

Bounce-Back: Why we do children's ministry

*How does our holiday programme build resilience in our kids?
Silvia Purdie has three answers ... and it's all about the bounce-back!*



Scripture: **John 16:25-33**

Sunday 19 April 2026, Plimmerton Presbyterian Church

The coolest thing about a ball is the way it bounces.

And do you know the secret for a bouncy ball?

It has to be full of air, but not too much.

What happens to a ball or a balloon if you pump too much air into it?

It gets really tight, and it might even go Bang.

But if it has a hole in it, what happens? It goes all floppy and is no fun at all.

To be bouncy, balls need be robust, a little bit soft but not too much, and not too tight.

I have learned that people are just the same. We are happy when we are bouncy. When we can bounce back, we can learn, we can care about other people, we can sleep at night and have energy during the day.

Because, sorry folks, but the world is a tough place. It's not always safe or friendly out there. There's a war going on on the other side of the world and it is directly affecting us, and lots of people are worried, and that makes people grouchy.

I work as a counsellor and people come to see me for counselling when they feel like they have lost their bounce-back. They feel squashed and flat, or they feel so tight they're afraid they are going to go bang.

It's perfectly normal. But it makes it hard to feel happy, or calm.

What would you look like if you were all squashed? Can you show me how you would feel if you were squished ... exhausted ... pushed down, kicked around?

How does that feel inside?

And how about being pumped up so tight you might explode? Can you show me what that looks like?

How does that feel inside?

OK, and now show me being just right. Breathe in that air, breathe out that air.

You are just right. Nice and bouncy. How does that feel inside?

That, right there, that is exactly why we run Holiday Club.

Because we want these awesome kids to be bouncy, to be happy, to achieve well in life, at school, to care about other people, to be who they want to be.

And it's all about the bounce-back.

Let me tell you three things that Holiday Club is all about, that we know help kids be bouncy. These are our three 'whys'. You ready?

The first way to get your bounce on is what I call Being Celebrated. At Holiday Club we celebrate each and every child, and all our team of leaders too. First and foremost we are about being a community of love. Our goal is that from the moment that parents and kids walk through that door they just know that they are welcome, and that they matter, that we like you and we want you to be here, just because of who you are. Our theme this time was 'No matter what, we are loved.

We are loved by God, and we love Jesus and their love flows out through who we choose to be as a bunch of people.

I was chatting to one of the Mums at pickup time, telling her how awesome her son is, and she told me that he doesn't always have a happy time at school. Kids can be real mean, she said. She watched her son laughing as he crazy danced the jump jam and she said how special it was that here he can be himself in a supportive environment. Inside I was like, Yes, that's it, that's why we do Holiday club.

A warm supportive social environment is not just an optional extra, it is our core need as people. It is how God has hard-wired human beings, to exist in community where we are celebrated. It is how we learn who we are and grow in our intelligence and skills and compassion and wisdom and purpose. Only when we feel loved can we flourish. And it's not one-way. As we feel celebrated then we immediately celebrate others. Love is always to and fro.

We heard about this in our Memory verses, especially the one we heard just now.

For the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came from God.

Jesus was totally in the flow of love. He was fully aware of how much God is love, nothing blocking or draining that, and he invites us into that flow.

So let's celebrate each other, as we get to share in God's love for us. Can you turn to the people around you and say

I celebrate you ... and if you know them a bit you could say something specific that you celebrate about them.

Right. So, I said there were three things that Holiday Club is all about. The second one is tougher, and we call it Overcoming. Can you say that with me – Overcoming.

A ball bounces because it hits the ground. If you could watch it on slow-mo you would see how the hard ground squashes the ball, and then the ball pushes back out again, and the power in that push-back sends the ball high into the air.

That is overcoming.

At Holiday Club we don't just sit around being nice to each other. Oh no, we deliberately set out to make things tough for the kids, just some of the time.

I took on the job of organising some team challenges for the Wednesday afternoon. My main problem was how to make them hard enough. It needed to be really difficult. So I made problems for the kids to solve, problems that they could only solve by working together as a team. So they had to cross over the back yard and not touch the grass. All they had to stand on were two planks of wood, between 5 people. That is difficult, but they all made it.

