



## Riley's Heart Journey

BY RILEY MATTHEWS

I was diagnosed with severe aortic valve stenosis when I was less than 24 hours old. My parents knew then they were in for a tough journey ahead. When I was two days old, I had my first surgery, a balloon dilation procedure, which opened up my aortic valve.

I have, over the past few months, been learning about all these details—the surgeries I have had, the names of the medications I have taken, and what I need to know to ensure my heart stays healthy.

As I turned 18, I came to the realization that I, not my mom, must be the one to explain my condition to the doctors. I must now be my own advocate for my health. I know my parents will always be by my side, but I need my own plan that provides me with the knowledge about my heart journey so that I can be independent in my future health.

I discovered that after that first procedure, my parents had to persist with feeding me and I was only able to slowly gain some weight. By the time I

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### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Our families enjoy the spring, summer, fall, and winter gatherings that CHN sponsors. We are always looking for volunteers, so if you have some time, talent, and expertise that you are willing to share, please contact Sam Aitken at [saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org](mailto:saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org).

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the board of the Children's Heart Network. The best sources of medical information are your child's physician and the health care professionals who provide care for your child.

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*Heart Matters* is the newsletter of the Children's Heart Network, which works to educate, support, and enhance the lives of children, youth, and families living with congenital heart disease.

## COFFEE GROUPS NEAR YOU

Our coffee groups are normally held in person; however, due to COVID, we are now hosting virtual get-togethers. Email Sam at [saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org](mailto:saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org) for more information.

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## SIGN UP TO GET CONNECTED

If you have a child growing up with heart disease, please email us at [chn@childrensheartnetwork.org](mailto:chn@childrensheartnetwork.org) so that we can add you to our mailing list to receive invitations to all our fun events!

## THANK YOU

CHN would like to thank the Province of BC for its continued support of CHN through its Community Gaming Grants program.

CHN would like to thank the CKNW Kids' Fund for their generous support of our Heart Beats and Hearts of Gold camp programs.



## CHN BOARD

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**JADE PALM** – Vancouver Island Hearts of Gold youth coordinator

## Riley's Heart Journey, continued from page 1

was four and a half months old, I weighed 11 pounds, but I was showing signs of congestive heart failure.

The initial balloon dilation had helped me grow a bit stronger and prepared my body for my first open-heart surgery. This time, my aortic valve was replaced with a human donated valve. It was a success and I started getting back to a more “normal” life with my twin sister and my loving parents. I started crawling at seven months old and was on my feet at 10 months of age. I began to gain weight and my parents said I was a pretty much a typical little infant and toddler.

My life also consisted of regular visits to the Heart Centre where they monitored my growing heart. At three years old, I had just started preschool and had become one very active little girl. However, my donated valve started to leak. This is when my fantastic cardiologist, Dr. Hosking, recommended that it was time for my next surgery: the Ross procedure. This replaced my aortic valve with my own pulmonary valve and then replaced my pulmonary valve with a human donated valve. The brilliance of this surgery is that it allowed my “new” aortic valve to grow with my body (as it is my own valve) and then, in the future, I will only need my pulmonary valve replaced.

After only five days post-op, I was riding a tricycle up and down the hospital halls and goofing around with my sister in the playroom even though my hair was heavily matted! I guess no one told my mom to tie it up before the surgery.

I settled back into life at home with my family and did hospital check-ups every six months. As I got older, I started doing many of the activities that any other ordinary kid would do. I did ballet, gymnastics, and Girl Guides, and even learned how to ski when I was seven.

Throughout the years, I have played competitive soccer

for my community gold team and my school, learned to play the trumpet, and met many new friends. I love the life I have been given and now I know that my heart journey is only a small part of the so many great things that make up my life.

That said, the heart is a pretty important organ and I cannot ignore the journey I have travelled. I was very young when I went through my major surgeries and I am forever grateful to Dr. Hosking, my surgeon, Dr. LeBlanc, and the whole Heart Centre team, whose work has allowed me to have the life I have today. However, to be honest, I never really paid much attention to what exactly was wrong with my heart.

