

## Strength-Based Parenting for Kids on the Spectrum: How Small Shifts Can Make a Big Difference

Parents with kids on the spectrum are all too familiar with being told about the deficits and challenges their children face. Yet, what happens when we consider the upside that comes along with having a different neurotype? Like all kids, those along the spectrum have both strengths and weaknesses – the two don't cancel each other out. Building up strengths can occur at the same time as we work with challenges. The problems and differences for kids on the spectrum don't negate the many strengths these children have and yet it is typical for schools, psychologists and others to focus on the negative.

Strength-based parenting is an approach that helps parents see the upside, it provides a new way to see and enable kids along the spectrum and to build happy, peaceful family dynamics. By intentionally seeing and building strengths in your children (and yourself) you:

- can focus on the positives and thus, put the negative into perspective;
- build off the confidence of your child;
- see the big picture;
- use strengths to help overcome challenges;
- connect your child with people who have similar strengths and passions; and
- breathe a sigh of relief and see a positive pathway forward.

This presentation will introduce you to the science and practice of strength-based parenting developed by psychologist Dr. Lea Waters (PhD) and introduced in her acclaimed parenting book *The Strength Switch*.

In neurotypical samples, Lea's research has shown that children and teens who have strength-based parents have:

- Higher levels of life satisfaction, self-efficacy, and positive emotions;
- Lower levels of depression and anxiety; and
- Better ability to cope with friendship issues and homework challenges and better grades.

SBP research also shows benefits for the parents themselves, including high confidence in parenting and more frequent positive emotions.

As a psychologist, Lea has a keen interest in the development and wellbeing of children along the spectrum and how it is we can sustain and uplift families on this journey. SBP is not about ignoring the challenges you face, rather it is about seeing these challenges through a different lens and about equipping you with strengths that assist with the challenges. SBP provides you with a lens that sees the full child and celebrates their uniqueness while also finding concrete ways to work with the trials of life.

**FORMAT:** 45 to 60-minute keynote; half and full-day workshops.

**IDEAL AUDIENCE:** Anyone raising or working with children with autism; such as parents, teachers, family therapists, school administrators, psychologists.

## ABOUT LEA:

[Lea Waters](#), PhD is a professor, published author, psychologist, internationally-celebrated speaker and one of the world's leading experts on Positive Education, Positive Organizations and Strength-Based Parenting and Teaching.

Professor Waters is the Founding Director and Inaugural Gerry Higgins Chair in Positive Psychology at the Centre for Positive Psychology, [University of Melbourne](#) where she has held an academic position for more than 23 years. Lea holds affiliate positions at Cambridge University and the University of Michigan and serves on the [Scientific Board at Berkeley University's](#) Greater Good Science Center. Lea is the 2017-2019 President of the International Positive Psychology Association, serves on the Council of Happiness and Education for the [World Happiness Council](#), is the Patron of Flourishing Education Japan and Ambassador for the Positive Education Schools Association.

As a researcher, she has published over 100 scientific articles and book chapters.

Her book, [The Strength Switch: How The New Science of Strength-Based Parenting Can Help Your Child and Your Teen to Flourish](#), was the top release on Amazon in the parenting category, was listed as one of the [top reads for 2017](#) by Berkeley University's Greater Good Center and was listed in the Top Five Books on Happiness for Children in the UK's Top Five site. It has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Taiwanese, Hungarian, Arabic, Russian, French, and Spanish.

In 2015, Professor Waters was listed as one of Australia's [Top 100 Women of Influence](#) by the Financial Review and Westpac Bank. She has been listed in the Marques 'Who's Who in the World' since 2009 and was included in the 2017 edition of Who's Who of Australian Women.

Lea is committed to spreading the science of positive psychology as widely as possible and has been featured on *Morning Dose* (The CW, Dallas, TX, USA), *Revolution School* (ABC, Australia), *Matter of Fact* (ABC, Australia), *Destination Happiness* (Channel Nine, Australia), *Today Extra* (Channel Nine, Australia), *National Nightly News* (Channel Ten, Australia), *The Project* (TV3, New Zealand), *The Café* (NZTV, New Zealand), *Breakfast* (NZTV, New Zealand). Lea is also frequently featured in print media, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *TIME Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, *The Atlantic*, *The Globe* (Toronto), *The Guardian* (UK), and *The Age* (Australia). Lea's TEDx talk, [Warning: Being positive is not for the faint hearted!](#) explores how small positive steps can make a big impact on the wellbeing of ourselves and others, has been viewed more than 118,000 times.

Lea is the founder of [Visible Wellbeing](#), an initiative that brings the science of wellbeing and learning to schools. Visible Wellbeing is being used in schools across Australia, Asia, Canada, New Zealand and United Arab Emirates. Her newest program, [The Strengths Switch](#), offers parents and educators free resources, online courses, and facilitated courses to better build the strengths of families across the globe.

