

Chill Skills



An eight session program for supporting students
to build skills in managing anxiety

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Introduction

“Onset of anxiety disorders in young people

Anxiety disorders are the most common mental health problems experienced by young people. In Australia, anxiety disorders are estimated to affect about one in every 10 young people aged 18-24 years (1), with the rates higher among young females (14%) compared to males (8%). The most common anxiety disorders reported by young Australians are social anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Overall, about half of people with anxiety disorders experience their first symptoms by the age of 11 years, which is significantly younger than for most other mental health problems (2). However, the typical age of onset varies between the different types of anxiety disorders: specific phobias and separation anxiety often occur at a younger age than panic disorder, generalised anxiety disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder (3).”

From the headspace website www.headspace.org.au



Welcome!

This manual is designed to be a user-friendly resource for teachers, school welfare coordinators, school nurses, health promoters, social workers, youth workers and other staff working with young people in schools. Chill Skills is a series of eight workshops that, through a combination of educational and therapeutic group work, helps young people to build skills in managing anxiety.

As well as the session outlines with easy to follow step by step instructions and tips for facilitators, we have included information about anxiety, how to prepare for the sessions and resources for you to use.

The information in this manual is based on evidence-based research, project evaluations and my experience working with colleagues at headspace and in partner schools to design and deliver two School Focused Youth Services funded pilot Chill Skills projects. Thank you to Amanda Rigby and Gail Jessen of Schools Focused Youth Services for early and ongoing support of the Chill Skills projects, to Gretel O’Loughlin for co-designing and facilitating the original pilot, and to secondary school staff Anne Goller, Hayley Clarke and Cynthia Williams for their commitment to student wellbeing in getting the programs up and running in their schools and co-facilitating the program. Thanks to all the young people who volunteered to be in the photos.

We’d like to warmly congratulate you, the reader, on taking on the role of facilitator, encourage you in your efforts to support young people, and wish you all the best on what we are sure will be a rewarding journey with your group.

Carla van Laar

References

1. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2007. Young Australians: their health and wellbeing 2007. Cat. no. PHE 87. Canberra: AIHW.
2. Kessler, RC, Berglund, P, et al. Lifetime prevalence and age-of-onset distributions of dsm-iv disorders in the national comorbidity survey replication. Arch Gen Psychiatry. 2005 Jun;62(6):593-602.
3. Kessler, RC, Amminger, GP, et al. Age of onset of mental disorders: A review of recent literature. Curr Opin Psychiatry. 2007 Jul;20(4):359-64.

What is anxiety?

The headspace website is a great resource for finding out about anxiety and how it affects young people. It is important to always ensure that information we are giving young people is clear, easy to understand and reliable. To access up to date information about anxiety and young people, please visit the headspace website where you will find a range of downloadable resources and articles.

Here are some useful key points taken from the headspace fact sheet. Fact sheets are available on the website at www.headspace.org.au

About one in every 10 young Australians aged 18 – 25 will have problems with anxiety in any year. For young people aged 13 – 17, the figure is about one in 25.

Anxiety is distressing and it can stop you from reaching your full potential, but it can be treated.

‘Anxiety’ is like ‘worry’. It’s an unpleasant emotion that most people feel at some time when they’re faced with challenges. Mild anxiety, like just before a sporting event or an exam, can help people perform at their best. But when anxiety becomes more intense, causes distress, lasts for a longer time and interferes with daily living, then it’s a problem.

Physical feelings of anxiety include a faster heart rate, faster breathing, muscle tension, sweating and shaking, and ‘butterflies in the stomach’. In a ‘panic attack’, these symptoms are very severe.

Other common symptoms of anxiety are:

- Persistent worrying and excessive fears
- Being unable to relax
- Avoiding challenging situations
- Excessive shyness

As with any mental health issue, getting help is one of the most important ways to minimize the impact of the problem in a young person’s life over the long term. The earlier a young person receives help, the better the long-term outcomes are likely to be.

A person with anxiety problems needs understanding and support for their medical condition. Be patient and listen to the person’s fears and concerns, and take them seriously. It’s not just a matter of telling them to ‘calm down’ – it’s not that easy. Be prepared to seek help or support for yourself as well if you need it.

Anxiety can be improved with treatment, so it’s important that the person gets professional help. Give the young person relevant local information about school counselors, local youth services, and, for more information, and to find out how to get help, visit the headspace website: www.headspace.org.au



Anxiety and student learning

In our pilot Chill Skills programs we asked young people to think about external pressures (things in their family, community, society and environment) that contribute to anxiety. They came up with a frighteningly long list that helps us to understand the vast range of pressures young people today face.

The pressures they listed Included:

Family issues, school, peer pressure, health, global economy, global warming/pollution, natural disasters/wars, media pressures, expectations, stereotypes, friendship cliques, lack of awareness of options, attitudes and judgments, career decisions, over emphasis on academic achievement and future success, fear of the unknown, others' expectations, unbalanced views, under emphasis on life skills in education.

