

Session 1 – Introduction to the group

Handout 1

Concepts, skills & strategies

- Working in groups getting to know each other, building rapport.
- Establishing group rules (e.g. Use respectful language, what to do if an issue arises), and confidentiality contract.
- Promoting tolerance, appreciation of differences, and empathy.
- Consider who is in their supportive circle, those they can talk to, or ask for help, etc.
- Sharing positives they see in others.
- Identify positive experiences in their own lives.
- Setting personal goals (new things they would like to try, how they will accomplish a challenging task, or situation), home, and school goals, setting completion dates if possible.

Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye when speaking, speak clearly, and to smile and stand tall.
- Sit down with your child/youth and discuss individual, and family goals that can be achieved over the coming weeks. Make the goals specific and positive in nature (e.g. sticking to curfew, doing chores, no yelling, etc).
- Focus on noticing positive behaviors (e.g. standing up for others, good citizenship, etc.), and talking about them, or rewarding them (e.g. extra time doing something they enjoy with family, or friends).
- Encourage your child/youth to talk about the things that upset them including any fears or worries. Share some of your own worries and fears from your youth, sharing these can be a normal part of growing up. Your child/youth will be learning new skills to manage these worries in the coming weeks.
- Take time to discuss everyone's day together as a family. Focus on the positive things that happened, and address anything that may be bothering your child/youth.

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**Session 2 – Self-Esteem & Communication and
Relationships with others**

Handout 2

Concept skills & strategies

- Discussing what self-esteem is, and what it means to each person.
- Creating awareness of self-esteem destructors (e.g. fear of others laughing, fear of others thinking they are silly, etc.), and personal self-esteem destructors, like using statements to cover up jealousy by using statements such as “The colour of that dress/shirt doesn’t really suit you.”
- Encouraging a boost to their own self-esteem (e.g. “I’m proud of myself for...”)
- Encouraging recognition of achievements without the use of safety cues (e.g. lucky pen, good luck pants, etc.).
- Enhance child/youth’s awareness of different communication channels by recognizing different feelings through body language and facial expressions, and understanding the importance of verbal, and non-verbal communications.
- Learning the important relationship between thoughts and feelings, and how the way we think about situations can influence how we feel about these situations, and can influence, and determine how we behave in these situations.
- Understanding the characteristics, and the importance of good friends and relationships, including being their own friend.

Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child/youth to take pride in their accomplishments.
- Encourage child/youth to talk about their fears, and worries about upcoming activities such as sports, or school presentations.
- Help child/youth recognize when they are using self-esteem destructors such as negative language, or avoidance.
- Talk and praise child/youth about their accomplishments, and achievements.
- Help child/youth recognize negative feelings they may be having towards others, and when they are using negative statements surrounding those feelings.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Encourage child/youth to recognize when their body language does not meet their verbal communications (e.g. rolling eyes when asking permission to go out, crossing arms when telling about a positive thing that happened to them).
- Help child/youth change negative thoughts into more positive ones about a situation.
- Encourage child/youth to talk about their friends, and invite them to do positive activities together.
- Get to know child/youth's friends
- Encourage child/youth to learn to foster helpful, positive language when speaking about themselves.

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Session 3 – Introduction FRIENDS

Handout 3

F = Feelings

Concepts, Skills, & Strategies

- Understanding the importance of listening to body clues and identifying when they feel excited, happy, nervous/worried, sad, or angry.
- Encouraging self-awareness, and being mindful to the cues their bodies are giving them as to how they are feeling.
- Recognizing the different ways in which they can effectively manage and cope with negative feelings (e.g. slow deep breaths, walking away, using humour to diffuse difficult situations etc.).
- Emphasize the importance of practicing the new skills they are learning in the FRIENDS program.
- Facilitating the development of empathy through understanding their emotional reactions to others.

