



Fun Friends: Information for parents

Everybody gets worried or sad sometimes. All children feel anxious as a part of their normal development. *Fun Friends* was developed by world-renowned child psychologist Professor Paula Barrett to equip children and their families with life skills that build resilience and social-emotional strength to cope with stresses and challenges that are a part of everyday life. Research has shown that children who are resilient (able to bounce back from adversity) are more likely to succeed at school, develop healthy peer relationships, and are less likely to develop mental health problems.

Your child will learn how to be “brave” and deal with difficulties, to recognise signs of anxiety, relaxation strategies for staying calm, how to build positive relationships with others, to develop positive thinking, and how to try new things and face their fears.

What you can do at home

There are many things you can do to help your child become more resilient and happy. Each week, your child will be introduced to specific skills which need to be reinforced both during the group and in the home environment in order for change to occur. As a parent you are an extremely important and influential role model, and you play a vital role in the development and maintenance of the skills taught in the *Fun Friends* programme.

The Family Adventure book has a lot of useful discussion starters, stories and pictures which you can use with your child. In addition, the following handouts outline the key skills and strategies for each of the sessions of Fun Friends, and gives some helpful tips for how you can help your child and other family members to practise them at home.

It is our aim that your child, your family and community will enjoy the Fun Friends program and will benefit from learning practical, useful skills for coping with stress, worry, fear and day-to-day challenges.



F = FEELINGS.

My body gives me clues to help me know how I'm feeling. I can recognise that I'm feeling worried because my palms are sweaty, I have butterflies in my stomach, my heart is beating fast, and I need to go to the toilet. This is my bodies way of telling me it is time to do something to calm down!

R = REMEMBER TO RELAX. HAVE QUIET TIME.

I can do milkshake breathing, practise relaxation, have fun times and quiet times too.

I = I CAN DO IT! I CAN TRY MY BEST!

I can think of more helpful GREEN thoughts, such as "I can do it", and "It doesn't matter as long as I try my best".

E = ENCOURAGE!

I can learn new things and try new things that are hard for me. I'll take small "baby" steps and try new things so I can feel really proud of myself. Making a Step Plan will help me. I can reward myself for each step I climb.

N = NURTURE.

There are many special people in my life. They can help me in lots of ways. My family, my friends and my teachers can all help me learn and try new things.

D = DON'T FORGET TO PRACTISE.

I can use the FRIENDS plan to feel confident and brave about all sorts of things. I can practise my relaxation games so that when I feel tense and stiff, I can relax my muscles straight away. I can also practise GREEN thoughts.

S = SMILE! STAY CALM FOR LIFE!

I can stay cool and calm, because I know the steps of the FRIENDS plan, which will help me to be confident and brave.



Session 1 – Getting started

Concepts, skills & strategies

- Sense of identity (who am I, saying who you are to others)
- Feeling scared is okay. We can all learn to be brave
- Being brave = looking people in the eye, smiling, saying hello with a brave voice, trying your best, trying something for the first time, sharing, trying, and staying happy.
- We are all different and we are all the same too - understanding and accepting differences between people and recognising things we have in common
- Social skills training
- Identifying happy experiences



Tips for Parents

- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking
- Practise using a brave voice with your child. This can be turned into a game where you experiment using different tones, voices and volumes. You can use role plays and puppets.
- Praise your child when they smile and stand up tall
- Talk about the ways in which people are different and emphasise that it's okay to be different. We all have a lot in common as well. You might like to use books or atlases to look at people in different countries with different cultures and talk about this.
- Talk about times you were brave, and praise your child for “brave” behaviours, such as trying new things, speaking in a brave voice, being kind to others, and facing scary situations. Give them specific feedback e.g. *“I liked the way you spoke to our neighbour with a big loud voice. That was very brave of you.”*
- You might like to use a “brave chart”, and give your child a sticker/stamp everytime you see them doing something brave. You might like to negotiate rewards for your child e.g. when they have 20 stickers.
- At the dinner table, have each family member share their “happy thing” that happened that day. It can be something big or small! This encourages focussing on the positive. They might also like to talk about a time that day when they did something brave. Get all of the family members involved.
- 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 and okay. We all feel this way sometimes – even adults! Your child will be learning new skills to manage these worries in the coming weeks.



