



What is Fun FRIENDS?

Fun Friends is the latest program developed by Dr Paula Barrett, author of the world leading, evidence-based FRIENDS for Life program. Designed specifically for four to seven year old children, Fun Friends builds emotional resilience that will stay with young children for life, and teaches practical, useful strategies for coping with stress, worry, fear and sadness. With Fun Friends, young children will gain the emotional and social intelligence necessary to excel during their school years. The program is based on the concept that the *majority* of children will feel pressure at some stage in their life and it is important to provide these children with the effective coping skills needed to “bounce back” in those situations.

What SEL Skills Are Taught?

The Fun FRIENDS program covers five major areas of social-emotional learning (SEL):

- 1) *Developing a Sense of Self* : Who am I?;
- 2) *Social Skills*: looking people in the eye, smiling, speaking with a confident voice;
- 3) *Self Regulation*: being able to adjust to new situations, being aware of own feelings and being able to manage emotions;
- 4) *Responsibility for Self and Others*: demonstrating self-direction and independence, respecting and caring for the classroom or group environment, following routine and rules, social awareness; and
- 5) *Pro-Social behaviour*: playing well with others, recognizing others feelings and responding appropriately, showing empathy, sharing, respecting the rights of others, and using thinking skills to resolve challenges and conflicts.

Children who are socially and emotionally well adjusted do better at school, have increased confidence, have good relationships, take on and persist at challenging tasks and communicate well (National Research Council and Institutes of Medicine, 2000).

How is Fun FRIENDS Delivered?

Children, parents, and teachers are taught developmentally sensitive cognitive-behavioural techniques to cope with and manage worry, and conquer challenges and adversity. Teachers guide students through a series of 12 weekly classroom-based lessons designed to teach the children how to be brave, try new or difficult things, reward themselves, and seek support from others. There is a strong emphasis on experiential and play-based activities including puppets, games, creative arts and story-telling.

How are Parents Involved?

Fun FRIENDS uses a family based approach by actively involving children, parents, teachers, and schools in the intervention process. Parents are encouraged to attend parent information sessions where they learn the skills being taught in the program. The program includes a ‘Family Learning Adventure’ workbook for parents and children providing discussion pictures and step-by-step instructions for home implementation of the session skills.

Does It Make a Difference?

Preliminary results from research conducted over several years in Australia indicate that Fun FRIENDS is effective in decreasing anxiety symptoms, decreasing parental stress, and increasing social-emotional strength in preschool aged children.

Is Training Required?

Certification through a one day Fun FRIENDS training is required prior to implementing the program. Regional training information is posted on our website at www.friendsrt.com For more information about the Fun FRIENDS program or how to arrange a training at your site, please contact us at 613-692-3764 or e-mail us at contactus@friendsrt.com