Parent Tips

- Encourage child/youth to spend quiet time each day reading, listening to music, etc.
- Remind child/youth to listen to their own bodies to help them recognized signs of how they are feeling.
- Help child/youth practice FRIENDS skills such as F = feelings, and R = relax.
- Help child/youth become more aware of how their reactions may be affecting others around them.
- Remind child/youth that they are in control of their own thoughts, and behaviours (e.g. negative/unhelpful thoughts can create negative/unhelpful behaviours).
- Help child/youth practice ways they can manage, and cope with negative emotions (e.g. deep calming breaths, changing negative thoughts into more positive thoughts, what they can say to remove themselves from the situation, using humour to deal with difficult situations).

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

Remember to...

- Remind your child/youth to use the new skills learned in this session to help them achieve their goals.
- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye when talking, using a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!
- Catch your child/youth being courageous and praise them for it!
- Share your positive experiences as a family once a day, and talk about times you were contagious. Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas and feelings experienced from the day.
- Exercise together as a family.
- Take time for quiet time to relax each day.

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Session 4 – R = Remember to relax

Handout 4

Concepts, skills, and strategies

- Introduction to body clues – paying attention to the physical reactions we experience when we feel worried or nervous, helps us understand how we are feeling, e.g. butterflies in stomach, tight muscles. This doesn't mean we are sick! Our body is our friend!
- We can use different methods of relaxation to remain calm, manage our worries, and to feel confident and relaxed, e.g. slow deep calming breaths, muscle relaxation.

Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child/youth to talk about what is happening inside their bodies when they experience different types of feelings, and share examples of your own body clues. Remind your child/youth that these signs are your body's way of telling you how you are feeling.
- Notice your child/youth's physical complaints and when they occur. If they complain of a stomach/headache, etc, remind them that it might be their body's way of telling them something. Is this because they are feeling worried, or nervous about something?
- It is important that as soon as children/youth are aware of their body clues they need to take action. Engaging in relaxation strategies helps to reduce these feelings and to remain in control.

**Spend time each day doing relaxation
activities and having quiet time.**

- You might notice that when you feel worried, your breathing quickens and becomes shallow. Ask your child/youth to teach you how to do "calming breaths". Next time you notice your child is feeling angry, worried, or upset, remind them to slow down and take some calming breaths. Try this for yourself next time you find yourself feeling worked up or worried about something. Sit still and close your eyes. Repeat this 10 times and see how you feel afterwards.

By taking slow, deep breaths, we can relax our body, our heart beats slower, and we feel less tense or worried.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Practice **progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)** with your child/youth. Sometimes our muscles become tense (e.g. jaw clenched, shoulders up high, neck tight) when we are feeling worried, stressed, or angry. When we notice this, we can help ourselves feel better by relaxing our muscles. In PMR, you can go through each of the muscle groups one by one, tensing and then relaxing. It can help to close the eyes, lie down, and use relaxation scripts when practicing PMR.

Physical relaxation = Mental calmness ☺

- Another way your child/youth can feel more relaxed is to do something they enjoy and find relaxing. Every child is different, so talk with your child and identify what is relaxing for them. It might be reading a book, riding their bike/skateboard, playing with their dog, or cat, going for a swim, listening to music, or just lying down. You might refer to it as “quiet time.” **Avoid activities such as watching television, using the computer, or playing video games.**
- It is also extremely important that you make time for yourself, and your own relaxing activities. Make a list of the things you can do to feel good, and relax. When you notice yourself feeling stressed or worried, pull out this list and engage in one of those activities. It could be something as simple as making a cup of tea, or sitting in the sun on the deck. What works for you? Parents need special times too!
- The more your child/youth practice relaxation activities, the better equipped they will be in managing their emotions in times of stress. They will also become more aware of their feelings, and remaining relaxed will become a more automatic response.

Remember to...

- Assist your child/youth in using the new skills learned in this session to help them achieve their goals.
- Encourage your child/youth to express their feelings, and to **choose** appropriate ways of dealing with those feelings
- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Catch your child/youth being courageous, and praise them for it.
- Share you positive experiences as a family once a day, and talk about times you were courageous. Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas, and feelings experienced from the day.