Session 2 – My Feelings (*F = Feelings*)

Concepts, skills & strategies

- Identification and naming of feelings in self and others
- Normalisation of all feelings – we all feel certain ways at certain times.
- We CAN make happy feelings grow and our unhappy feeling shrink. All feelings are okay but there are some feelings we would like to have more/less often.
- 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 (a “thumbs down” idea), or we could splash our face with water and take some deep breaths (a “thumbs up” idea)



Tips for Parents

- Act out different feelings using different facial expressions and body postures with your child and have them guess what you are feeling. Let them have a turn. Talk about how you can tell when people are feeling certain ways (*What does their face look like? What does their body look like?*)
- 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.
- Validate your child's emotions. Let them know that you notice their feelings. For example *“I can see that you are grumpy because you are scrunching up your face and crossing your arms. I know you don't like packing away your toys, but I need you to make a good choice now and put the toys in the box please”*. Discussing what emotions you see your child displaying will create understanding.
- When your child experiences unpleasant feelings such as sad, angry, worried, frustrated or lonely, talk about constructive things they can do with those feelings. For example, if you are sad: have a cuddle, talk to someone you love, play with a pet, have a bubble bath; if you are angry: go to a “chill out zone”, have a cool drink of water, or run/swim; if you feel worried: talk to Mum or Dad, listen to some nice music, play a fun game...etc. Praise them for what they tell you and for doing these things.
- It may be helpful to refer to the unhelpful things – e.g. kicking, breaking things, etc., as “thumbs down” ideas, and the helpful things as “thumbs up” ideas (use actions as well).
- When you read story books or watch movies, talk about what the different characters are feeling.
- Reward your child whenever they take control of their feelings, and make “thumbs up” choices.



Session 3 – Your Feelings: I will help (*F = Feelings*)

Concepts, skills & strategies

- Paying attention to other people's feelings – parents, siblings, friends etc
- Thinking about ways to help other people feel better (empathy training)
- Recognising other's feelings and thinking about how you would feel in somebody else's situation

Tips for Parents

- Discuss with your child what certain people they know do when they feel certain ways, especially members of the family. E.g. *“How can you tell when your sister is feeling sad?”*
- Encourage your child to identify other peoples' feelings. For example, *“when you saw Sally crying, how do you think she was feeling at the time?”*
- Encourage your child to recognise moments when they can support or assist others in times of need. For example *“what could you have done to help Sally feel better when she was crying?”*
- Provide praise for times when your child offers assistance to others or go out of their way to help. Praising “thumbs up” choices is going to increase the likelihood of that behaviour occurring in the future.
- Point out that there are lots of things they can do to help somebody feel better. Little things like smiling, getting somebody a glass of water, or patting them on the back can make a big difference!



Remember to...

- 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.
- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings and use “thumbs up” ideas to deal with unpleasant feelings



Session 4 – Our bodies and relaxation games (*R = Relax*)

Concepts, skills & strategies

- Paying attention to the physical reactions we experience when we feel worried or nervous (our “body clues”) 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 and manage our worries
- You might notice that when you feel worried, your breathing quickens and becomes shallow. Practise breathing slowly, or milkshake breathing.

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

- Progressive muscle relaxation (PMR)
- It is important to have rest and quiet time

