



## Session 1 – Introduction to the group

### Concepts, skills & strategies

- Working in groups
- **Learning to feel confident and brave in sharing one's feelings and ideas in a safe and appropriate way**
- Understanding and accepting differences between people, and acknowledging that we all share things in common, e.g. everyone feels worried sometimes.
- Learning to cope with stress, fears and worries
- Identifying happy experiences and goals



### Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, to use a loud brave voice, to smile and stand up tall.
- Sit down with your child and discuss individual and family goals that can be achieved over the coming weeks. Make the goals specific and positive in nature (e.g. to keep my room tidy each day, to use friendly words when talking to my brothers and/or sisters)
- Focus on positively reinforcing all brave behaviour. Catch your child being brave (e.g. doing something new for the first time, having a go at something they normally find challenging, being kind to others). **You might like to use a “Brave Chart” and give your child a sticker/stamp on for these behaviours, and negotiate rewards for your child e.g. a picnic in the park when they have 20 stickers.**
- Encourage your child to talk about the things that upset them including any fears or worries. Share some of your own childhood worries and fears. This will help your child to understand that feeling anxious and worried is normal okay. Your child will be learning new skills to manage these worries in the coming weeks.
- **Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave. Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas and feelings experienced from the day.**

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## Session 2 – Introduction to feelings (F = Feelings)

### Concepts, skills & strategies



- Understanding your own and other people's feelings
- Identifying feelings we want to “grow” (have more often) and feelings we want to “shrink” (have less often) in our lives. We can't expect to have happy feelings all the time!
- Normalisation of all feelings – we all experience certain feelings in different situations. While all feelings are okay, it's what we do with our feelings that counts most. For example, when we are feeling angry, we could kick something or somebody, or we could splash our face with water and take some deep breaths.
- Thinking in powerful or helpful ways – we can *choose* to think in ways that help us feel good

### Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child to talk about and identify their feelings. Praise them for what they tell you. Model sharing some of your feelings as well and talk about times when you felt certain ways.
- **Help build your child's vocabulary of feelings words** – give them ideas of new words used to describe how they feel.
- Try to verbalise what you think your child is feeling. For example, if you notice that your child looks happy, let them know this. You could **say something like “you look very happy today. I can tell because you are smiling and have laughed lots, this shows me that you are happy.”** Or, “I can see that you are angry as your face and fists are scrunched up and you are raising your voice, this **shows me that you angry.”**
- You can also recognise and label feelings in other people, such as other family members by identifying their facial expressions and body language, and encourage your child to recognise moments when they can support or assist others in times of need.
- When you read story books or watch movies, talk about what the different characters are feeling.

## **Remember to...**

- Remind your child to use the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!
- **Catch your child being brave and praise them for it. Use your child's brave chart!**
- **Share your "happy things" as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.** Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas and feelings experienced from the day.
- Remember to exercise together as a family and encourage healthy eating and drinking of water.
- Take time for quiet time to relax each day.



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## Session 3 – Learning to feel confident and brave: Feelings (cont.) and Relaxation games (R = Remember to Relax. Have quiet time)

### Concepts, skills & strategies

- Introduction to body clues - paying attention to the physical reactions we experience when we feel worried or nervous, helps us to understand how we are feeling e.g. butterflies in tummy, **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 breaths, muscle relaxation



### Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child to talk about what is happening inside of their bodies when they experience different types of feelings, and share examples of your own body clues. **Remind your child that these signs are your body's way of telling you how you are feeling.**
- **Notice your child's physical complaints and when they occur. If they complain of a tummy ache/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 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 to teach you how to do "milkshake breathing".** Next time you notice your child is feeling angry, worried, or upset, remind them to slow down and take some milkshake 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.

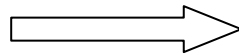
**By taking slow, deep breaths, we can relax our body, our heart beats slower, and we feel less tense or worried.**



**Keeping your shoulders relaxed, take in a slow deep breath, starting from the bottom of your stomach, in through the nose. Breathe out as slowly as you can through the nose or mouth.**

- Practise **progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)** with your child. 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 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 practising PMR (see example at end of handout).