We asked young people to think about some of the internal factors that contribute to anxiety, such as negative self-talk (thoughts that go around and around inside the head). These thoughts can become beliefs in a young person's mind and can feed anxiety, making it stronger. Here are some of the negative thoughts that the members of our pilot projects identified.

On friends:

"They won't want me to intrude, they are having fun without me"

On homework:

"Why bother? It won't be good enough even if you do get it finished"

"It doesn't matter how hard I work it is not paying off"

On exams:

"I won't get to sleep tonight"

"I am going to be crap and forget"

A combination of external and internal factors can result in problems for students that have negative consequences for their learning, including:

- Poor concentration
- Sleep problems
- Eating problems
- Avoidant behaviour
- Poor self-esteem
- Social isolation



Background to the Chill Skills program

Anne Goller, a School Wellbeing Coordinator from a local secondary school, was concerned at the levels of anxiety being experienced by an increasing number of students during their final two years at school. She was inundated with students presenting with anxiety symptoms and she was distressed to see students not completing their schooling due to anxiety. Anne approached headspace Western Melbourne to partner in designing and delivering a project to help students manage anxiety. She also wanted to build her own skills in responding effectively to assist these students.



A pilot program was developed that included an educational session for the whole of year 11, an information session for parents and a six-week program for students who were identified as showing signs of anxiety.

A second program was delivered at another local secondary school in collaboration with Hayley Clarke, the school Social Worker, and Cynthia Williams, the school Health Promotion Nurse. The second program was extended to eight sessions, complimented by a whole year level information session and opportunities for parents to meet facilitators and take home printed information.

Aims of the group sessions were:

- Establish group agreements about confidentiality, behavior and trust in the group
- Present participants with reliable information about anxiety
- Identify the physical, mental and emotional effects of anxiety experienced by participants
- Assess the impacts of anxiety in participants' wider life
- Practice setting realistic goals
- Consider multiple pathways to achieving goals
- Develop understandings of the importance of creating balance in various areas of life, for example; spiritual, emotional, family, friends, vocation, interests, health.
- Identify fears, worries and concerns
- Identify excuses and other avoidant behaviours that act as barriers to a balanced lifestyle
- Identify sources of wellbeing
- Practice and strengthen coping skills
- Familiarise participants with local services that are youth friendly, accessible, and where help is available.

Evaluation of the pilot projects

To help us assess whether the Chill Skills program was effective in helping students manage anxiety and decrease their levels of distress, we designed questionnaires and used psychometric tests. We asked students to complete these before and after they had participated in the Chill Skills project. Examples of the pre (before) and post (after) questionnaires are included in this manual. The psychometric tests that we chose were the K10 to measure mental distress and the Adolescent Coping Scale to measure coping styles.

There were some limitations of the data, including small sample size, and the fact that some students were absent and did not complete both the pre and post tests. The Adolescent Coping Scale was conducted only with the second group, as its addition was an outcome of the first evaluation. However, despite the limitations, the results were promising for the Chill Skills program as a useful intervention for increasing students' ability to manage anxiety.

Across the two pilot projects, students' average productive coping style improved from 61.3% to 68.6%, an increase of 7.3%. Productive coping includes skills like trying to solve the problem and getting enough rest.

The students' average reference to others also increased from 52.1% to 57.9%, up 5.8%. Reference to others is an important coping skill that includes asking others for help, or help seeking, one of the most significant factors in early intervention.

Non-productive coping styles include responses that don't help the situation and can even make it worse, such as using alcohol or other drugs, or fighting with people. The average non-productive coping styles amongst group members reduced from 54.6% to 49.1%, a desirable decrease of 5.5%.

There was an overall 24.95% increased knowledge of triggers to anxiety, along with a 55.15% increased knowledge of coping strategies and a 25.05% increased intention to help-seek amongst the students.



Quotes from young people in the pilot groups:

"I have learned strategies to make myself feel better, increase my self-esteem, when I'm feeling down I think about the strategies. I can enjoy life more."

"You guys taught me that exercise really helps. I now go for a run if I'm frustrated. Every time I step a bit of my frustration goes out of my feet."

"It was good to see the other people also experienced similar feelings, I never realised that before."

These results have been crucial in gaining further support from School Focused Youth Services to create a manual for the Chill Skills project, with the intention of assisting more staff to be confident in responding effectively to the growing numbers of Australian students experiencing anxiety. Having the project based in the school environment enables a service to be provided for students who would otherwise not access professional help.

Early indicators that a student may be experiencing anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety can interfere with student learning, and one of the most important early indicators that teachers can observe is a change in academic performance or behaviour at school.



Here are some hypothetical case examples:

Emily's family had always placed high expectations on her to perform exceptionally well in her VCE.

They had aspirations for her to do well enough to study medicine. They placed such importance on her studying medicine that it felt to her as though any alternative would be a failure, and that her entire future life success and happiness relied on her achieving very high scores in exams. She had a rigorous study timetable and a tutor to help her. Although she achieved better than average marks in exams, she was often teary and disappointed after receiving her results.