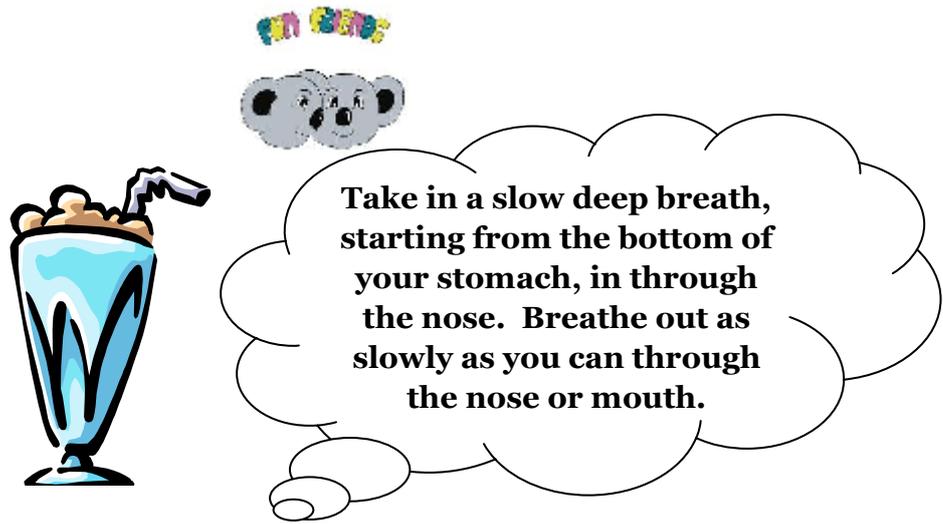


Tips for parents

- 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. Let your child know 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? Explain to your child what you notice, for example “*I notice that when I mention going to school you say you feel sick in the tummy. I think this means that you are probably feeling worried about school?*”
- 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.

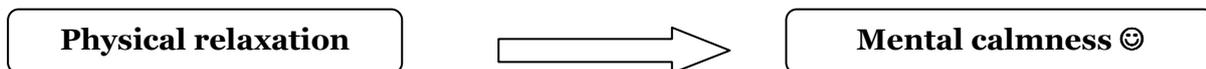
Spend time each day doing relaxation activities and having quiet time.

- Ask your child to teach you how to do “milkshake breathing.” 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. Next time you notice your child is feeling angry, worried, anxious, remind them to slow down and take some milkshake breaths.

- 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 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. You might talk with your child about the difference between being a stiff robot and floppy jellyfish or ragdoll. It can help to close the eyes, lie down, and using relaxation scripts when practising PMR (see example at end of handout).



- 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.



Example: Relaxation script for young children

Here is a script you might read to your child as they are going to bed. You could play some relaxing music. 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. Start with a story book, maybe even a backrub, then dim the lights and read the relaxation script. Have your child close their eyes, lie down, or sit comfortably. You can use your own words if you prefer.

Now make your hands into fists, go on really squeeze those fists. Feel that tight feeling,----- And now go floppy. ----- Enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Make your hands into tight fists again and bring your hands up to touch your shoulders. Feel that tight feeling along your arms. Feel the tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Now relax your arms, let them hang loosely by your side. Push your shoulders up and try and touch your ears. Go on really push upwards. Feel that tight feeling in your shoulders. Feel the tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

This time scrunch up your face. Really scrunch up your face. Feel that tight feeling in your face and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Now make your tummy muscles tight go on really tighten those muscles. Feel that tight feeling. Feel the tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Push your tummy forward this time, make your back arch, feel the tight feeling all along your back, feel that tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Tighten the muscles in your legs, feel those muscles tightening, feel that tight feeling and relax. Feel that tight feeling along your arms. Feel the tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Now make your toes into fists, really scrunch up those toes. Feel that tight feeling. Feel the tight feeling and relax, enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Take a deep breath hold that breath, feel that tight feeling in your chest, feel the tight feeling now let the breath out slowly and feel all the tightness go away. Enjoy that lovely floppy feeling.

Keep your eyes closed, we are going to check each part of your body to see if there is any tightness. Think of your hands and arms if there is any tightness just let go of it. Now check your shoulders, neck and face. If you find any tightness just let go. Check your back and shoulders, your legs and feet. If you find any tension just let go.

You should now be feeling wonderful and relaxed and floppy. Just enjoy that wonderful feeling and when you feel ready open your eyes.



Session 5 - Red and green thinking (*I = I can try!*)

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.