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Session 5 – I = Inner Helpful Thoughts

Handout 5

(I can try my best)

Concepts, Skills, & Strategies

- Understanding, and paying attention to our thoughts, or self-talk.
- Introducing the idea of different kinds of thoughts:
 - Unhelpful, negative thoughts – stop! Negative thoughts make us feel miserable, worried, or angry.
 - Helpful, positive thoughts – go! Positive thoughts make us feel strong, confident, and happy.
- Recognizing our thoughts and feelings affect our behaviours.

Tips for Parents

- Encourage dialogue with your child/youth about self-talk and how it can affect how we feel about ourselves, and others.
- Encourage everyone at home to use the same language when talking about unhelpful and helpful thoughts, and self-talk.
- Remember we all have unhelpful thoughts, and sometimes they occur without us knowing. FRIENDS teaches children/youth to listen to their self-talk. You can help your child/youth to become more aware of their thoughts. Having negative thoughts is okay – it’s what we do with those negative thoughts that is important.
- The more we listen to unhelpful thoughts the more we believe them and act upon them. It is important to help your child/youth practice changing those thoughts such as “It’s too hard”, and replacing them with more positive thoughts such as, “I know it is hard, but I can have a go, and try my best.”
- Notice negative thinking in yourself, or your child. Thinking in positive and helpful ways is a skill that requires continual practice, and reinforcement. When you notice negative thinking in yourself, or your child/youth, take a moment to stop and ask yourself “is that thought helpful?” If it is not, try turning that thought around to find a more positive way of viewing the situation.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

Remember to...

- Assist your child/youth in using the new skills learned in this session to help them achieve their goals.
- Encourage your child/youth to listen to their body clues, take time to relax and have quiet time.
- Encourage your child/youth to express their feelings, and to **choose** appropriate ways of dealing with those feelings.
- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye when talking, being brave, and standing up tall.
- Catch your child/youth being courageous and praise them for it.
- Share your positive experiences as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.
- Take time to exercise as a family.
- Incorporate healthy eating, and drinking water into your daily life as a family.
- Encourage your child/youth to get enough sleep every night and encourage all of the family to turn off mobile phones, and computers at a set time.

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Session 6: Exploring ways to cope

Handout 6

Introduction to Coping Step Plans

(E = Explore step plans)

Concepts, skills and strategies

- Learning to do things one-step at a time – breaking difficult things down into smaller manageable steps (The “Coping Step Plan”).

Tips for Parents

- Provide your child/youth with praise every time they attempt something difficult, or try something new.
- Encourage, and model *facing* rather than avoiding difficult, or scary situations. If there are certain things you avoid because you are afraid, (e.g. heights) model courageous behaviours! A lot of the time we transfer our own fears and anxieties onto our children, because they watch and learn. Be aware of this when *you* encounter difficult tasks, or situations.
- Help your child/youth practice thinking positive thoughts when faced with new situations, or challenges, or when they are finding a task, or situation difficult to master.
- Although it is hard to see your child/youth in a situation that they find challenging, or scary, research shows that supporting our children to actually face their fears actually helps decrease their level of fear. Support and encourage them to make it less daunting.
- We all encounter situations that are difficult, or worrying to some degree. One possible strategy is what we call a **“coping step plan”**. This is useful when a situation seems overwhelming. This involves breaking down a challenging situation into small achievable, easy steps.
- Once you have created a coping step plan for your child/youth, pick a goal for yourself as well (other members of the family can do the same), and come up with your own coping step plan. You could even have a family goal. You might like to put your coping step plans up on the fridge, and chart your progress. You can all encourage and reward each other for your efforts.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Encourage your child/youth to identify specific tasks, fears, and difficult upcoming events.
- Provide your child/youth with praise every time they attempt something difficult, try something new, or are working towards their goals.
- Share your own experiences in learning new tasks, overcoming fears, etc.
- Break skills, and activities into small steps. Don't expect your child to progress to the next level until they have mastered the level below and feel confident with this.

Remember to...