Now that I am 18 and must move on to the adult world, my health is in my own hands and I am learning more about what I need to do to take care of my “special heart.”

The Children's Heart Centre has been there to guide me through this transition, providing information about youth transition and planning for adult care. At first, it was scary and I hardly knew where to start. I asked one of my nurses questions about my own personal health. What should I look out for in the future? At each check-up, I discovered that I had more questions and the nurses were there to answer them. They even answered questions that I didn't know I needed to ask.

I am aware that my health can change at any point. There is still the unknown of if or when I will need another surgery. This thought is always in the back of my mind. But, I don't let it overwhelm me.

I have learned that transitions are not a finite thing—they too are a journey. So, I am taking this journey one step at a time. The first step in my transition plan is to find my own voice and advocate for my own health care needs. I think it is step in the right direction. ♥



Riley and Hunter, four months old.



Riley and Hunter, 18 years old.



# Heart Heroes

BY COURTNEY CRAN

Our world was forever changed when we learned our sweet eight-day-old son, Austin, was born with a coronary heart disease called total anomalous pulmonary venous return. We were told that all four of his pulmonary veins were wired incorrectly and that the condition would be fatal if not corrected immediately.

On January 31, 2020, Austin underwent a successful open-heart surgery, thanks to Dr. Gandhi and the rest of the team at the BCCH cardiology department. We are eternally grateful to them all. Today, Austin is a happy, healthy, and mischievous 16-month-old who has graduated to annual appointments!

To celebrate Austin's first heartiversary, which also happened to be the day before the start of heart month, we decided to hold a virtual fundraiser benefitting the Children's Heart Network. CHN was a place we turned to on our darkest days for support and solidarity during a time that felt incredibly lonely. Hearing other families' stories gave us so much hope and inspired us to give back to this beautiful community. Our fundraising goal was \$500 and through an extraordinary amount of love and generosity, we were able to raise \$5,010! I'm still speechless.

We hope this money can assist the Children's Heart Network in all of its magic and that all families affected by

coronary heart diseases can continue to be supported by this important organization. We would like to thank Sam and the rest of CHN for all that they do. We look forward to being a part of events in the future! ♥

Lots of love,  
Courtney, Matt, Big Sister Olive, and Heart Warrior Austin



## Hearts of Gold May 2021 Online Camp

BY EMILY COTEY

My name is Emily. This is my heart story, and my memories of a recent Hearts of Gold (HOG) camp.

I was diagnosed with transposition of the great arteries when I was in utero, while my dad was away at sea with the Navy. When I was nine days old, I had my first surgery, which got infected twice. In total, doctors had to open up my chest three times, so I have a reasonably deep scar there from that.

I have a really active life and I play rugby and take horseback riding lessons.

Over the last weekend in May, we had a HOG online camp. HOG is a group of heart kids from Vancouver Island that meets every month for a fun Zoom meeting full of activities. (Before COVID, we would meet in person.)

On the first day, the Vancouver Island Hearts of Gold (VIHOG) teens met online and tie-dyed camp T-shirts to wear the next day. We then painted ceramic hearts that will

go to an auction to raise money for the Children's Heart Network. Later that night, we watched the original *Jumanji* movie and said our goodbyes for the evening.

The next day, the VIHOG and Lower Mainland HOG groups came together to play D-Icebreakers. It's a game where you answer different questions based on what dice number you roll. For example, number two was "If you were stranded on a desert island, what three things would you want to take with you?" Number five was "If you could spend the day with one fictional character, who would it be?"

After that, we had a talent show. There were some pretty cool performances, including lip-syncing "I Want it That Way" by the Backstreet Boys, playing the clarinet or guitar, riding a unicycle, singing, and being able to fit a whole fist inside a mouth.

The CHN members from the Lower Mainland shared their Camp Zajac memories and all the fun times they had with each other. After that, we all watched a slideshow of

photos we took of ourselves with items from a scavenger hunt checklist that we completed beforehand. The tasks were to take a selfie with something that starts with the first letter of your name, with something that makes you happy, in nature, with an animal, and with a heart. There were a lot of creative ideas that the others had.