A quarter of the way through her final year at secondary school, Emily's attendance started to become less regular than usual, sometimes missing up to two days a week. Her ability to keep up with her studies was affected and her results reflected this. By half way through the year, Emily had stopped attending school altogether and her parents were working with the School Wellbeing Team to try to re-engage Emily in her education.

In Emily's case, school based awareness raising and education about the effects of anxiety and where to get assistance may have aided her to identify her anxiety symptoms earlier and seek help. Her teacher may have noticed her high expectations and tears about exams and referred her to the School Wellbeing team. If her parents knew more about anxiety and its effects on young people they may have realised that Emily needed help and supported her to get help earlier.



Anton was the eldest of four siblings living with their mother, who worked evenings to support the family. While she was at work, Anton was responsible for caring for his siblings and preparing the evening meal. He was known amongst school staff as a popular and confident young man who often made jokes in class, did well at sport and achieved academic results within the lower end of the average range. His homework was sometimes late and staff attempted to be tolerant with him as they were aware of his home responsibilities.

Midway through year eleven, Anton's presence in school was noted as being disruptive to other students. His capacity to concentrate on his schoolwork diminished and he would spend most of his class time drawing cartoons and making jokes to classmates. After a number of attempts from his maths teacher to encourage Anton to concentrate, Anton lost his temper in class and physically shoved his teacher into a wall. This resulted in a visit to the Principal's office and a three-week suspension.

During this period Anton would visit school at lunch time to socialise and staff suspected he had been consuming alcohol. His abusive language to staff when he was asked to leave the school ground resulted in Anton being told he was not welcome at the school.

In Anton's case, again, school based awareness raising and education about the effects of anxiety may have enabled him to recognise some of his anxiety symptoms and seek help from school based staff, his GP or other local youth services. School staff aware of his home situation and the added stress of the VCE workload could have anticipated that he may need extra support and consulted with the School Wellbeing team. If his mother had been given information about early indicators of anxiety in young people, she may have noticed changes in his behaviour at home and made some changes to the situation and sought help for Anton.



Educating school staff about the early indicators of anxiety in young people contributes to early identification and support for students. Professional development sessions for staff can include conversations about observable indicators that a student may be experiencing the following symptoms of anxiety:

Poor concentration – for example; disruptive behaviour in class

Sleep problems – for example; late arrival or tiredness

Eating problems – for example; weight gain or loss, refusal to eat in front of others, unhealthy diet

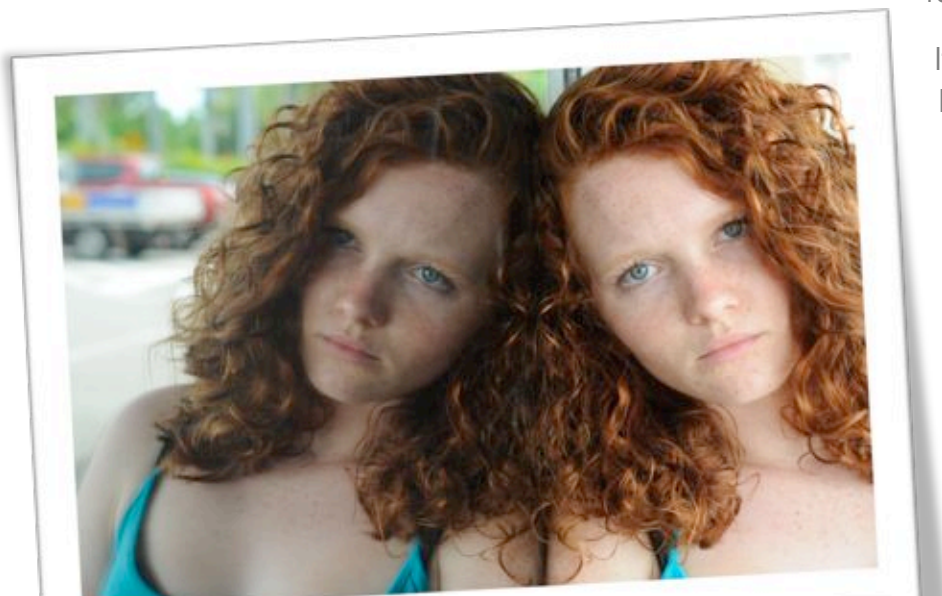
Avoidant behaviour – for example; not turning up to exams

Poor self-esteem – for example; lack of confidence, shyness, poor grooming

Social isolation – for example; sits alone, withdrawn, target of bullying



Remember that anxiety can be treated. The earlier a young person gets help, the greater the chance of reducing long term effects of anxiety.



If Emily and Anton had received help earlier, they may have remained engaged in education with extra support. Early identification and assistance can help young people avoid the significant impacts of disengagement, which is linked to long-term problems such as depression, unemployment, crime and homelessness.

Interventions – What do we address and how?

In assisting students to build skills in managing anxiety, we can take a logical approach to decreasing risk factors (factors that increase risk of anxiety) and increasing protective factors (factors that reduce risk of anxiety). These will be unique and different for every student, however there are common themes that give us a starting point to begin working with students.