**Physical relaxation**



**Mental calmness ☺**

- Another way your child 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, jumping on the trampoline, playing with their dog or cat, going for a swim, **drawing, listening to some 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 veranda. Whatever works for you! Parents need special times too!
- The more you practice relaxation activities, the better equipped your child 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 in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
- 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 brave and praise them for it. **Use your child's brave chart!**
- **Share your "happy things" as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.** Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas and feelings experienced from the day.

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## **Example: Progressive muscle relaxation for children (author unknown)**

Here is a script you can read to your child to help them relax. You might choose to do this before bed to help your child get to sleep. You could play some relaxing music if you want. Speak in a calm and slow voice. You could even record your voice and play this back to your child when they go to sleep at night. Have your child close their eyes, lie down, or sit comfortably.

### **Introduction**

Okay, first, get as comfortable as you can. If you are sitting, sit back, get both feet on the floor, and just let your arms hang loose. That's fine. Now close your eyes and don't open them until I say to. Remember to follow my instructions very carefully, try hard, and pay attention to your body. Here we go.

### **Hands and Arms**

Pretend you have a whole lemon in your left hand. Now squeeze it hard. Try to squeeze all the juice out. Feel the tightness in your hand and arm as you squeeze. Now drop the lemon. Notice how your muscles feel when they are relaxed. Take another lemon and squeeze. Try to squeeze this one harder than you did the first one. That's right. Real hard. Now drop the lemon and relax. See how much better your hand and arm feel when they are relaxed. Once again, take a lemon in your left hand and squeeze all the juice out. Don't leave a single drop. Squeeze hard. Good. Now relax and let the lemon fall from your hand.  
(Repeat the process for the right hand and arm.)

### **Arms and Shoulders**

Pretend you are a furry, lazy cat. You want to stretch. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them up high over your head. Way back. Feel the pull in your shoulders. Stretch higher. Now just let your arms drop back to your side. Okay, kitten, let's stretch again. Stretch your arms out in front of you. Raise them over your head. Pull them back, way back. Pull hard. Now let them drop quickly. Good. Notice how your shoulders feel more relaxed. This time let's have a great big stretch. Try to touch the ceiling. Stretch your arms way out in front of you. Raise them way up high over your head. Push them way, way back. Notice the tension and pull in your arms and shoulders. Hold tight, now. Great. Let them drop very quickly and feel how good it is to be relaxed. It feels good and warm and lazy.

### **Jaw**

You have a giant jawbreaker bubble gum in your mouth. It's very hard to chew. Bite down on it. Hard! Let your neck muscles help you. Now relax. Just let your jaw hang loose. Notice that how good it feels just to let your jaw drop. Okay, let's tackle that jawbreaker again now. Bite down. Hard! Try to squeeze it out between your teeth. That's good. You're really tearing that gum up. Now relax again. Just let your jaw drop off your face. It feels good just to let go and not have to fight that bubble gum. Okay, one more time. We're really going to tear it up this time. Bite down. Hard as you can. Harder. Oh, you're really working hard. Good. Now relax. Try to relax your whole body. You've beaten that bubble gum. Let yourself go as loose as you can.

### **Face and Nose**

Here comes a pesky old fly. He has landed on your nose. Try to get him off without using your hands. That's right, wrinkle up your nose. Make as many wrinkles in your nose as you can. Scrunch your nose up real hard. Good. You've chased him away. Now you can relax your nose. Oops, here he comes back again. Right back in the middle of your nose. Wrinkle up your nose again. Shoo him off. Wrinkle it up hard. Hold it just as tight as you can. Okay, he flew away. You can relax your face. Notice that

when you scrunch up your nose your cheeks and your mouth and your forehead and your eyes all help you and they get tight too. So when you relax your nose, your whole body relaxes too, and that feels good. Oh-oh. This time that old fly has come back, but this time he's on your forehead. Make lots of wrinkles. Try to catch him between all those wrinkles. Hold it tight, now. Okay, you can let go. He's gone for good. Now you can just relax. Let your face go smooth, no wrinkles anywhere. Your face feels nice and smooth and relaxed.