- Assist your child/youth in using the new skills learned in this session to help them achieve their goals.
- Encourage your child/youth to listen to their body clues, take time to relax, and have quiet time.
- Encourage your child to express their feelings, and to **choose** appropriate ways of dealing with those feelings.
- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!
- Catch your child being courageous, and praise them for it.
- Share your positive experiences as a family once a day and talk about times your were courageous.

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**Session 7: Learning from our role models
and building support teams**

Handout 7

Concepts, skills, and strategies

- Understanding the importance of role models, and support teams.
- Establishing personal role models, and support teams
- For participants to identify their own social support team, and to learn how to use them when they need to.
- Being part of someone else's support team.
- Identifying positive friendships qualities, and social skills.

Tips for Parents

- Identify your role models – the people whom you look up to in your life both now, and in the past. Identify the strengths of these people and discuss with your child/youth the ways in which these people have impacted your life.
- Encourage positive role models for your child/youth – people, or characters who are brave, kind, and helpful to others, and who cope well with difficult situations. Make choices of movies/books, etc., which include positive role models. Role models aren't always famous people, or superheroes – they can be people in the family, or neighborhood as well!
- Help your child/youth to recognize when to seek help, and the people they can talk to when they go through good and bad times. It is important for children/youth to know there are people available who care!
- Give your child/youth the opportunity to interact with their friends and other people their age. Invite your children/youth's friends over for a movie, sleepover, or plan an outing and encourage your child/youth to invite a friend. Provide a nice, welcoming environment for your child/youth's friends when they visit.
- Depending on your child/youth's interests, get them involved in girl guides/scouts, choirs, sporting teams, community, or church groups, etc.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- It is important to have quality time as individuals, as couples, and as families, and to establish and use support networks of your own.
- Understanding that our support teams (people who care about us, and who are there when we need them) can help us cope in difficult situations. They can also help us to achieve our goals.
- Having a strong, and broad support network, or team, is important.
- Support teams share good things that happen to us, which increases our own happiness and excitement.
- Sharing tough times with our support team often helps to reduce the stress and pressure we feel.
- We can all help each other – being a friend to others.

Remember to...

- Identify the people whom you **look up** to in your life both now and in the past. Identify their strengths, and discuss with your child/youth the ways in which these people have impacted your life.
- Have a family discussion as to the **sources of supports** available to you. For example, family, friends, community leaders, teachers, family GP, dance teacher, etc.
- Assist your child/youth in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals.
- Help your child/youth to think in more positive ways – catch your child/youth's negative thoughts, and help turn them into more positive ones.
- Help your child/youth to face challenges and to break difficult things into small steps (using coping step plans).
- Encourage your child/youth to listen to their body clues, take time to relax and have quiet time.
- Encourage your child/youth to express their feelings and choose appropriate ways of dealing with those feelings.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!
- Catch your child/youth being courageous and praise them for it.
- Share your positive experiences as a family once a day and talk about times you were courageous.

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**Session 8: Using a Problem Solving Plan
and Reward yourself.**

Handout 8

(N = Now Reward Yourself! You've Done Your Best!)

Concepts, skills, and strategies

- To learn to utilize the 6-Block Problem Solving Plan
 1. What is the Problem?
 2. What could I do? (Think of a different ideas)
 3. List what might happen. (The consequences for each solution)
 4. Pick the best solution.
 5. Do it! (Put your plan into action)
 6. Did it work? (Good points and bad points)
- We all face many different challenging situations in life. Rather than focusing on the problem, the best idea is to come up with a solution for that problem.
- There are always many different solutions – it's a matter of choosing the best one.
- **For participants to understand the importance of self-rewards, and to be happy with themselves for trying their best, not for being perfect.**
- We should reward ourselves to acknowledge our own achievements and strengths.
- Trying your best is a success – as long as you have a go, that is the most important thing!
- We should also reward ourselves at each step of our coping step plan, not just when we achieve our final goal (Note: try to make rewards proportionate to achievements).
- Choosing rewards for ourselves. Interpersonal rewards are the most powerful – fun, quality time. Rewards don't have to cost money!
- Thinking like a winner, regardless of the outcome.

