Friends Programmes

- An overview of anxiety and resilience in childhood and adolescence
- Information on the FRIENDS programmes

What is 'Friends'?

- Gives children skills and tools for coping with emotional distress. Prevents anxiety, builds social and emotional strength/resilience.
- Only anxiety prevention program acknowledged by the World Health Organisation - 15 years of comprehensive evaluation and practice.
- Evidence effects are maintained- 6 yrs
- New Zealand, and Canada, The United States, Mexico, South Africa, Netherlands, Germany, Portugal, Finland, Norway, UK, Saudi Arabia, China, Japan , Hong Kong, Hong Kong
- 12 different languages
- Developed by world renowned child psychologist Dr Paula Barrett

FUN FRIENDS

FRIENDS for Life

MY FRIENDS YOUTH RESILIENCE PROGRAM

RESILIENCE FOR LIFE Adult Resilience Program

The Statistics...

How Common are Anxiety and Depression?

- **Anxiety is the most common mental health concern for children and teenagers.**
- **Anxiety and depression are more prevalent than drug use, ADHD, or any other mental health problem.**

Emotional distress affects...

Cognitive/Thinking

Worry, negative thoughts, poor concentration, attentional biases.

Physiological/Body

Increased heart rate, muscle tension, perspiration, stomach aches, sleep difficulties, agitation.

Behavioural/Actions

Flight (escape or avoidant behaviours)

Fight (aggressivebehaviours)

Reassurance seeking

Anxiety is normal .....

- **Infant anxiety - loud noises and unfamiliar people.**
- **Children - loss or separation from parents and specific fears**
- **Adolescents - social comparisons [failure, criticism, physical appearance]**

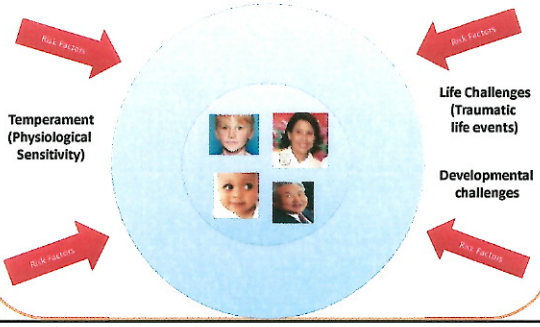
"I don't know why Doc, but I always feel anxious around thanksgiving!"

What are the signs of Anxiety?

- Worry
- Avoidance
- Psychosomatic complaints
- Difficulty in resting and going to sleep
- Shyness
- Social withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Appetite changes

RISK FACTORS

Anxiety/Depression Prevention ⟷ Resilience Building



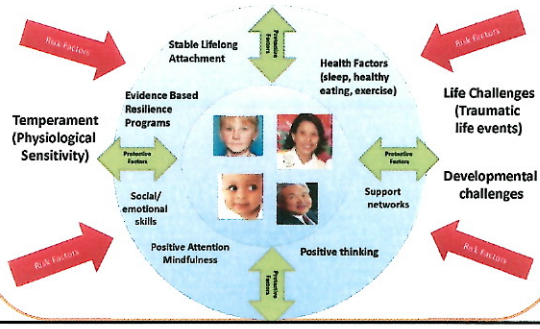
Protective Factors

Scientific proven resilience skills

- **Attachment/**Affection
- **Positive thinking style**
- **Support networks** (extended family, community and friendships)
- **Health factors** (sleep, daily physical activity, healthy eating)
- Skills taught in **evidenced based prevention programs** (FRIENDS programs)

Protective Factors

Anxiety/Depression Prevention ⟷ Resilience Building



Why do we use the word "FRIENDS"?

Because:

- Our body is our *friend*
- We need to be a good *friend* to ourselves
- We can make *friends*
- Talking to our *friends* is important
- *FRIENDS* is an acronym for the skills and strategies taught in the program
- *For Life:* We need to use these skills throughout the rest of our lives when faced with challenges

The FRIENDS for Life acronym

Unhelpful — Helpful

Feelings.
Remember to Relax. Have quiet time.
I can do it! I can try (helpful thoughts)
Explore Solutions and Coping Step Plans.
Now reward yourself! You've done your best!
Don't forget to practice.
Smile! Stay calm and talk to your support networks!

The FUN FRIENDS Acronym

Feelings
Relax
I can try!
Encourage
Nurture
Don't forget to be brave!
Stay happy

F = FEELINGS

Talk about feelings
Talk about other people's feelings

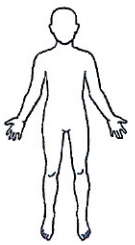
- Introduction to Group
- Recognising their own individual body clues
- Understanding link between thoughts, feelings and behaviour
- Working on feeling happy, brave and confident

ACTIVITY : Session 3 Feelings

Activity 1
Identifying Body Clues

Activity 2
Body Clues Poster

Draw the outline of a person and label it with the body clues that you experience when feeling sad, worried, angry, happy, etc.