## **Stomach**

Hey! Here comes a cute baby elephant. But he's not watching where he's going. He doesn't see you lying in the grass, and he's about to step on your stomach. Don't move. You don't have time to get out of the way. Just get ready for him. Make your stomach very hard. Tighten up your stomach muscles real tight. Hold it. It looks like he is going the other way. You can relax now. Let your stomach go soft. Let it be as relaxed as you can. That feels so much better. Oops, he's coming this way again. Get Ready. Tighten up your stomach. Real hard. If he steps on you when your stomach is hard, it won't hurt. Make your stomach into a rock. Okay, he's moving away again. You can relax now. Kind of settle down, get comfortable, and relax. Notice the difference between a tight stomach and a relaxed one. That's how we want to feel---nice and loose and relaxed. You won't believe this, but this time he's coming your way and no turning around. He's headed straight for you. Tighten up. Tighten hard. Here he comes. This is really it. You've got to hold on tight. He's stepping on you. He's stepped over you. Now he's gone for good. You can relax completely. You're safe. Everything is okay, and you can feel nice and relaxed. This time imagine that you want to squeeze through a narrow fence and the boards have splinters on them. You'll have to make yourself very skinny if you're going to make it through. Suck your stomach in. Try to squeeze it up against your backbone. Try to be skinny as you can. You've got to be skinny now. Just relax and feel your stomach being warm and loose. Okay, let's try to get through that fence now. Squeeze up your stomach. Make it touch your backbone. Get it real small and tight. Get it as skinny as you can. Hold tight, now. You've got to squeeze through. You got through that narrow little fence and no splinters! You can relax now. Settle back and let your stomach come back out where it belongs. You can feel really good now. You've done fine.

## **Legs and Feet**

Now pretend that you are standing barefoot in a big, fat mud puddle. Squish your toes down deep into the mud. Try to get your feet down to the bottom of the mud puddle. You'll probably need your legs to help you push. Push down, spread your toes apart, feel the mud squish up between your toes. Now step out of the mud puddle. Relax your feet. Let your toes go loose and feel how nice that it feels to be relaxed. Back into the mud puddle. Squish your toes down. Let your leg muscles help push your feet down. Push your feet. Hard. Try to squeeze that puddle dry. Okay. Come back out now. Relax your feet, relax your legs, and relax your toes. It feels so good to be relaxed. No tenseness anywhere. You feel kind of warm and tingly.

## **Conclusion**

Stay as relaxed as you can. Let your whole body go limp and feel all your muscles relaxed. Each day, remember how good it feels to be relaxed. Sometimes you have to make yourself tighter before you can be relaxed, just as we did in these exercises. Practice these exercises everyday to get more and more relaxed.



## Session 4: Helpful (green) and Unhelpful (red) Self-talk

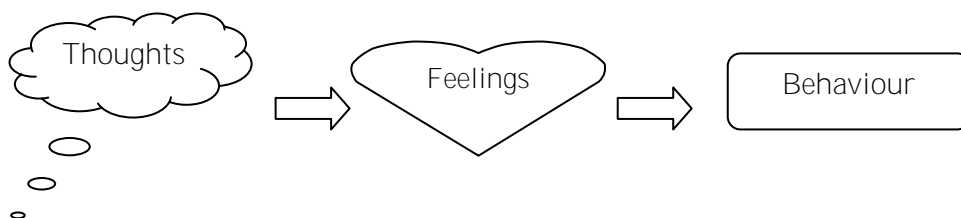
### I can do it! I can try my best!)

People who are positive thinkers are happier, healthier have better relationships, and are more successful in school and work. Positive thinking, or seeing the glass as half full rather than half empty, is a skill that everybody can learn.