Even though we couldn't do an in-person camp, being able to do it virtually was better than not being able to do it at all.

At the end, a lot of us were challenging each other to who would win a Twister match when we, hopefully, do the camp in person next year. We are all going to be practising and training for the big Twister match at Camp Zajac!

Everyone was wearing the tie-dyed T-shirts that they

made when they met with their group before we all met up together on Sunday.

There were lots of laughs and funny stories. I was probably one of the youngest kids there out of the 30 people online. Everyone was nice to each other and to the other shy people.

We got to hear a story about how someone, by accident, let a donkey out of its pen at Camp Zajac. My favourite part of the meeting was when we all started challenging each other to a Twister tournament and a "who could yell the loudest" tournament. I have pretty strong vocal cords, which is more than likely from playing rugby.

I'm hoping to go to Camp Zajac in 2022 and have fun with new people. ♥

## Meet Kristi Coldwell, CHN Lower Mainland Hearts of Gold Coordinator

**W**e recently had the pleasure of checking in with Kristi Coldwell, who has been the Hearts of Gold coordinator for the Children's Heart Network for over 10 years!



### Kristi, how did you first get involved with CHN?

I started working with CHN right out of my child life internship, taking over the Hearts of Gold coordinator role when the previous coordinator went on maternity leave. However, my involvement with CHN goes way back to when I was a heart patient at BCCH. Facing a heart transplant, I wanted to connect with someone my age who had already been through such an event. I was fortunate to be introduced to a fellow teen who had endured two heart transplants. We became good friends and he was instrumental in my own transplant journey as a teenager, providing much-needed support and guidance.

### What is the Hearts of Gold program, for those that are not familiar with it?

The Hearts of Gold (HOG) youth program is an integral part of the services provided by the Children's Heart Network. We meet monthly for a fun and supportive event that helps foster a sense of connectedness among teens who have a heart condition. Our group is for teens 13–19 years of age with a focus on socialization and education. The pandemic has forced us to get creative, but we have continued to meet monthly via Zoom.

### What would you say to any youth considering joining HOG?

Give it a try! We are a really fun and welcoming group, where a lot of really great memories are created. HOG is a place where others understand what it means to be a youth with heart disease and all that it entails.



## What advice would you give any young adult graduating from HOG and entering adult care?

It's important to understand that transitioning from pediatric to adult care is a significant life event. It's okay to be uneasy and nervous. Change can be scary but it can also be really great. Don't be afraid to ask questions and speak up for what you need, and know it's okay to bring a support person with you to appointments, may it be a parent or friend.

## What is your favourite part of what you do with CHN?

It is incredibly rewarding to have the opportunity to share in a teen's heart journey. I watch as they become more confident and comfortable in their ability to manage their own care and health needs. I witness anxiety and shyness be replaced with pride and resiliency. The teens never fail to inspire me and their outlook on life is refreshing and humbling. As a bonus, they are invaluable resources when it comes to anything technology related!

## What is your favourite program you have planned?

By far my favourite event is the pudding fight at our annual camp. An adult-endorsed food fight that tastes good? It doesn't get any better than that! I take great pride in the pudding flavour selection each year. It's also just really fun to watch the teens let go and have an unabashedly great time with their friends!

## What is something your HOG teens don't know about you?

Horror/scary movies are by far my favourite movie genre. I just can't watch them after 7 pm!

## What do you love to do in your spare time?

I love to spend time in my garden and bake. Going to the beach with my husband and dogs is also a favourite activity. ♥

*Thank you so much, Kristi, for sharing your thoughts with us and for all the valuable work you do for the CHN community! We are so grateful!*

# Meet Jackie Bonsal, CHN Board Member

Jackie has enjoyed a long and rewarding career in human resources specializing in the area of employee compensation and benefits for a number of organizations, including Vancity Credit Union, Telus, and the Provincial Health Services Authority. Jackie is currently the director of compensation with the BC Public School Employers' Association.

