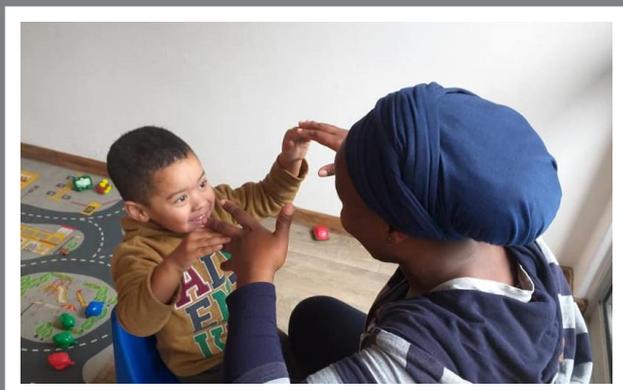
### How to Help Yourself Succeed:

- **Stand on one line** with your partner and/or any other caregivers (e.g., a nanny) for your child.
- **Be flexible.** For example, if there are special visitors, you may set bedtime a little later than usual. Be sure to explain that the change is an exception and not a change to the rule.
- **Know your own needs and limits** and try to avoid situations where you get stressed or angry.
- **Use distractions if your child has a tantrum**, but avoid giving in to the demands or you risk reinforcing the behaviour.
- **Bring in fun and humour** as often as you can.

Parenting is not easy, but great relationships result when our children feel safe and secure, with a strong sense of attachment. Once they are well grounded, then we can continue with good communication, and set limits and boundaries for them. It is our responsibility as parents to provide the framework.

Mindstretch Preschool's high teacher to child ratio lets us deliver great learning, not only in the academic area but also related to life skills. Every day every child gets personal time with our educators.

We help them know and be proud of their strengths, even as we also help them tackle any weaknesses.



See overleaf for the difference between a 'tantrum' and a 'meltdown'

## A Tantrum or Meltdown?

Here, at Mindstretch, we see **Tantrums** and **Meltdowns** as different things and treat them accordingly.

A Tantrum is characterized by an uncontrolled outburst or frustration. It is typical in younger children and often caused by them not getting their way. For example, Mommy not buying them a sweet at the grocery store. Tantrums can vary in length, but if they last longer than 20 minutes there may be underlying problems.

A child throwing a Tantrum requires firm boundaries and needs to know who is in charge. In this case, do not give in to the demand, or it will reinforce the negative behaviour.

A Meltdown is a reaction to feeling overwhelmed, often due to sensory overload. It arises when a child tries to process too much sensory input. For example, a noisy shopping centre can trigger a Meltdown. A child may find it difficult to deal with the noise, lights, visual stimuli and smells. The unpredictable movement of people, trolleys, lifts and escalators can also help cause a 'fight or flight' response to kick in.

Support and understanding is needed in the event of a Meltdown. Remove the child to a quiet corner with reduced sensory stimuli and give him or her time to calm down. Take them out of the environment, if possible. The 'Two-Finger Spinal Massage' (see below) can help some children calm down quicker – though note that other children may prefer not to be touched.

Try to avoid Meltdowns occurring in the first place. Learn to look for signs that your child is getting agitated and intervene before a Meltdown results.

## The Two-Fingered Massage

- Have the child lie on a bed on their stomach, or they can sit or stand.
- Begin at the neck. Place the index and middle finger of one hand on either side of the child's spine. Slowly drag your fingers along the spine, ending at the waist. Use a comfortable pressure and a smooth, even motion.
- If the child is clothed, pull the fabric taut so that crumpling does not interfere with the movement.
- Repeat the massage a few more times in the same direction, from top to bottom, until the child relaxes. (Reversing the motion, moving from the waist to the neck, is more energizing and so best avoided in the event of a Meltdown.)



## We Welcome Your Feedback

- Email [jen@mindstretch.co.za](mailto:jen@mindstretch.co.za) with comments or suggestions, and please follow us on Facebook: [@mindstretch.co.za](https://www.facebook.com/mindstretch.co.za)
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