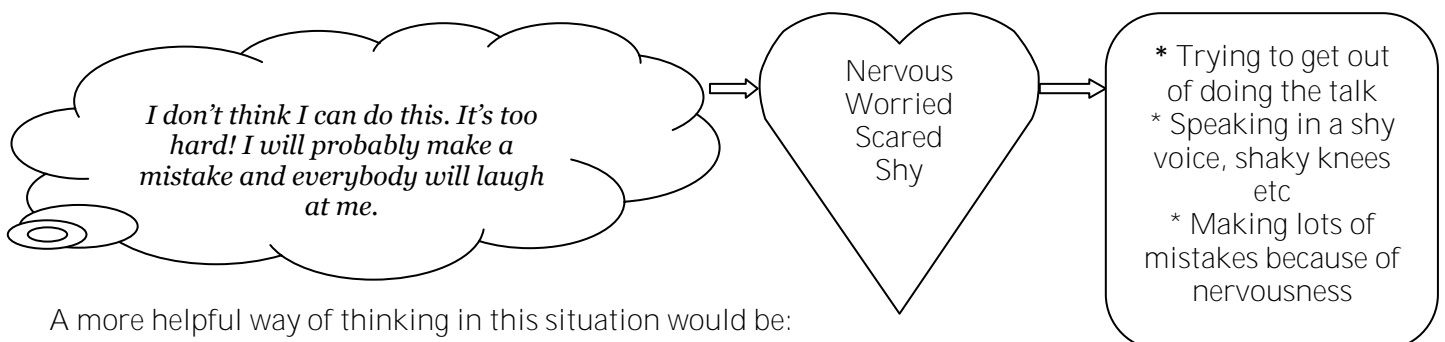
People are often unaware of their own self-talk, especially when they are nervous, upset or angry. If we pay attention to the thoughts going on inside our heads when we are feeling this way, we will mostly find that these thoughts are very negative. We call these “red thoughts” e.g. “*I’m so hopeless*”, “*This is too hard*”, “*Everybody will laugh at me*” etc.

**It helps to pay attention to the voice inside our heads to identify when our self-talk is unhelpful.**

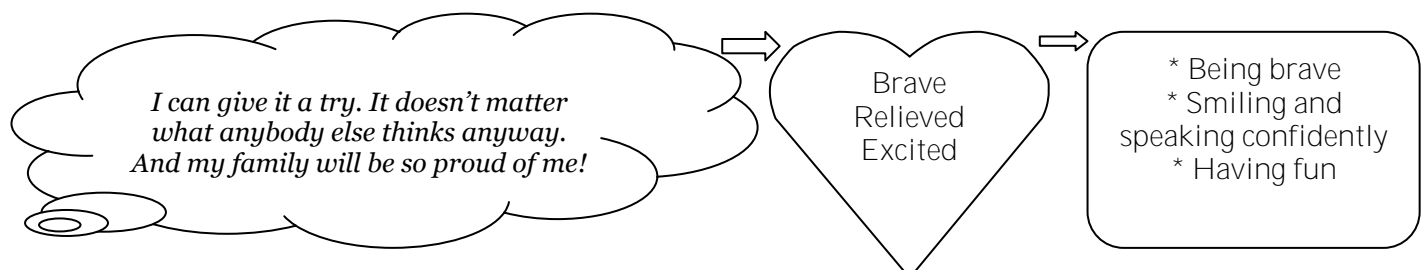
Our thoughts have a big influence on the way we feel. In any situation, there is a link between the types of thoughts we have and the way we feel and act.



Let’s apply this to a real life situation to see how it works. Example: Talking in front of a group of people



A more helpful way of thinking in this situation would be:



In other words, we have the ability to change the way we think about different situations, which can change the way we feel and behave.