Environmental factors include a safe home and school environment, regular healthy meals, and a stable and predictable routine. These environmental factors may be out of a young person's control. School staff can assist by thinking about how they reduce stress for students in the classroom and create a culture of safety and respect among students.

If staff are concerned about the safety of a student's living environment this should be reported to the School Wellbeing team or Principal in keeping with mandated reporting requirements.

Helping a young person to become more self aware and reflective about their own risk and protective factors is the first step towards helping them make choices that will decrease anxiety. The Chill Skills workshop outlines are designed to assist students in developing these self reflective and choice making skills.

We work with students to

Decrease:

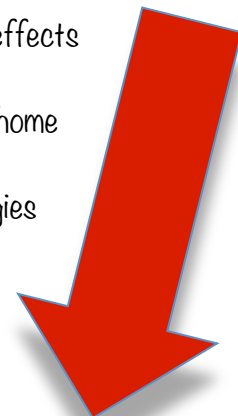
Environmental triggers and effects

eg; bullying at school, abuse or neglect at home

Unproductive coping strategies

eg; alcohol and drug use or avoidant behaviour

Negative thinking –eg; “I’m not good enough”



Increase:

Self identification of triggers and effects – eg: through school based education

Coping skills and strategies – eg; relaxation techniques, mood monitoring, diet and exercise, positive self-talk, mood diary, affirmations

Support – eg; trusted teacher, youth worker, school counselor, mental health professional



Preparing for the Chill Skills project

The Chill Skills project takes a whole school approach to responding to student anxiety. As well as the eight week group program for up to twelve students (described in detail later), we work to increase awareness among:

- students (perhaps targeting one year level such as year 10 or 11)
 - staff
 - families



Student awareness raising

We suggest choosing a number of awareness raising methods to reinforce the health promoting and help seeking information. School staff will understand the opportunities and limitations unique to their school and can tailor awareness raising approaches to suit.

Some ideas for general awareness raising:

- Posters around the school
- Tips in school newsletters
- Tips in daily bulletin
- Guest presenter at year level assembly
- Student awareness raising presentations

Staff professional development

Finding an opportunity for all staff to attend even a half hour workshop provides a valuable opportunity to raise awareness of the prevalence of anxiety in young people, early warning signs and the importance of early intervention.

Some ideas for staff workshops:

- Use a combination of information giving and small group discussions to highlight;
- Prevalence of anxiety amongst Australian young people
- Links between anxiety and student learning
- Early indicators and identification
- Referral of students to School Wellbeing team
- Risk and protective factors
- Discussion about how staff contribute to reducing anxiety and increasing healthy behaviour at school.

Families

Providing families with information about anxiety and the Chill Skills project supports a culture of awareness and responding.

Information can be shared in a number of ways:

- Parent information session facilitated by the wellbeing staff or local mental health service
- School newsletter
- Meetings with School Wellbeing team
- Prior to commencing the eight week program, each student must bring a signed Parental Consent form. An example of a Parental Consent form is provided after the workshop outlines.



Facilitators will need to meet together and allocate the following tasks:

Evaluation

Decide who is responsible for ensuring all students complete pre program and post program psychometric tests (K-10 and Adolescent Coping Scale) and pre and post surveys for the evaluation (examples of pre and post surveys are provided in this manual in the resources section). Evaluation is crucial in assessing the effectiveness of the program and identifying any students who may need additional and ongoing support or referral to a mental health service.

Kessler Psychological Distress Scale - K10 (Kessler R. Professor of Health Care Policy, Harvard Medical School, Boston, USA.)

The Beyond Blue website has an online version of the K-10, a ten question self-reporting test used to measure psychological distress. Students can enter their data and receive an immediate score that gives an indication whether they are low, medium or high risk for an anxiety or depression disorder.

http://www.beyondblue.org.au/index.aspx?link_id=1.237

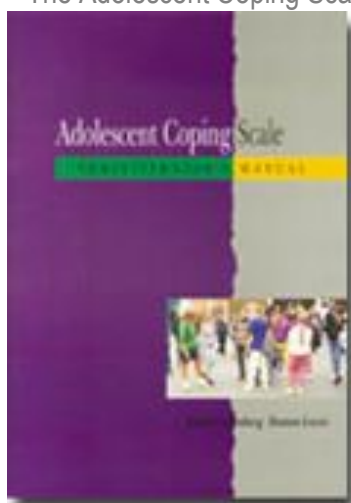


This document is downloadable from the North East Valley Division of General Practice website

<http://www.nevdgp.org.au/>

Adolescent Coping Scale (Erica Frydenberg and Ramon Lewis)

The Adolescent Coping Scale is a self report inventory that measures a range of coping styles and helps young people understand whether they use productive or unproductive coping strategies. There is a short form with 18 questions and this is the form we recommend for use in this program.



