

The app to happiness

When my son came into the kitchen, I could tell he was worried.

'What's up?' I asked.

John, now 10, explained he was anxious about school.

With my job in leadership development and HR consulting, I knew what I needed to say to make him feel better.

The problem was, how could I phrase it so he'd understand?

That's when I remembered a project my daughter Sara, now 11, had made earlier that year. It was about how a healthy mind can lead to a healthy body.

My husband Brian and I have always taught Sara, John and our other son, Charlie, now

seven, that our feelings come from our thoughts.

Inspired by this message, Sara had decided to base her assignment around it.

'I'll make it fun,' she said.

That's how Positive Penguins came about. The adorable creatures have a reputation of being resilient so they were perfect for Sara's project.

She created four characters to guide kids through their thoughts. There's Evi, who finds out the facts and Ollie, who looks at the bigger picture.

Happ prepares for all the possibilities and Buddy asks what you'd say to a friend going through a similar thing.

'It's fantastic,' I told Sara.

Her teachers thought so too.

So when John was struggling later that year, we turned to Positive Penguins.

Amazingly, his attitude began to change. 'If you do the right thing at school, you won't get into trouble,' he decided.

It was fantastic seeing Sara's project work before our eyes!

One day, we had an idea. If it was a phone app, kids could always access it. But with no idea where to start, it seemed impossible. 'Not if we listen to the Positive Penguins,' Sara said.

She had a point!

Putting the app together was a family affair. Sara drew the



Me, Brian and our kids John, Sara and Charlie

penguins and the boys came up with clothing for them. The messages were based on theories from psychologist, Dr Martin Seligman.

Finally, six months later, the Positive Penguins app was available on iTunes.

A cut of the proceeds go to Koala Kids, an organisation that supports children with cancer. We're proud of how far it's come.

A little bit of hope can lead to a lot of happiness! ■

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