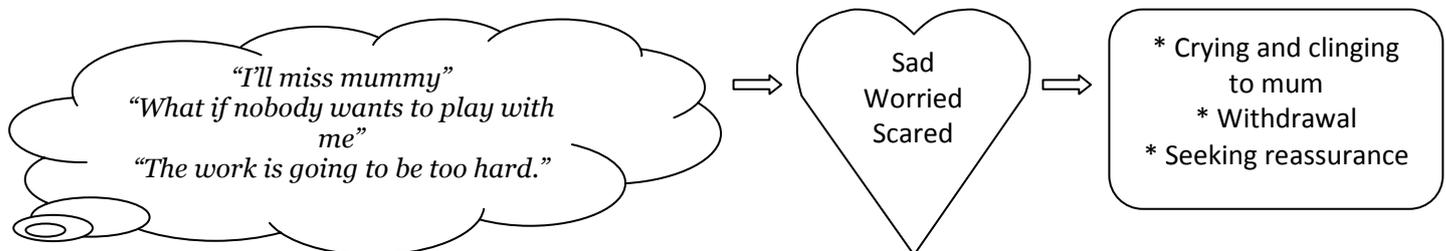
People are often unaware of their own self-talk, especially when they are nervous, upset or angry. If we pay attention to the thoughts going on inside our heads when we are feeling this way, we will mostly find that these thoughts are very negative. We call these “red thoughts” e.g. “*I’m so hopeless*”,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

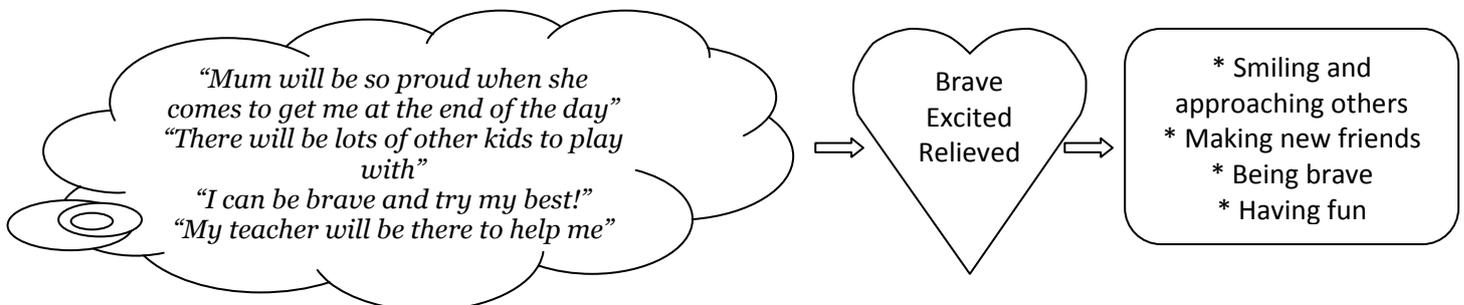
Our thoughts have a big influence on the way we feel. In any situation, there is a link between the types of thoughts we have and the way we feel and act.



Let’s apply this to a real life situation to see how it works. Example: Going to school at the start of the year



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 the difference between our thoughts and feelings (thoughts in our heads, feelings in our body)
- Paying attention to our thoughts
- 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.



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.
- Remember that we all have unhelpful thoughts and sometimes they occur without us knowing. Fun 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's important. Next week we will look at how to turn red thoughts into green thoughts.
- 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.





Session 6 – Changing “Red” Thoughts into “Green” Thoughts (*I = I can try!*)

In Session 5 your child learnt what we mean by “thoughts”, and that there are two different types of thoughts – red and green. The next step is to learn to turn red thoughts into more helpful green thoughts (we 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.

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/techniques

- Throwing away red thoughts
- Challenging unhelpful thoughts
- Encouraging changing red thoughts to green thoughts

Tips for parents

- Provide praise when your child is able to say their thoughts aloud, whether they be unhelpful or helpful.
- The most effective way to help your child avoid negative thinking is through example. Voice your green thoughts regularly and avoid voicing red thoughts. If parents continually put themselves down and adopt an “*I can't*” attitude, their children will copy. Stay positive and support your child's positive behaviour!



- If you recognise that you are saying unhelpful words or feeling tense or nervous, 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 CD 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.
- 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!
- You could also play the traffic light game. When you come to a set of traffic lights, see who can be the first person to come up with a red thought about a particular topic, when the light turns green the idea of the game is to turn that RED thought into a positive GREEN 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 “*It’d be great to score a goal, but as long as I have fun and try my best it doesn’t matter!*”.
- 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! 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!