The Adolescent Coping Scale must be purchased and is available only to professionals with accredited training in psychology, health sciences, counselling, special education, medicine and other specialist areas. Members of your School Wellbeing Team should be able to decide who is the best person to purchase and score this scale. It is available to purchase online at ACER:

<https://shop.acer.edu.au/acer-shop/group/HU/18.jsessionid=782CCAEEEE618B407214667961326BBEC>

What to do with the tests and surveys

- ✓ You will need to decide who is responsible for compiling the data from pre and post tests and compiling an evaluation report. This is done by comparing the overall results pre program to the overall results post program. This data is anonymous and is to evaluate the effectiveness of the program. Showing that the program is effective is useful in obtaining support to continue running Chill Skills in your school. You might like to present the evaluation findings at a staff meeting to help build respect for the program.
- ✓ Each individual student's pre and post tests and surveys should also be compared to evaluate any changes for individual students. After the project is completed, staff should arrange to have a follow up meeting with each individual student to provide feedback about the pre and post test results and to talk to students about any areas of concern or need for ongoing support or referral to a mental health service.
- ✓ Book a space for the workshops
- ✓ This must be a space that is private, where other students and staff will not walk through or be able to hear what is being said. Ideally it will be the same space each week
- ✓ Book session times



We found it was a good idea to have the workshops on the same day every week but to change the times. This ensured that students were not missing the same class each week.

Discuss referral process

- ✓ We suggest the School Wellbeing teamwork collaboratively with classroom teachers to identify students for the program and approach students individually to encourage them to attend. Students can also be given information about how to self refer for the program.
- ✓ Discuss how to handle any tricky situations; for example, if a student becomes upset and needs to leave the room, allocate a staff member to accompany them and agree on who will stay in the room with the other students. Discuss who will provide back up support if this is needed, and any safety precautions that need to be considered.
- ✓ Ensure all students in the program have a Parental Consent form and this is returned to school.
- ✓ Inform teaching staff which students will be absent because of attending the Chill Skills program.
- ✓ Allocate a staff member to be responsible for organizing healthy snacks for the students to have either at the start of the session or in a break. Water, juice, fruit, cheese and biscuits are all appropriate.
- ✓ Allocate a staff member to make a list of materials required for the workshops and be responsible for purchasing these. We suggest that you make a box of Chill Skills resources and have this ready to go each week. We recommend keeping the student's A4 folders in this box to ensure they have the folder in each class. They will need to take their journals home as these will serve as their mood diaries that they write in during their own time.

Workshop outlines

Each workshop is designed to run across a double school period, about 1.5 hours in duration. The structure of the workshops follows a format of check in, recap, warm up, main activity and reflection time. Activities include group discussions, pair work, visual arts, role-play, mindfulness, relaxation, and journaling. The use of various modalities caters to a range of learning styles among the students. The emphasis is on providing psycho-educational information and facilitating opportunities for students to try out different ways of responding to anxiety and find ways that will work for themselves.

Facilitators will need to be mindful of timekeeping and keeping discussions and activities on track. Before each session facilitators should review the session plan and allocate time for each activity. It helps to let students know how long they have for each activity before they start, and to give them a one-minute warning before it is time to finish. Sticking to your timekeeping will establish a predictable routine for students and help the sessions to be productive.

If a particular student seems to need more attention than time permits, allocate a staff member to leave the room and have a private conversation with them so that the rest of the group can make the most of their time in Chill Skills.



Week 1

Theme:

Introduction session

Aims:

- Establish group agreements about confidentiality and expectations for behavior in the group.
- Develop foundations for group rapport and trust.
- Present participants with reliable information about anxiety.

Materials:

- ✓ Butcher's paper
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Small ball
- ✓ Textas
- ✓ Picture cards such as St Luke's Innovative Resources 'Sign Posts'
- ✓ Journal books (small exercise books or sketch books are fine)
- ✓ A4 size folders with plastic sleeves to keep work in over the course of the Chill Skills project
- ✓ Pre program evaluation surveys and psychometric tests

Before the session:

- Give students journal books and A4 folders
- All students to complete pre program evaluation surveys and psychometric tests. It can work well to have a staff member allocated to welcome students as they arrive and explain the tests. Make sure there are some tables around the edge of the room so students can complete the test in privacy
- Set up enough chairs for all the students and staff to sit in an equal circle



Warm up:

Introductions – Staff



ACTIVITY!

In establishing rapport and trust, students often feel more engaged when a staff member takes the time to talk about their professional background, the experience they bring to the group and their motivation for being a facilitator. This should be kept brief. Remember, the point is not for staff to disclose personal experiences of anxiety, but to instill confidence in the students that they are interested and committed to working with the group over the coming weeks.

For example,



TIP!

“Hi, my name is Julie and I am the Student Welfare Coordinator here at the school. I’ve worked with hundreds of young people over the past fifteen years and I get enormous satisfaction from helping young people to work through difficult times. I’m excited to be working with you all and getting to know you better during the Chill Skills program”.

After introducing yourselves, give the students an idea of what to expect over the coming weeks;

- ✓ We are here to work together to learn new skills about managing anxiety
- ✓ Anxiety is really common and we are very glad these students have taken the step of being involved in the group
- ✓ We are sure it will sometimes be challenging for the students in the Chill Skills program
- ✓ This is a place where it is OK to express our feelings, laugh, listen and even cry
- ✓ The Chill Skills program is a journey and we are on this journey together
- ✓ We are committed to making the Chill Skills program interesting and you can expect over the coming weeks to be involved in lots of activities, including drama, art work, games and journaling.