Jackie became a heart mom in October 2016 when her daughter Londyn was born. Londyn has pulmonary atresia with intact ventricular septum. Along with a number of heart catheterization procedures, Londyn had open-heart surgery when she was five and a half months old.

In early 2020, Jackie approached the Children's Heart Network expressing an interest in becoming a board member: "I very much struggled with becoming a heart mom knowing the incredible responsibility and difficulties it would bring. I would not have survived the first six months without the support of this amazing group. Now I feel extremely proud and grateful to have been chosen to be Londyn's heart mom. I have grown as a person and learned so much about life through my extremely special and courageous heart warrior. It is time to give back and support others as they begin their unique journey." ♥



# Meet Jade Palm, CHN Vancouver Island Hearts of Gold Coordinator



Jade is a certified child life specialist who is currently practising at Surrey Memorial Hospital and BC Children's Hospital. She grew up in a small town on the coast of BC and has recently settled into her new home in Steveston with her partner, Tanner. Jade graduated from the University of the Fraser Valley with a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology and a graduate certificate in child life and community health. While attending university, she was fortunate to follow her passion in sports by making an impact with the women's varsity soccer team and attending nationals with her team.

Jade has several years of experience working in various roles with children and youth, which all began while coaching youth soccer and recognizing how much she loves helping youth reach new potentials while creating a fun and enjoyable atmosphere. Jade loves to play sports, hike, camp, travel, and swim at the beach in her spare time. She is excited to have started with CHN as a youth coordinator and is looking forward to all of the memorable moments that she will share with the Vancouver Island HOG youth! ♥

## Summer Is on Its Way!

*It's time to get outside and connect with nature.*

BY MIKEL SEGAL, MD, CCFP

I don't know about you, but trying to get my kids out of the house these days is like pulling teeth. They complain, protest, and whine. It's almost enough for me to let them have their way and just stay put.

But I don't give in.

Spending time outside in nature is not just a way to pass time on free days; it is imperative for physical, emotional, and mental health.

The benefits are numerous:

1. **Spending time outside in natural light, especially in the early morning, helps regulate the circadian clock.**

The circadian clock is an internal clock in our brain that has an important role in driving many processes in the body, including sleep, hormone release, body temperature, and gut health. The clock responds to external cues, especially light; therefore, early-morning sunlight exposure is a strong signal to get systems functioning as they should.



2. **Exposure to sunlight enables the production of vitamin D in your body.**

Vitamin D is formed in the skin through a reaction with sunlight. It is important for modulating many reactions in the body and has a role in gene expression, immune



function, and bone health. Due to minimal exposure to sunlight, many people living in the Northern Hemisphere have deficient levels of vitamin D.

### **3. Spending time in nature can lower blood pressure, calm the nervous system, and improve mood and anxiety.**

A 2014 study done in Japan looked at the response of young men who walked in the forest versus those who walked in an urban environment. They found that the men who spent time in the forest had significantly lower heart rates as well as higher heart rate variability, which is a signal of increased stress resilience. They also reported better mood and lower anxiety than the men who walked in urban spaces.<sup>1</sup>

### **4. Spending time in nature can make you smarter.**

Psychologists Marc Berman, PhD, and Kathryn Schertz reviewed the literature on the cognitive benefits of spending time in nature in 2019. They found evidence that exposure to natural environments improves performance on working-memory, cognitive-flexibility, and attentional-control tasks. Green spaces near schools were associated with cognitive development in children in one study. In another, green views near the homes of young girls were associated with self-control behaviours. Experimental studies also supported the association between exposure to nature and improvements in cognitive performance.<sup>2</sup>

### **5. Spending time in nature can increase your creativity and attention.**

A 2012 study done with a group of hikers who spent four days immersed in nature showed they had significantly better scores on a task that required creative thinking and problem solving compared with a similar group that had not just spent four days in nature. The researchers had a theory that the results were due to lack of stimulation of everyday activities, which then allows the pre-frontal cortex to restore and replenish so it is better able to perform its executive functions. They note the limitations of the study include not being able to determine if the effects were due to an increased exposure to nature and the positive responses to this, a decreased exposure to technology and its associated expectations, or another factor.<sup>3</sup>

