

# Cool Little Kids

## PARENTING PROGRAM

## EARLY INTERVENTION FOR ANXIETY (AGES 3-6 YRS)

The Cool Kids Program is a world renowned cognitive behavioural therapy program developed at Macquarie University, Centre for Emotional Health, to teach children and parents skills that address anxiety disorders. This version of the program aims to educate parents about how best to parent their anxious or extremely shy child to prevent future problems and enhance emotional wellbeing.

### IS SHYNESS NORMAL IN PRESCHOOLERS?

Some shyness can be a normal part of development. However, research has revealed that excessive shyness in preschool aged children can lead to the development of more serious problems in later life, such as the development of anxiety disorders. Having a parent who is anxious also increases a child's likelihood of developing anxiety.

### WHAT HELP DOES THE CENTRE FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH CLINIC OFFER?

The Centre for Emotional Health Clinic offers an early intervention program for pre-schoolers who exhibit excessive shyness or anxiety. This program targets young children at higher risk of developing anxiety disorders in later life by providing assistance to parents on how to effectively manage their child's shyness and fears. Our research has revealed that participating in the Cool Little Kids parenting program when a child is a pre-schooler can reduce the likelihood of a child developing an anxiety disorder in their teenage years.

### WHAT IS THE COOL LITTLE KIDS PROGRAM?

The Cool Little Kids Program is a group treatment program for parents of children aged 3-6 years who exhibit excessive shyness or anxiety. Cool Little Kids is a psycho-educational parenting program that equips parents with both knowledge and practical skills and tips on how to help their child manage and overcome anxiety. The program uses Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) techniques to give parents effective tools and strategies to assist their child.

### WHAT IS COGNITIVE BEHAVIOUR THERAPY AND HOW DOES IT WORK?

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) focuses on discovering unhelpful thoughts and behaviours that encourage anxiety and then learning healthier skills and habits that are designed to reduce fears and worries. CBT is described as an active, solution-focused therapy and involves learning new skills, practicing those skills in-session and at home before applying them to real life situations to create lasting change. By using the CBT approach, the Cool Little Kids program will focus on understanding and addressing the thoughts and behaviours that are contributing to or maintaining your child's anxiety.

### WHAT TOPICS DOES THE PROGRAM COVER?

- Understanding anxiety and shyness in preschool children
- Causes and risk factors for child anxiety
- Helpful and unhelpful ways of responding to anxiety in children
- Skills and strategies to help your child build brave behaviours and face fears
- Dealing with setbacks and difficulties
- How to maintain progress after the program ends.

### HOW LONG WILL THE PROGRAM TAKE AND WHEN WILL IT RUN?

The program consists of 6 group sessions across a 6-8 week period, held at the same time each week. Each session runs for approximately 2 hours. Once an intake screening call has been conducted, you will be placed on a waitlist to be allocated to the next group starting. Groups are arranged according to demand, but typically new groups run every 1-2 months. Please note that you are assigned to a group based on your availability. The more flexible you are able to be with times to attend a group program, the sooner you are likely to be assigned to a group.



Photo credit: Chris Stacey

### WHO ATTENDS THE GROUPS?

Wherever possible and applicable, we recommend that all parents involved in the day-to-day care of the child attend the group. If this is not possible, we would suggest that the same parent attends each session (rather than alternating parents). This allows a parent to build on knowledge learned in previous sessions and we would encourage the attending parent to include the non-attending parent in the program by updating them on session content learned and involve them in tasks being practiced each week at home.

**Children do not attend groups and childcare is not available on site, so childcare arrangements should be made for the 6 sessions.**

We keep groups small and interactive so that all families are able to get the most out of the program. Your group will consist of 4-8 families.

### HOW MUCH DOES THE PROGRAM COST?

The total cost of the program is \$600. This includes all sessions and program materials. Fees are paid prior to starting a group when securing your place and are not refundable.

Under the Better Access Medicare initiative a valid Medicare service requires the 'identified patient' to be present. A session cannot be conducted with the child's parents alone. Consequently we cannot accept a Mental Health Care Plan for this program as the child does not attend the sessions.

### WHO WILL BE RUNNING THE GROUPS?

The groups are run by registered psychologists and clinical psychologists at the Emotional Health Clinic. Our friendly, qualified clinicians are all highly trained and have extensive experience in working with children and parents to help them cope with anxiety, among other issues. Groups may also have a provisional psychologist or group assistant attending.

### CAN I DO THE PROGRAM ONE-ON-ONE INSTEAD OF IN A GROUP?

Whilst it can be helpful to participate in a group with families going through similar experiences, we understand that this may not be the preferred option for everyone. As such, we do offer the program on a one-on-one basis for families who wish to complete the program individually with a clinician. Please note that the cost for the individual program is different as it is offered through private individual sessions. Details are available on our website.

### WHAT IF I NEED HELP WITH ISSUES BEYOND THIS TOPIC?

The Centre for Emotional Health Clinic offers tailored one-on-one treatment for children and adults for anxiety and related disorders. This involves working with a psychologist to create a treatment plan to address your specific current concerns.

Please contact us to see if private individual treatment at the Clinic would be a suitable option for you. If not, we may be able to offer recommendations of other more appropriate services that may better suit your needs.

### HOW CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION OR SIGN UP TO PARTICIPATE?

You can contact us by telephone on 9850 8711 or email [ehc.admin@mq.edu.au](mailto:ehc.admin@mq.edu.au).



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