Name game, say your name and one thing you like that starts with the same letter



ACTIVITY!

“I’m Carla and I like Chocolate!”

As you go around the circle each person repeats back everyone else’s name and what they like before saying their own. This game helps the group and facilitators to become familiar with each other’s names and provides a small bit of information about each person as they inform each other of something they like. If someone can’t think of anything just let them pass and come back to them.

Ball name game- throw the ball from person to person and say their name.



ACTIVITY!

The person throwing the ball should say the name of the person they are throwing to. Remind the group to make eye contact with the person they are throwing to before they throw, to ensure the person is ready to catch the ball. Continue until everyone knows everyone else’s name.

Activities:

ACTIVITY!

Group discussion with butcher's paper and scribe.

This activity can be scribed as a mind map, with "Chill Skills Group Agreement" in the middle of the paper and students' responses mapped around the outside.



Discuss confidentiality, physical and interpersonal safety and expectations for group behavior.

The group can be warmed up to this discussion by introducing the idea that we want everyone to get the most out of the group, and that it is very important for the group to think about how we are going to work together to ensure the group is safe and productive. Sometimes it can be helpful to start with the very practical aspects of group safety and trust, and work towards talking about the more complex interpersonal aspects of safety and trust.

For example, facilitators might ask, "So what do you think we need to do to make sure everyone is physically safe and comfortable?" Agreements here might include suggestions about seating, being conscious of other people's physical space and basics such as moving carefully around the room and treating all materials and furniture with respect; depending on the group you may wish to agree not to hit, poke, throw objects etc. Usually these basics are common sense for most young people in schools.

You will also ask students to think about listening to one another, taking turns to speak, 'no put downs' and other ways to show respect for one another.

Ask students to consider arriving on time, commitment to attending the group, the fact that it is a closed group and whether new members should be allowed to enter after week one or not.



In considering privacy and confidentiality, ask students why these are important aspects of ensuring that everyone gets the most out of the group. Students will usually come up with their own insightful answers about this. Try to draw the following important points out of the discussion, rather than just tell students what is important, try to get them to tell you and each other. This will strengthen the student's ownership over the agreements and will use the power of peers to help the students feel responsible for respecting the group agreements.



- Respecting privacy means that what is said in the room stays in the

room. Everyone must be able to agree that they will not talk to other friends about things said in the group. Discuss how it might affect someone if this confidentiality was broken.



- Keeping ourselves safe means thinking about what we say in the group. For example if something bad, sad or painful has happened to us that is quite private and we have not told anyone before, this group might not be the best place to talk about it for the first time. If students have a personal issue they wish to talk about it is best to talk privately with a staff member first.

Facilitators should also explain clearly the limits to confidentiality,



"If we are concerned that someone is harming you, or that you may harm yourself or someone else, it is part of our job to help you get the help you need and this may mean talking to someone else about it. If this is the case we will always do our best to talk to you first and help you feel prepared and safe".

Group Activity

ACTIVITY!

“How do I feel about being in this group?” and
“What would I like to get out of this group?”

Spread the picture cards on the floor in the centre of the circle and ask group members to select one picture in response to each question. Remind students that if someone else chooses the picture they wanted to select, that the pictures can be shared by more than one person if necessary.



Go around the circle and ask everyone to explain what picture they have selected and why. It is useful for facilitators to take notes to document student responses. After each person has spoken simply thank them, saying “Thank you very much” and invite the next person to speak.

Introduce mood diaries and set a goal to complete them during the week.

ACTIVITY!

The idea of mood diaries is to help students start to self reflect. Here are the key points of keeping a mood diary:

- People can keep mood diaries in many different ways.
- Try to put something in your mood diary every day.
- Record points about the following:
- What time did I go to bed and wake up?
- What food and drink did I consume?
- What exercise and activities did I do?
- Who did I spend time with?
- What happened in the day that affected my mood?
- Rate my mood on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very poor to 10 being excellent.
- Rate mood in morning, middle of day and evening.
- Feel free to add in pictures, poetry or anything else that seems relevant.

Keeping a mood diary will help students start to see patterns that affect their moods and become more conscious about making choices that promote a calmer and more positive mental state.

TIP!

Offer the group some praise for their time, attention and contributions. Let them know that they can expect a lot of hands on and creative activities over the coming weeks.

Remind everyone about time and place of next week's group.

Close.

Week 2

Theme:

Understanding anxiety and its effects

Aims:

- Revisit group agreements about confidentiality and expectations for behavior in the group.
- Develop foundations for group rapport and trust.
- Present participants with reliable information about anxiety and assist participants to reflect on the effects anxiety has on them.
- Identify the physical effects of anxiety in participants.

Materials:

- ✓ Group agreement on butcher's paper from last week
- ✓ Masking tape
- ✓ Anxiety disorders and symptoms quiz
- ✓ Markers
- ✓ Textas
- ✓ Body Map templates



Before the Session:

- Set the chairs up in a circle
- Tape the group agreement up where everyone can see it

Warm up:

Welcome the group back

ACTIVITY!