Tips for Parents

- The 6-Block Problem Solving Plan can help us to cope with our worries, or with difficult situations because it encourages us to come up with many ideas to manage the situation calmly.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- We all face many different challenging situations in life. Rather than focusing on the problem, the best idea is to come up with a solution for that problem. We can help our children/youth come up with solutions for their problems using the “6-Block Problem Solving Plan”. We can apply this plan to help us handle the difficult situations that we face. There are always many different solutions – it’s a matter of choosing the best one. We can do this by looking at the “pros” and “cons” of every possible solution (the good and bad points). This helps to make our decision easier.
- **Try to help your child/youth focus on their effort in giving things a try and not necessarily the outcome of their efforts.**
- Encourage your child/youth to reward him/herself whenever they have a go, and try their hardest. This could simply be entering a sporting event, or studying for a test. It is also important for children/youth to reward themselves for trying hard and approaching difficult, or worrying situations.
- Reward your child/youth for trying hard and approaching difficult worrying situations. Rewarding children/youth serves to encourage and motivate them to continue to try hard, and face challenges again in the future.
- Rewards do not have to be big or expensive. Simply giving your child praise for their behaviours is a reward in itself. Make your praise specific, such as *“I really like the way you just spoke to the teacher with confidence and respect”* or *“Thank you for cleaning up when asked”* rather than just *“Well done”*.
- **Praise and reinforce your child/youth whenever you catch them being courageous. Let them know you are proud of them.**
- It is important to negotiate rewards with your children/youth so they know what they are working towards, and what to expect. Rewards that are given immediately, and consistently are most effective.
- Try to encourage rewards that involve doing things with others, and not just simple tangible rewards such as food and toys. Interpersonal rewards, such as shared family

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

time, are the most powerful kinds of rewards, e.g. ice cream together, bike ride, kick a soccer ball, family dinner, etc.

- Work out with your child/youth what rewards they will receive for climbing the steps of their coping step plan. Ensure that the size of the reward is proportionate to the size of achievement (e.g. rewards get bigger as they approach their goal).

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Session 9 – Using the FRIENDS Skills

Handout 9

to help ourselves and others

(D = Don't forget to practice. S = Smile! Stay calm and talk to your support networks)

Concepts, skills, and strategies

Attention Training

- To help participants understand that paying attention to positive things helps
- It is called “attention training” because we are training ourselves to pay attention to the positive aspects of any situation.

Putting it all together – applying the FRIENDS skills

- To encourage group members to start to practice feeling confident and brave by using all of the skills they have learned.

Help your child/youth choose to pay attention to positive things that help them to feel more confident in difficult situations

- Not only can we focus on positive thoughts in our minds, but we can focus on positive things in our environment.
- Our focus of attention can be very powerful in determining how we feel and behave. Example: getting an injection, talking in front of a large group.
- When we feel nervous, or worried about a situation we tend to focus on all the negative aspects, which only make us feel even more anxious, and prevents us from coping with the situation in the best way that we can.
- Assist your child/youth in using the new skills learned in this session to help them achieve their goals.

Start to practice feeling confident and brave by using all of the skills they have learnt

- ✓ Try to help your child/youth focus on their effort in giving things a go, and not necessarily the outcome of their efforts.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- ✓ Help your child/youth to focus on what they can do well. This is likely to increase their willingness to give new things a go, or to continue facing things they find difficult.
- ✓ Discuss with your child ways that they can feel good about themselves when they have done their best, despite things not going the way they planned.
- ✓ The more ideas and solutions generated, and the more practice of these skills, the better skilled you and your child/youth will become in dealing with problems/conflicts and managing life situations.
- ✓ Plan ahead for difficult or challenging situations
- ✓ Look at ways to practice and remind ourselves of all the skills they have learned.

Remember to...