### **6. Spending time in nature can make you more empathic, agreeable, generous, and helpful.**

In a series of experiments in 2012, researchers in California found that exposure to beautiful nature, when compared with exposure to nature not perceived as beautiful, leads to increased interest in social behaviour through higher positive emotions.<sup>4</sup>

### **7. Spending time in nature can improve your immune system function and decrease your stress hormones.**

A 2010 review looked at the effects of forest bathing in Japan. Forest bathing trips, called *shinrin-yoku* in Japanese, are very popular. They are essentially short, leisurely visits to a forest. The review found that people who spent time forest bathing had increased natural killer cell activity and lower stress hormones in their system. Natural killer cells are a type of white blood cell that is involved in limiting the spread of infections and can play a role in cancer prevention. The increased activity in natural killer cells lasted for 30 days after the forest visit.<sup>5</sup>

### **8. Finally, the most important thing is that it appears that we gain the benefits from time in nature even when we don't enjoy it.**

A study done in Michigan found that people who walked in nature on an unpleasant windy cold winter day still performed much better on short-term memory and attention tests than those who walked in an urban environment, even though they didn't particularly enjoy the experience. They found that mood tended to be higher as well. One of the researchers, Marc Berman, discussed the results in a newsletter: "What we're finding is that you don't have to like the interaction with nature to get the benefits."<sup>6</sup>

Enough said.

Our family gets out into the great wild world almost every day in the summer. And if I must resort to some incentivizing to make that happen, I'm OK with that. This way, the adults are more likely to enjoy it and the kids, well, they will get the benefits regardless. ♥

*Mikel Segal, MD, CCFP, is a physician and health coach with an interest in helping people reach their full potential. She can be found at [www.mikelsegalmd.com](http://www.mikelsegalmd.com), on Instagram at @mikelsegalmd, and on Facebook at Mikel Segal MD. Sign up to get her free smoothie-building guide here: <http://eepurl.com/hxVNbP>.*

1 <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2014/834360/>

2 <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0963721419854100>

3 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3520840/>

4 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0272494413000893>

5 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2793341/>

6 <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.462.484&rep=rep1&type=pdf>





## CHN's Virtual Program on Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

**C**HN has been hosting a mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) program for parents and caregivers of heart children. There are eight consecutive 2.5-hour online classes on Thursday evenings, plus an orientation and a half-day retreat. CHN hopes to host another MBSR workshop in the fall of 2021. Watch for an email invitation.

### What is MBSR?

The MBSR program was originally developed in 1979 by Jon Kabat-Zinn at the University of Massachusetts Memorial Medical Center to help people learn to better cope and live with stress. He described mindfulness as “the awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally.” Through mindfulness-based practices, participants develop increased awareness of present-moment experience as it arises, including the thought, emotional, and behavioural patterns related to stressful situations. Participants learn that, though they cannot always change the circumstances in which they find themselves, they can choose how to respond more clearly and skillfully, and less reactively, when faced with difficult situations.

### One heart mom's experience

Tara Edwards jumped at the chance when she saw the email from CHN offering the eight-week MBSR course.

“I have wanted to do this course for many years, and

what better time than during a global pandemic where I can participate virtually! I knew I would find the course to be intriguing, but the common thread of other heart parents doing it along with me brought a unique experience. It has been comforting to hear similar challenges and to learn new tools as a way to cope with our everyday stressors to help support our heart kids, our families, and ourselves.

“Together, we have been learning the practice of mindfulness, or as I now understand it to be...a non-judgmental awareness, an opportunity to just ‘be.’

“Marnie and Melanie, our most respectful and genuine facilitators, have guided us through meditative and movement practices during our weekly class. Individuals are asked to commit 45 minutes a day to practising on their own in order to support a lifestyle change and to get the most out of the course.