Check in from last week

The facilitators ask the group what they can remember from last week. It is fine to have this as a large group discussion. Encourage everyone to participate by asking quieter group members to contribute after the more forthcoming students have offered their thoughts.

Ask the group if anyone used their mood diaries. Ask those who did to share with the group anything they found useful, interesting or difficult about using the mood diary. Congratulate anyone who has had some insights, and reassure everyone that the mood diary is a useful personal tool for them to use to learn more about their own moods.

Encourage students to reflect by asking questions such as:

- “When did you notice yourself feeling anxious, tired or unhappy?”
- “What do you think contributed to this, can you see any patterns? For example; work load, relationships, diet, rest, exercise?”
- “When did you notice yourself feeling good – relaxed, calm, happy, energetic?”
- “What do you think contributed to this, can you identify anything that helps you to feel good?”

Thank everyone for their contribution and introduce the next exercise.

Trust circle

ACTIVITY!

Ask the group to move their chairs back and form a standing circle.

The facilitator may wish to demonstrate the following:

Each group member is invited to place their trust in the other group members by closing their eyes and walking across the centre of the circle.

The task of the other group members is to help the walker to feel safe. As the walker reaches a group member, that group member gently stops them from walking by placing their hands on the walker's shoulders and turns them around to walk back across the circle to another person, all the time the walker keeps their eyes shut. Each group member can walk across the circle about three times.

The facilitator pays careful attention to the body language of the walker. If you notice the walker hesitate, flinch or open their eyes, say “Stop - I noticed something happening there, what was going on for you?” Let the walker describe what was happening, they might say something like “I thought I was going to bang into someone” or “I felt like I was at the edge of the circle”. Ask them to try again, breathe and walk at a comfortable even pace. Ask the group to pay careful attention and help the walker feel safe.

For students who find this exercise easy, ask them to vary their pace, for example to walk very slowly or to walk very quickly.

After everyone has completed the walk, ask the group “Why do you think we did this exercise?”

They will come up with their own answers, sometimes they will say things like “To build group trust”, “To help us learn to breathe through our anxiety” or “To try doing something differently”. All of these are valid answers, thank them for their reflections and let them make their own meaning from the exercise.



Activities:

Psycho Educational Presentation



A quiz in which the questions provide reflection, myth busting and discussion on facts, statistics, and the identification of anxiety.

This can be facilitated as a True or False trivia game. A simple way to do this is to have students stand and use their hands to vote either true or false for each question. They can vote “true” by placing their hands on their heads, or “False” by placing their hands on their hips. To increase the competition, you can get them to sit down if they get two wrong answers. Of course, keep the whole thing light hearted by giving everyone a participation prize at the end such as a sticker or pen.

If you like you can ask them to divide into two teams and come to an agreement as a team about the answer. Each team’s score can be tallied on the whiteboard or butcher’s paper.



Questions:

Anxiety is a normal emotion and can help you do well in things like exams, sport or performing. **True**

Anxiety can become a problem when it interferes with everyday life, like going to school, socializing, sleeping or eating. **True**

If you notice your friend is sad, tired, withdrawn or angry at school you should tease them. **False.** Sadness, tiredness, being withdrawn or angry can all be symptoms of anxiety. If you feel comfortable you can encourage your friend to talk to the School Wellbeing team, or if you are concerned but don't know how to help you can talk to the School Wellbeing team or a trusted teacher and tell them about your concerns for your friend.

Nightmares, fear or worry, racing heartbeat, sweatiness, and nausea can all be symptoms of anxiety. **True**

Anxiety is a real medical condition. **True**

If you suffer from anxiety you will have it for life. **False.** Anxiety is treatable. You can seek help from your School Wellbeing team, your GP, local youth services or a counselor.

Eating healthy food, getting enough rest and exercising daily are effective ways to help manage anxiety. **True**

Anxiety and depression are rarely experienced by Australian young people. **False.** Anxiety and depression are the most common mental health problems experienced by Australian young people.

Using alcohol and other drugs is an effective way to deal with anxiety and depression. **False.** Alcohol and other drugs can make you feel better for a short time but can make things worse in the long term by affecting school performance, home life, health and relationships.

The earlier you get help with managing anxiety the sooner you will start to feel better. **True**

There are youth friendly places locally where you or your friend can get help for anxiety. **True**

Offer a bonus prize for anyone who can name three places to get help for anxiety, for example; School Wellbeing team, headspace, local youth services, GP.



TIP!

Give out prizes and ask students if they were surprised by any of the answers. Clarify any misunderstandings or questions to the best of your ability. If you don't know the answer to a question just say something like "That's a good question, I will do some research and fill you in you next week".

Body Mapping

ACTIVITY!

Large group demonstration

On a large piece of butcher's paper, draw an outline of a body. You can trace around a group member or have it pre-prepared.