**We can choose to think about situations in positive ways which make us feel happy and brave, or we can choose to think in negative ways which may make us feel fearful, tense, sad, angry or uncomfortable.**

### Concepts, skills & strategies

- Understanding and paying attention to our thoughts, or “self talk”
  - Introducing the idea of different kinds of thoughts:
    - Unhelpful **RED thoughts** – stop! Red thoughts make us feel miserable, worried or upset.
    - Helpful **GREEN thoughts** – go! Green thoughts make us feel strong, brave, happy and confident.
- Understanding thoughts and feelings affect our behaviour



### Tips for Parents

- Have your child explain what red and green thoughts are to all family members. It helps if everyone at home is using the same language.
- To help children recognise whether thoughts are helpful (GREEN) or unhelpful (RED), share out loud some of your own thoughts. Other family members can do the same.
- Provide praise when your child is able to say their thoughts aloud, whether they be unhelpful or helpful.
- Encourage your child to focus on the positives of any situation.
- Help your child practice **bossing back unhelpful thoughts** and replacing them with more positive thoughts.

#### **Notice negative thinking in yourself or your child.**

- Remember that we all have unhelpful thoughts and sometimes they occur without us knowing. FRIENDS teaches children to *listen* to their self-talk. You can help your child to become more aware of their thoughts. Having red thoughts is okay – **it's what we do with those red thoughts that are important.**
- The more we listen to unhelpful thoughts the more we believe them and act upon them. It is important to help your child practise **bossing back unhelpful thoughts** such as “I cannot do

it” and replacing them with more positive thoughts such as “I know it is hard, but I can have a go and try my best”.

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- 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, 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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- Next week we will look at how to turn red thoughts into green thoughts.

### **Remember to...**

- Assist your child in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
- Encourage your child 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 brave and praise them for it. Use your child’s brave chart!**
- **Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.** Provide lots of praise for attempts to share ideas and feelings experienced from the day.
- Take time to exercise together as a family
- Incorporate healthy eating and drinking water into your daily life as a family.
- Encourage your child to sleep 8 hours a night and encourage all of the family to turn off mobile phones and computers as a set time.

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## Session 5 : Changing Unhelpful thoughts into Helpful thoughts.

### (I = I can do it! I can try my best!)

In Session 4 your child learnt about the power of thoughts, and that there are two different types of thoughts – red (unhelpful) and green (helpful) thoughts. The next step is to learn to turn red thoughts into more helpful green thoughts (we can call this **“bossing back” our red thoughts**). While everybody has red thoughts sometimes, we need to catch our red thoughts and turn them into green thoughts to help make ourselves feel better and cope with difficult or challenging situations.

**We can *choose* to think green thoughts and to feel calm, happy and brave.**

Examples of helpful (green) thoughts are:

- *At least I had a go. If I keep practising I'll get better.*
- *It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks!*
- *I can try my best!*



Be aware that bossing back unhelpful thoughts is just like learning any other new skill – it takes lots of practice! But it is worth the effort, because it can make a huge difference in our ability to cope with difficult situations.

### Concepts, skills and strategies

- Challenging unhelpful thoughts
- Changing red thoughts into to green thoughts
- Paying attention to the positive aspects of any situation can help us cope and feel better

### Tips for parents

- Catch your child when they have red thoughts and actively help them to turn them into green thoughts. It is important to help your child practise bossing back unhelpful thoughts such as *“I can't do it”* and replace them with **more positive thoughts** such as *“I know it's hard, but I can have a go and try my best.”* We can be the boss of our thoughts!

- If you recognise that you are saying unhelpful words, then let your child know that you are aware of this. Then demonstrate coming up with a more positive way of looking at your situation. For example, if you are getting stressed about being late for work, instead of saying *“I can’t believe I’m running late. Knowing my luck I’ll get all the red lights!”* you could say *“I’m just going to stay calm and I will get to work eventually. At least I can listen to my favourite radio station as I drive!”*.
- When a family member has a red thought, the other family members come up with green thoughts to talk back to the red thought.
- Make sure your child’s green thoughts are realistic – otherwise they might lead to disappointment. For example, before their first soccer match, it is not helpful to think *“I am going to score 10 goals!”*, because this is not likely to happen. Encourage more helpful and realistic green thoughts, such as *“I’m going to try my best, and as long as I have fun that’s all that matters!”*
- Another way we can help our children change unhelpful to helpful thoughts is to challenge them by asking certain questions, and looking for evidence against the unhelpful thoughts. Adopt the role of a detective to find out if their red thoughts are really true! You can also ask your child: *“Is that really a helpful way of thinking? Is it helping you feel good?”* Examples of questions to challenge your child’s red thoughts:
  - *Is that really true?*
  - *Are you exaggerating?*
  - *Are you sure?*
  - *What’s the worst thing that could happen?*