R = RELAX

This step teaches students to learn and practice a variety of relaxation techniques. Why? We find it hard to think straight if we are not calm

'Milkshake Breathing ' - Slow deep breathing
- Breathing slowly helps us relax our body, our heart beat slows down and we feel less tense and worried

Muscle Relaxation
- When we tense and relax our muscles our body releases happy chemicals (endorphins) which makes us feel relaxed

Visualisation
- Imagining a peaceful, happy relaxing place can help us to feel calm

Quiet Time
- Activities that make yourself feel happy and relaxed

Fun activities with the family is a way of relaxing and feeling good

I = I can do it (helpful thoughts)

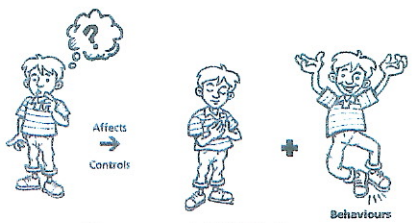
This step teaches children to tune into their self-talk. This is an important skill as thoughts influence feelings and behaviour.

There are two main steps:

1. Awareness of red thoughts (negative self-talk)
2. Replacing with green thoughts (positive self-talk).

'I can be the boss of my thoughts'

Inner Thoughts...



The way we THINK influences
the way we FEEL and BEHAVE

Red THOUGHTS vs. Green (POWERFUL) THOUGHTS

"I'm dumb"
"I'm ok at lots of things"
"I give up"
"If I try I'll get better."
"I hate my sister/ brother"
"I find my brother/ sister annoying sometimes, but other times they are fun to play with"
"I have no friends"
"I have 2 people I play with and my dog is my friend"

E =Explore Solutions

This session teaches students how to be brave by taking small steps towards something they find difficult or scary

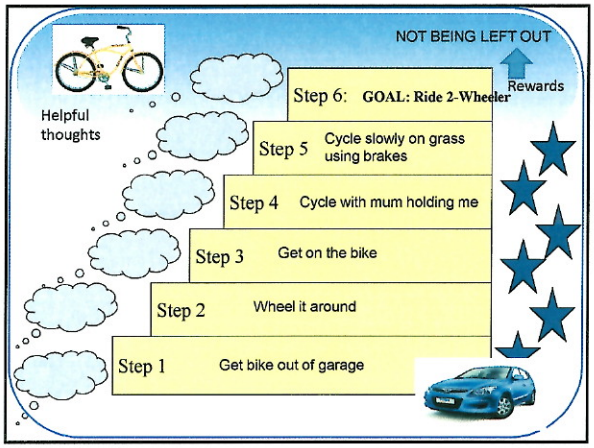
- Problem Solving Skills
- Coping Step Plan
- 6 Block Problem Solving Plan

E = Exploring Solutions and Coping Step Plans

how to be brave by taking small steps towards something we find tricky or scary.

COPING STEP PLANS

- **breaking down** a challenging situation into **small, achievable, easy steps.**
- The steps **gradually become more difficult** until the fear is overcome.
- Children need to **use the FRIENDS plan** (deep breaths, green thoughts) as they climb each step
- Children cannot go the next step until they feel calm and **relaxed on the current step.**



N = Now reward yourself. You've done your best!

- Understanding that it is effort towards success that is important not success
- Use of rewards for trying hard
- Support Teams

D = Don't forget to practise

Tips for Families:

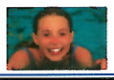
- Try to incorporate the *FRIENDS* language into everyday life.
- Continue to challenge unhelpful thoughts and turn them into helpful thoughts.
- Discuss situations where a coping step plan may be useful (e.g. learning a new activity).
- Continue to help your child generate personal ways to reward themselves for their efforts.

S =Smile!

Stay calm and talk to your support networks!

Tips for Families:

- Keep practising the *FRIENDS* skills
- Setbacks may occur from time-to-time, this is to be expected.
- Importance of staying calm in a difficult situation
- Spend time with people who make us feel happy and good about ourselves



Details

- 10 sessions , 1-1.5 hours
- Every week
- Whole class
- Each student will have their own workbook
- Experiential learning – designed to be fun
- Peer learning model
- Building on concepts learned in previous session
- Support from parents

How can you help?

- Families and caregivers play a vital role in the development and maintenance of the skills taught in the FRIENDS program.
- There are home activities each week so students can practice the skills introduced at each session. Your child will show you the activities in their workbook.
- These skills need to be reinforced both during the group and in the home environment in order for change to occur.

How did the 'FRIENDS for Life' programme help you?

Family
'It makes you closer to your family, they help you cope with things better'
'It helped me because I can do it at home with my mam and my family

Red/Green Thoughts
'I put green thoughts in my head to make me feel better'
'I now know that I am in charge of my feelings'

Coping Skills
'When I get annoyed I now relax and explore my solutions'
'I feel more confident and staying in my house by myself is not a bother anymore'