“My main takeaway thus far has been noticing how my brain is constantly analyzing, processing, and worrying as opposed to just noticing. I am learning to allow negative and positive experiences to just be present instead of trying to push them away or distract myself.

“I am also finding times where I'm now stopping to listen, feel, taste, see, and touch in the most unusual places, such as in grocery stores, at my kids' school, in traffic, and during work.

“I am looking forward to completing this course and to incorporating mindfulness meditation to my everyday life.” ♥



## How to Talk to Young Kids About Race

BY FATHERLY<sup>1</sup>

**T**his story is part of *From the Start: A Parent's Guide to Talking About Racial Bias*,<sup>2</sup> a series created in partnership with Johnson's, Aveeno Baby, and Desitin.

The most challenging thing about discussing race with your children is that by the time they are able to form words and have a discussion, so much of how they perceive, react to, and process differences in appearance has already been shaped. Even before your child is old enough to have a conversation, they are hard at work building a vocabulary for dealing with the world around them. The best way to intercede before it's too late is by modelling good behaviour. Let's consider a few times when a slight change in tone, attitude, or even physicality can do wonders for your child's growth and development when it comes to race.

### 0–1 years old

Can we even discuss race this young? The short answer is: no. Not in the sense of a back-and-forth dialogue. However, we can consider age-appropriate modes of communication. At five months, a baby can match a happy sound like laughter to a picture of a laughing face, regardless of race. Yet just a few months later, they begin to tap into different regions of their brains (specifically the occipital-temporal region, where adults do their recognition work) and begin reacting and responding more quickly to faces that look more like theirs. But the whole process relies on non-verbal expression. They will absorb so much through your tone and body language. With children, this is called “social referencing.” They look to you and your body language and demeanour to know if a place or a person is safe. For

example: When you're out and about with your little one, are you conscious of your body language when you interact with people? Tensing up with someone who looks different from you or changing the tenor of your voice around certain people will communicate your attitudes to your child that is observing you for behavioural cues.

### 1–2 years old

What can a toddler learn from my behaviour? By the toddler stage, “social referencing” in your child has blossomed into outright mimicry. They not only look to you for cues, but also begin to adopt your mannerisms. The old “I learned it from watching you” cliché is true. When telling stories or relaying a work anecdote over the dinner table, pay attention to how you describe people. Do you focus on skin colour first? Do you casually remark about “those” people and therefore create unconscious separation? Do you mimic accents or ways of speaking in broad or cartoonish ways?

Each of these things in context may not be overtly racist or negative, but they create a sense of otherness in people who look and sound different, and even at this young age your child is absorbing that and may begin echoing it back at you. By mimicking your prejudices, they learn to be prejudiced before they're even aware of the concept.

### 2–3 years old

Do young kids have a sense of discrimination? These are the years when a child begins to develop empathy for

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.fatherly.com/community/fatherly/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://experience.fromthestart.com/>



others. They are more open about showing physical affection to friends and loved ones. While this is positive, it can also raise fears of discrimination—not in those exact words, of course, but more like an understanding that it feels really, really bad to be left out. Some things are just... unfair.

This is where you can reinforce a strong sense of inclusion by surrounding them with TV shows, movies, and toys that expand their perception of what pretty is, what a hero can look like, and how having a crew of different people with different backgrounds and abilities (“She’s bilingual!”) makes for greater adventures. Thankfully, these things are a bit easier to find than they may have been 20 or 30 years ago. Media companies have realized Black, Latino, and Asian children want to see more of people like them in prominent and diverse roles. They now understand that doing so helps teach white children that their bubble is not the only one where cool, fun, and exciting things happen.

### 3–4 years old

Can you use games or activities to teach kids about racism? During these peak imaginative play years, your child is exploring the limits of their imagination—but also forming tools that will be used to navigate a very real world. Start with dolls, action figures, and representative people. Strip away the fantastical trappings of the dolls or action figures they’re playing with, and you’ll see they’re play-acting real human interactions. One doll is mad at another. One is trying to get the other to join them on an adventure. One is clearly the dominant leader.