Session 7 – Learning to set goals and trying new things (*E = Encourage*)

Concepts, skills & techniques

- Setting goals
- Trying new things
- Learning to do things one step at a time – breaking hard things down into lots of little 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 facing 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.
- Work together with your child to come up with a goal for them. It could be something that they want to achieve, a new skill they would like to learn, or a fear they want to overcome.
- What is a coping step plan???
 - Breaking a goal into small steps
 - Each step should be slightly more difficult than the last.
 - Practice the steps every day, moving up a step only when they feel comfortable with the previous one.
 - Reward your child at each step along the way.
- 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 in their ability to perform the task. Only progress to the next step once they feel comfortable with the one prior.
- Help your child practice the steps every day until they reach their goal.
- Work out with your child what rewards they will receive for climbing the steps of their coping step plan.
 - The best type of rewards are ones that involve doing things with others – not just simple tangible rewards such as food and toys
 - Explain that they can give themselves a small reward when they do a little thing and big rewards when they do a big thing



We all encounter situations that are difficult or worrying to some degree. One possibly 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. Each step becomes gradually more difficult.

- Although it is hard to see your child in a situation that is difficult or a little bit scary, research shows that helping children to face their fears actually helps decrease their level of fear. Support and encourage them to make it less daunting.

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.

Here is an example:

Get your child to use green thoughts to help them achieve their goal!

Remember to...

- 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 talk about their own and others’ feelings and use “thumbs up” ideas to deal with unpleasant feelings and to help others feel better
- Share your “happy things” as a family once a day and talk about times you were brave.
- Catch your child being brave and praise them for it. Use your child’s brave chart!
- Encourage your child to look people in the eye when talking, use a brave voice, smile, and stand up tall!



Session 8 – Learning how to be a good friend

Concepts, skills & techniques

- How to be friendly and make new friends
- Being a good friend: smile, share, help, listen



Tips for parents

- Create a friends chart to use with your child. Reward your child with a sticker each time you catch them being friendly (e.g. sharing, smiling, helping, listening to others, etc).
- Encourage and praise your child as often as possible for being a good friend.
- Discuss with your child different things they can do to be a good friend. Encourage your child to do these things with their friends, family and new people as well.
- Talk to your child about the people who have been good friends to you (both now and in your childhood), and what makes them good friends (e.g. they listen to you when you are talking to them, they help you to use the computer at work, they smile at you when they see you, etc). Also share how you are a good friend to them (e.g. share your recipes, laugh together, do nice things together like go to lunch, etc).
- When you hear your child talk about different situations at school (e.g. “Jessica was sitting by herself at lunchtime today” or “ I saw Jeremy fall over in the playground”, ask them how they could be a good friend to that person.



Session 9 – Learning about rewarding ourselves

A huge self-esteem and confidence boost for your child is to give them lots of praise for their attempts at difficult activities. In the short term, this will help them to think in helpful ways, which will assist them to feel confident about continuing to make attempts at a challenging task. However, over time, this kind of praise will help your child to become increasingly competent at providing their own praise and acceptance, and will help them to develop the belief that they do not have to be perfect or the best at things to be a worthwhile person. Having this belief will assist them to cope, and to continue to feel confident and optimistic, despite the disappointments that can occur in life.

Concepts, skills & techniques

- How reward ourselves when we've tried our best!
- How to plan a party, step by step

Tips for parents

- It is important to reward your child when they are brave and try their best. This could be if they try something they have never tried before, or if they do something that they usually find a bit scary. For example, learning to swim, or riding their bike without training wheels. Tell your child that you are very pleased and happy with them for being brave or trying their best and that they should feel proud of themselves!
- It is important to encourage your child to reward themselves for partial successes (not necessarily for reaching their final goal). This is particularly important for children who experience anxiety, as it helps them to learn to persist and not give up when things get difficult (rather – they learn to focus on small, achievable steps and reward themselves for each small step).
- 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. For example, if your child does something new or faces a fear, they could say to themselves *“I am a winner because I tried my best and I know what to do next time”*. They could also work towards tangible rewards for their efforts such as quality time with the family, or bike riding, a trip to the park for an ice cream or an extra story at bed time.
- Come up with a list of rewards with your child. This might include things such as playing a favourite game, going to a favourite park with the family, a picnic or beach outing, inviting a friend over to play, or getting mum or dad to cook their favourite meal. Even something as simple as giving yourself a pat on the back.
- Your child will be having a party or celebration at the end of the Fun Friends program. Explain that this is a reward for being brave and reaching their goals. It is nice to celebrate with their family and friends.
- Model to your child that you reward yourself when you try new things, are brave in difficult situations, or try your best at something!



