

Preventing and Treating Anxiety in Children and Youth

What is FRIENDS for Life?

FRIENDS for Life is an anxiety prevention and intervention program developed by Dr. Paula Barrett, a clinical child psychologist.

It is a cognitive-behavioral intervention which addresses the cognitive, physiological and behavioral processes that are seen to interact in the development, maintenance and experience of anxiety.

FRIENDS helps children and youth cope with feelings of fear, worry, and depression by building resilience and self-esteem and teaching cognitive, behavioral, and emotional skills in a simple, well-structured format.

FRIENDS is about preventing childhood anxiety and depression through the building of emotional resilience. It aims to reduce the incidence of serious psychological disorders, emotional distress and impairment in social functioning by teaching children and young people how to cope with, and manage, anxiety both now and in later life.

FRIENDS has been specifically designed for use in schools as a universal preventative program, run by teachers in normal class times. Research has shown FRIENDS to be as effective when delivered by teachers in a school system as when conducted by a trained clinical team. FRIENDS can also be implemented by school support staff and counseling professionals as an early intervention strategy with children or youth with anxiety concerns. Certification through a one day FRIENDS training is required prior to implementing the FRIENDS programs.

Why is FRIENDS so important?

Anxiety is the most prevalent mental health disorder among children and youth. Anxiety disorders are characterized by a persistent pattern of excessive worry and uneasiness that causes distress and interferes with healthy development and functioning in multiple areas

of life. Anxiety significantly interferes with a child's academic, social and family life, and increases a child's risk for other mental health problems.

Anxiety disorders are often difficult to detect, and if left untreated, may develop over the years into a chronic adult anxiety disorder/s or, in some cases, clinical depression leading to thoughts of suicide. It is therefore crucial that anxiety prevention begins early, and that education and helping professionals are equipped with the resources to help children and their families develop effective strategies to deal with worry, stress and change.

How do we know FRIENDS works?

FRIENDS is being used in schools and mental health clinics throughout the world and is unique in its commitment to evidence-based research support for all aspects of the program. FRIENDS is the only childhood anxiety prevention and intervention program acknowledged by the World Health Organization for its more than 15 years of comprehensive validation and assessment across several countries and languages using rigorous randomized control studies.

In simple terms, this research says that up to 80% of children showing signs of an anxiety disorder no longer display those signs for up to six years after completing the program. For children who are not clinically anxious, FRIENDS significantly increases their level of self-esteem while reducing their feelings of worry and depression.

How can I find out more about FRIENDS?

Please contact Austin Resilience Development Inc. by e-mail at contactus@friendsrt.com or by phone at 613-692-3764. Additional information is also available on our websites at www.friendsrt.com or www.pathwayshrc.com.au.