First, make sure your kids have a diverse set of dolls that represent a wide range of gender and race. But just as important, get involved in doll play and begin to ask questions through the cover of “making up a story” that will nudge your child toward thinking about concepts like discrimination and privilege.

Your kid may assume that the doll that looks more like

them is prettier or more suited to be in charge. Use another distinctly different doll to try to lead a story or adventure and note how your child reacts. Do they go with it, or do they immediately pigeonhole certain types of dolls into certain types of roles?

### 4–5 years old

How does one deal with the racism kids bring in from the outside world? Between four and five years old, children begin to absorb less from you and more from their own perspective and experience. They’re growing independent and are more fluent communicators. They will stop solely mimicking your words and start to bring some in from the outside. Even if you show kindness and acceptance and tolerance in your own words and actions, your child will meet someone else—perhaps someone their own age—who has had a very different experience.

Your child repeats a racial slur. Do you get angry? Immediately forbid it and punish the child? That will only make it mysterious and, while initially a source of fear, they may eventually start to grow curious about why a word would have such a negative impact on you. The goal is to get them to understand *why*.

By explaining that a racist epithet can make someone feel ashamed or embarrassed or angry or sad attaches cause and effect to the word: “Saying this may make someone feel attacked. How would you feel if someone called you a nasty nickname because of how you looked?” Or “People use that word to make other people feel like they don’t matter.” The act of putting themselves in another’s shoes removes the forbidden allure of the word that simply saying “No! Don’t say that!” puts around it.

In the end, there’s now a figurative face to the epithet, and hopefully an understanding of the impact of “just words.” ♥

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## CHN’s COVID Restart Plan

CHN’s restart plan to bring our BC heart families back together will start in the fall. We have missed you all and know how important our social connections and fun activities are to our community. We hope that by the fall all those that can be vaccinated have had their two doses and we can begin to host in-person events again. We know that our community is more vulnerable than most and recognize that moving forward will be different for everyone. Some of us will be ready to reconnect in person and some will need more time. We will continue our virtual Heart Mamas & Papas Virtual Coffee Nights by Zoom but may also host some in-person evenings for those that are ready. Our Hearts of Gold youth group has had

real growth over the past year and a half, as many teens that live outside the Lower Mainland and Victoria have been able to join in on the fun events via Zoom. The Island group has doubled in size!

We recognize how positive these new friendships and connections are to our youth, so we will continue to host both virtual and in-person events, perhaps rotating from month to month.

We would love to hear your suggestions. How can we best support your family as we slowly start to move forward during these COVID times? Please feel free to email Sam at [saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org](mailto:saitken@childrensheartnetwork.org) with your ideas.

Wishing you all a healthy, happy summer! ♥

# A Heartfelt Thank You to All Our Sponsors

Thanks to the support of many sponsors, donors, and bidders, CHN had a very successful online auction. We raised close to \$25,000! The board would like to recognize Hege Hoegler, our event coordinator, for her tireless commitment and incredible attention to detail. A huge “heartfelt” thanks to Hege. In addition, we would like to recognize the following sponsors for their generous support:



## Gold Sponsorship:

Dr. Brian Sinclair and Dr. Aisling Young

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## Hearts of Gold Support:

The Rotary Club of Vancouver

*Mark your calendars: the Sid Dickens memory block online auction will be in September! ♥*

## What's Happening?

### Heart Mamas & Papas Virtual Coffee Nights

We have had great success with our virtual heart parent get-togethers since COVID-19 hit. Wonderful to have both mom and dad attend in some families. Watch for emails inviting you to join!

### Sid Dickens Memory Blocks Auction

Initially trained as a sculptor, Sid Dickens was quickly distinguished in the early '90s for his groundbreaking, unconventional, and prolific memory blocks. His name and unique memory blocks are now recognized worldwide.

Once again, Sid Dickens has graciously teamed up with the Hearts of Gold teenagers to create beautiful memory blocks for the Children's Heart Network, each a unique, special, one-of-a-kind piece.

Don't miss the online auction on September 25–26. Shipping is available within Canada and the US. ♥