Session 10 – Learning about role models in our lives (*N = Nurture*)

Concepts, skills & techniques

- Children learn about role models in their lives and how they can learn from them.
- Our family, friends and teachers can help us become brave and we can help them too.

Tips for parents

- Explain to your child the a role model is someone who helps, who cares, who is brave, or who tries difficult things. Help your child understand that role models can be family members, extended family members, teachers, people in the community, etc.
- Encourage your child to look for positive behaviours in others, such as sharing nicely, using friendly words, when talking to others, rather than looking for the negative behaviours.
- Talk about your role models as a child, and now as an adult. Explain to your child what you admire in such a person, what you can learn from her/him. We can all learn new things everyday, no matter how old we are!
- Identify 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.
- Praise your child when they do something brave, even if you consider it to be a minor or small step. Remember that for some children the smallest of tasks or the simplest of things can be difficult and/or problematic.



Session 11 – Learning about Support Teams in our lives (*D = Don't Forget to Practise*)

Research shows that social support is vitally important to the emotional wellbeing of human beings, and can buffer us against stressful situations in life. Help your child to build a strong team of support, by encouraging supportive relationships both within the home, and with extended family members and friends at school.

Concepts, skills & techniques

- Support groups across settings – our family, friends and teachers can help us become brave and we can help them too. We can all help each other.

Tips for parents

- Talk to your child about the people in our lives that are important to us. People that we love, have fun with, and play with.
- Have a family discussion about all the different support people that are available. For example, family, friends, teachers, doctors, dance teachers, sports coaches, etc. Help your child to recognise when to seek help and the people they can talk to when they go through good and bad times. Knowing that there are people available who care is a protective factor.
- Read story books with your child and discuss how people can help others to be more brave, to try new things, and to have a go and try their best.
- Encourage your child to call upon a variety of members of their support team when they are faced with difficult situations. The ability to seek assistance from others is a skill that will help them cope throughout their life. Seeking assistance from a support team is different from reassurance seeking, in that the child is identifying that they are struggling with a situation and want support in actively facing their fear.
- Explain to your child that it is important for us to talk to our family and friends about our feelings – both happy and sad. Sharing the way we feel is wonderful, because we can get support from the people we love. They can help us find solutions for problems and also tell us about times in their lives when similar things happened to them and what they did about it.
- Continue to engage in daily and ongoing practice of the Fun Friends skills.
- The more you and your child practice the Fun Friends skills the more automatic the strategies will become.

Please Note: Next week is the last session of the Fun Friends program and your child will be celebrating with a party. The children may be asked to dress up as their favourite brave person, role model or hero and to bring in a healthy snack. Help your child to get prepared for this!



Session 12 – Dress up party! (*S = Smile! Stay calm for life!*)

Congratulations! You and your family have gained many new Fun Friends strategies and skills to help manage feelings, to remain calm, relate well to others, and be brave when faced with challenges!

Concepts, skills & techniques

- Learning to be happy with our efforts.
- Celebrating finishing the Fun Friends Family Adventure Booklet
- Sharing happiness by spending special time doing fun things with friends and family, and eating yummy healthy food prepared by the children with their parents.

Tips for parents

- Remember to have fun!!!
- The FRIENDS skills are with you for life! Use the Family Learning Adventure Workbook to refresh yourselves with the FRIENDS skills.
- Remember – practise the skills learnt for many years to come! Learning Fun Friends is like getting a driver's licence – if you leave the car in the garage after you've passed the exam, you will never feel comfortable to drive properly. You need to keep practising!
- No one has to be perfect – just try your best and keep practising the skills, especially when difficult things happen. When difficult things happen, always wait until your child and also yourself calm down, take deep breaths, have some quiet, self-regulating/self-soothing time – then start practising all the skills. No one can think clearly when they are very upset.