- Help your child/youth practice the skills they have learned in the FRIENDS program
- Help your child/youth to acknowledge their strengths and efforts, and reward themselves for trying their best and having a go.
- Help your child/youth choose to pay attention to positive things that help them to feel more confident in difficult situations
- Help your child to use the 6-step problem-solving plan when problems arise
- Help to build, and maintain your child/youth's support network
- Help your child/youth to face challenges and to break difficult things into small steps (using coping step plans). Continue to work on their coping step plan, and create a new one if they have already reached the top.
- Help your child/youth think in more positive ways – catch your child/youth's negative thoughts and help turn them into positive thoughts.
- Encourage your child/youth to listen to their body clues, take time to relax and have quiet time.
- Encourage your child/youth to express their feelings, and to choose appropriate ways of dealing with those feelings.
- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye when talking, use a courageous voice, smile, and stand up tall!

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Catch your child/youth being courageous, and praise them for it. Share your positive experiences as a family once a day, and talk about times you were courageous.

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Session 10 – Celebration

Handout 10

The final session is about reminding ourselves of all the useful skills we have learned in the FRIENDS program, and applying them to real-life situations and challenges.

Congratulate group members for participating, and all of their hard work.

Concepts, skills and strategies

- Putting it all together – feeling confident in practicing the FRIENDS skills every day
- Using the FRIENDS skills and strategies in the future.

Tips for parents

- Remember that learning new ways of coping takes time and practice. Even though the FRIENDS program is drawing to a close, it is important for your child/youth to continually use, and practice the skills they have learned!
- Not only can we focus on positive thoughts in our minds, but we can focus on positive things in our environment.
- When your child/youth is feeling worried, nervous, sad, or angry, remind them to practice the FRIENDS plan, which will help them feel better about themselves. When your child/youth is feeling worried, or nervous they must try and stay calm – they know ways to feel confident and brave now.
- Start to think about ideas of how you, and your child/youth can implement what they have learned in the long term. Is there anything coming up that your child might find challenging, or difficult?

Help your child/youth identify future challenges and to set realistic goals for now, and the future (e.g. learning a new sport/musical instrument or moving on to high school). It helps to plan ahead! Now is the time to talk about how your child/youth will face that situation.

- Encourage your child/youth to try new activities and praise all attempts when they try. It's okay to not always succeed! Trying their hardest, and putting in their best effort is what counts. This helps to build your child/youth's confidence.

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Try to incorporate the FRIENDS language into everyday life. For example continue to discuss “body clues” for different feelings, and use terms such as “calming breaths” and unhelpful and helpful thoughts.
- Continue to help your child/youth generate personal ways to reward themselves for their efforts.
- Setbacks may occur from time-to-time, but don’t despair – this is to be expected! The FRIENDS skills are skills to be used in real-life situations both now, and for the rest your lives.
- Make sure your child/youth keeps their FRIENDS workbook in a special place, and encourage them to refer the book to maintain the skills learned.
- Take care of yourselves! A starting point is to get enough sleep each night, eat well, and exercise everyday! Spend time together as a family as often as possible. Smile, and talk to your support people! ☺
- Remember that help is always there when you need it. Use your support team, your school guidance officer, and if you are in need of further assistance, look up your local support/counseling services in the yellow pages.

Nobody is the perfect parent, and you can only do your best! Look after yourself, and keep up the good work ☺!

Remember to ...

- Encourage your child/youth to **choose** to pay attention to positive things that help us to feel more confident in difficult situations.
- Reward your child/youth for having a go, and encourage your child/youth to reward themselves!
- Encourage positive role models, and help to build and maintain your child/youth’s support team.
- Discuss situations where a coping step plan, or the 6-block problem-solving plan may be useful (e.g. taking an exam, not being invited to a party, fighting over computer time at home, etc.).

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FRIENDS for Life for Youth Information for Parents

- Support your child to think in more positive ways – catch your child/youth’s unhelpful thoughts, and help turn them into helpful thoughts.
- Practice relaxation at home, and make sure your child/youth has “quiet time” every day.
- Encourage your child/youth to talk about their own, and other’s feelings.
- Encourage your child/youth to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!
- Praise, and reinforce all courageous behavior, and reward your child/youth.
- Have each family member continue to set and work towards goals.
- Share your positive experiences as a family once a day.

Smile! ☺

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