- Be prepared to practise and make an effort - the more you and your child practise the skill of challenging unhelpful thoughts, the more control you and your child will have over your feelings and behaviour! **We can all learn to overcome our difficulties by CHOOSING to think positively.**
  - **Make sure your child’s green thoughts are realistic** – otherwise they might lead to disappointment.

- Help children by challenging their red, unhelpful thoughts by asking certain questions and looking for evidence against the unhelpful thoughts. Adopt the role of a detective to find out if their red thoughts are really true!
- Be prepared to practise and make an effort.



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## Session 6: Exploring ways to cope - 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 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 brave 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 to practice saying green thoughts when faced with new situations or challenges or when they are finding a task difficult to master.
- Although it is hard to see your child 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. *[See Tip Sheet and p50-52 of your child’s workbook for examples]*. You can break many skills and activities into small steps this way.
- Once you have created a coping step plan for your child, 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.

- Encourage your child to identify specific tasks, fears, difficult upcoming events.
- Provide your child with praise every time they attempt something difficult, try something new, or are working towards their goals.
- Help your child to practise saying GREEN thoughts when faced with new situations or challenges.
- 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 in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
- Encourage your child 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 brave and praise them for it. Use your child's brave chart!**
- **Share your "happy things" as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.**

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## Session 7: Learning from our role models and building Support teams

### Concepts, skills and strategies

- Understanding the importance of role models and support teams.
- Establishing personal role models and support team.
- 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 friendship qualities and social skills



### Tips for parents

- Identify your role models - the people whom you look up to in your life both now or in the past. Identify the strengths of these people and discuss with your child the ways in which these people have impacted your life.
- Encourage positive role models for your child— 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 neighbourhood as well!
- Help your child to recognise when to seek help and the people they can talk to when they go through good and bad times. It is important for children to know there are people available who care!
- Give your child the opportunity to interact with their friends and other children their age. **Invite your children's friends over for a video**, a sleepover, or plan a picnic and encourage your child to invite a friend. Provide a nice, welcoming environment **for your child's friends** when they visit
- **Depending on your child's interests, get them involved in girl guides/scouts, choirs, sporting teams, community or church groups etc** - the list goes on.
- It is important to have quality times 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 or in the past. Identify their strengths discuss with your child (ren) 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 in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
- Help your child to think in more positive ways - **catch your child's red thoughts and help turn** them into green thoughts
- Help your child to face challenges and to break difficult things into small steps (using coping step plans)
- Encourage your child 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 brave and praise them for it. Use your child's brave chart!**
- **Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.**



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## Session 8: Using a Problem Solving Plan

### Concepts, skills and strategies

- To learn and utilise the 6-Block Problem Solving Plan
- 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.**

### 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.
- 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 come up with solutions for their problems using the “6-block problem-solving plan”** (p72 of workbook). 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.
- **Remember to**
  - Assist your child in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals
  - Help your child to use the 6-step problem-solving plan when problems arise
  - Help to **build and maintain your child's support network**
  - Help your child to think in more positive ways - **catch your child's red thoughts and help turn them into green thoughts**
  - Help your child to face challenges and to break difficult things into small steps (using coping step plans)
  - Encourage your child 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 brave and praise them for it. **Use your child's brave chart!**
  - **Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.**



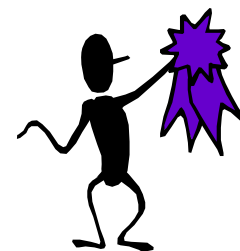
## **Session 9: Using the FRIENDS Skills to help ourselves and others.**

### **Introducing steps 5, 6 and 7 of the FRIENDS plan.**

**N = Now reward yourself! (You've done your best!)**

**D= Don't forget to Practise**

**S= Smile! Stay Calm and talk to your support networks.**



### **Concepts, skills and strategies**

- **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 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 outcome

### **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 practise feeling confident and brave by using all of the skills they have learnt.