The hardest of all was that I laid string all the way from one side of the yard to the other, and it went up the retaining wall, up around a tree, over some bridges, and under a big tarpalin. But it wasn't that hard for the kids to follow the string, so I made them all hold on to a hoop. 5 kids trying to hold on to 1 hoop, with the string going through the hoop and getting all tangled up in knots. It was really difficult. And the kids discovered quickly that trying to pull or push the hoop did not work. The only way to get there was to travel together, carefully, looking out for the little kids, sticking close, finding a unity of movement. And, I must say, the girls found this easier than the boys. The boys got grouchy with each other and frustrated. They needed to take a break, get a drink of water, calm down, before they were able to regroup and tackle the next challenge.

Why would we do this? It isn't very nice of us to make the kids do difficult things. And all the games we play have winners and losers. It doesn't feel good to get eliminated from a game and have to sit down. What do we do it?

It's all about the bounce-back. Every game, every challenge, is training the kids in what we call Resilience. Which is, like the ball, feeling the squash and bouncing back.

Counselling works because first we create a safe space, and then we invite people to talk about the hard stuff, and feel hard feelings, and then to come back again into a safe space. We grow stronger and more resilient as we learn that we can feel uncomfortable feelings and then return to being more calm, calm enough to bring our clear thinking back online and deal with the problem at hand. Facing and overcoming frustrations and doing difficult things - this is Overcoming.

Can I get you to feel this for a moment. Curl your fingers in and push them together. Bring to mind something that is stressing you out at the moment, and push that into the pressure between your knuckles. And then, like a ball, push in and bounce out. Feel that release of energy and the strength that comes. Do it again. Feels good, doesn't it. Bounce-back, this why we run Holiday Club.

Jesus told his disciples, before he died,

“An hour is coming, and has come, when each of you will be scattered to his own home, and you will leave Me alone. Yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. ³³ I have told you these things so that in Me you may have peace. You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous! I have conquered the world.”

You will have suffering in this world. Be courageous!

Courage does not just appear out of thin air when we experience suffering. We have to train ourselves in courage, and that starts young, by children knowing that they are loved and that they can overcome challenges.

All good. I promised you three answers to why we run Holiday Club. Ready for number 3? Number three is the Power of the Invisible.

This Holiday Club we shared with the kids about something called Faith. Thomas was up on Thursday morning, and he did an excellent job talking about how we have faith in things we cannot see. I was sitting with a boy at the table quietly playing a game – he wasn't a kid who found it easy to sit still on the mat. And as we listened to Thomas the boy asked ‘What is faith?’ . It's like, he just had never heard that word before, he was

surprised that it mattered so much to Thomas. What is faith? I whispered back, believing in God, and he nodded.

But why does it matter to us to believe in God? Why do we want to share this with the kids? Is it about trying to get more members for St Barnabas church? Well, maybe, that would be nice, but no, that is not the main reason. Are we trying to make the kids become Christians? Well, yes, but personally I would celebrate any path they go on that grows an understanding of the spiritual dimension of life.

In counselling, my clients are all facing really hard things in their lives ... bullying, grief, worries ... And I ask them something like, 'Is there a spiritual side of this for you?' And to me it is the saddest thing when they say, 'no'. People who have no sense of spirituality find it the hardest to find a way through difficult experiences. It makes me so sad when people have literally nothing else to live for beyond their kids or their work. My heart cries out for the smallness of their lives. Yes, I can support them in that, but when they leave I worry for them.

It is very different when clients say, Yes, I believe in God. I don't feel him right now but I know that somehow this will make sense.

This person has opened their life at some point, in some way, to the living God, and that gives God access into their lives, to work healing and restoration, to bring hope and courage.

Faith is believing in the invisible, who we know as a person, Jesus Christ. We believe in Jesus and we want to share this because we know that faith is hugely helpful in creating that bounce-back, that resilience, that is required for a happy life.

There is a spiritual dimension to life. There is a spiritual power who created the universe, and that spiritual power has a personality, and values and insights and guidance.

Kids can know God. You don't need to know much about God in order to know God. It's all about the yes. It just making a friend and setting off to play together.

Jesus said,

I came from the Father and have come into the world.

It's as simple as that. Jesus is here, with us now, through his Spirit. He came that we might have life, life in all its fullness. He came to give us courage. He came to welcome us into his love.

So, there you have it, our why. This is why we run a holiday club. It's all about the bounce-back.

Go be bouncy!