## Tips for parents

### **Try to help your child focus on their effort in giving things a go and not necessarily the outcome of their efforts**

- Encourage your child to reward him/herself whenever they have a go and try their hardest. This could simply be entering a swimming race, or studying for a test. It is also important for children to reward themselves when they cope with a difficult or worrying situation.
- Reward your child for trying hard and approaching difficult or worrying situations. Rewarding children 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 liked the way you just spoke to the shopkeeper in a loud confident voice”* or *“Thank you for cleaning up when asked”* rather than just *“Well done”*.

### **Praise and reinforce your child whenever you catch them being brave. Let them know you are proud of them.**

- It is important to negotiate rewards with your children 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 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 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 (i.e. rewards get bigger as they approach their goal).
- **You might continue to use a “brave chart” system when your child finished the *FRIENDS* programme.** Perhaps you can negotiate rewards for every row of stickers e.g. once you have 10 stickers we will go out as a family for an ice cream, have a picnic in the park, invite a friend over for a movie etc.



**Help your child 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 large group
- When we feel nervous or worried about a situation we tend to focus on all the negative aspects, which only makes us feel even more anxious and prevents us from coping with the situation in the best way that we can.
- **It is called “attention training” because we are training ourselves** to pay attention to the positive aspects of any situation
- Assist your child in using the new skills learnt in this session to help them achieve their goals

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

- ✓ Try to help your child focus on their effort in giving things a go and not necessarily the outcome of their efforts.
- ✓ Help your child 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 children 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 practise the skills they have learnt in the FRIENDS program
- Help your child to acknowledge their strengths and efforts and reward themselves for trying their best and having a go.
- Help your child 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's support network**
- Help your child 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 to think in more positive ways - **catch your child's red thoughts and help** turn them into green thoughts
- Encourage your child 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 brave and praise them for it. Use your child's brave chart! Share your "happy things" as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.**



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## Sessions 10: Review and Party

The final session is about reminding ourselves of all the useful skills we have learnt 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 practising 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 programme is drawing to a close, it is important for your child to continually use and practise the skills they have learnt!
- Not only can we focus on positive thoughts in our minds, but we can focus on positive things in our environment.
- When your child is feeling worried, nervous, sad or angry, remind them to practise the FRIENDS plan, which will help them feel better about themselves. When your child 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 can implement what they have learnt in the long term. Is there anything coming up that your child might find challenging or difficult?

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

- Encourage your child 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's confidence.
- Try to incorporate the FRIENDS language into everyday life. For example continue to discuss "body clues" for different feelings, and use terms such as "milkshake breathing" and "red and green thoughts"



- Use a brave chart at home and continue to help your child 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 of your lives.
- Make sure your child keeps their FRIENDS workbook in a special place, and encourage them to refer the book to maintain the skills learnt.
- 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/counselling 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 to choose to pay attention to positive things that help us to feel more confident in difficult situations
- Reward your child for having a go, and encourage your child to reward themselves!
- **Encourage positive role models and help to build and maintain your child's support team.**
- Discuss situations where a coping step plan or the 6-block problem solving plan may be useful (e.g., going on school camp, sitting an exam, not being invited to a party, fighting over computer time at home etc).
- Support your child to face challenges, and break difficult goals into smaller steps (using coping step plans)
- Help your child to think in more positive ways - **catch your child's red thoughts and help turn them into green thoughts**
- **Practise relaxation at home, and make sure your child has "quiet time" every day**
- Encourage your child to talk about their **own and others' feelings.**
- 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!
- Praise and reinforce all brave behaviour and reward your child.
- Have each family member continue to set and work towards goals



- Share your “happy things” as a family once a day.

**Smile!**