Ask the group to brainstorm how our bodies tell us we are feeling anxious. As a student names a symptom, such as "Feeling sick in the stomach" ask them to draw something on the body map to represent this symptom. Continue until all the common symptoms are represented, eg;

- Racing or negative thoughts
- Headaches
- Dizziness
- Crying
- Tired or unmotivated
- Blushing
- Sweaty armpits or hands
- Racing heart beat
- Fast or shallow breathing
- Butterflies in the tummy, nausea or feeling sick
- Change in appetite, either comfort eating or loss of appetite
- Needing to go to the toilet
- Fidgety or can't sit still
- Angry, wanting to lash out, kick, throw things or punch things



Each participant then individually creates a "body map" representation of the physical effects anxiety has on them. You can draw an outline and photocopy it to make templates for them to draw on.

Discuss as a group or in small groups with a facilitator in each group. Ask the students to share the unique ways that their bodies tell them they are feeling anxious by sharing their body maps and talking about them. Be sure to thank each person for sharing.

Self-assessment

Large group discussion.

ACTIVITY!

Ask the group to think about the following questions:

- What do I miss out on when anxiety gets the better of me?
- What do I get more of when I manage anxiety well?

Brainstorm as a group and create a mind map for each question on butcher's paper.

If you have time you can include a collage activity by asking students to look through magazines and cut out some pictures for each mind map.

TIP!

The purpose of this exercise is to help students build motivation for making changes that will help them manage anxiety. The main point to highlight is that they have a lot to gain, put simply, "To feel better".

Journal

Allow a few minutes for students to have some time for individual reflection by writing in their journals. Ask each participant to reflect on what they have learned today and create one realistic goal to achieve during the coming week.

Remind everyone to keep using their mood diaries.

Remind everyone of the time and place for next week's group.

Close.



Week 3

Theme:

External Pressures

Aims:

- Identify external factors that contribute to the experience of anxiety.
- Frame these external factors as “obstacles” to happiness, wellbeing and participation in life.
- Uncover the coping skills and resilience of the group members.
- Set goals to strengthen coping skills and resilience.

Materials:

- ✓ Whiteboard and markers
- ✓ Blind fold
- ✓ Butcher’s paper, magazines, glue and scissors

Before the session:

- Set up the chairs in a circle

Warm up:

ACTIVITY!

Check in the same way as the last session.

Review last week’s goals.

Ask the students if anyone would like to share:

- What was your goal from last session’s journaling?
- How did you go with addressing the goal?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Did you notice any benefits?
- Would you modify the goal in any way?



Activities:



Obstacle course

Using the chairs and tables etc. in the room, create an obstacle course by making a big 'mess' with upturned chairs, tables etc. Ensure that there are a few 'pathways' through the obstacle course for participants to walk through.

Ask for one group member to volunteer to be taken out of the room and return blind folded. The group are given instructions while the other person is out of the room.

Modify the obstacle course so that there is a start and a finish point. At the finish point place one chair upright for the volunteer to find and sit in.

The rest of the group are instructed that their task is to guide the blind folded person through the obstacle course without using touch or words, and get the blind folded person to sit on the chair at the end of the obstacle course. The blind folded person does not know this.

Allow the group a few minutes to discuss how they will do this. Don't intervene! Let them figure it out themselves. Do ask them how they will prevent the volunteer from banging into anything and keep them safe.

Outside, have a facilitator stay with the volunteer and explain that when they re-enter the room they will be blind folded and that the other group members have been instructed to guide them through the obstacle course without using any words or touch.

Bring the blind folded volunteer into the room and allow the group to help them through the obstacle course. Be patient! Don't 'rescue' them, but do intervene if the volunteer is unsafe; eg: about to bang into something or upset. Let them continue until they find a way to get the volunteer to sit in the chair.

Applaud their efforts when they achieve this goal!

Un-blind fold the volunteer and ask everyone to tidy up and place the chairs back in a circle.

First – have a facilitator sit next to the blind folded person and ask them what it was like to be the blindfolded person. Just let them talk, and then ask them how they felt about trust, fear, safety and danger.



It is important to let the blind folded person speak first as they have had the most intense experience. Let others know they will have a chance to talk later if they try to interrupt.

Then – ask the group how they worked together to overcome the obstacles. Discuss how this activity might be relevant to experiencing anxiety in broader life. Again, let them make their own meaning, there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers.

Activities:

ACTIVITY!

Reflective exercise – Group discussion

The facilitators ask the group to discuss the following questions:

What are some of the obstacles and challenges participants face in their wider life?

What are the external pressures that can contribute to anxiety?

Make a list on the whiteboard.

If the group needs prompting, ask them to think about pressures in various spheres of life, for example:

- School
- Home
- Work
- Friends / Relationships
- Media
- Health
- Environment
- Future
- Global



Discuss the idea that these external pressures can be seen as obstacles between participants and the life they wish to lead.

ACTIVITY!

Group Poster – Coping strategies

Introduce the idea that we all have ways of dealing with the external pressures of life that we all face.

Using magazines, scissors, glue and paper, make a collage that shows the different strategies the young people in the group use to cope with external pressures in their day-to-day lives. If they need some help, encourage them to think about what makes them feel good, including family, friends, relaxation, interests, spirituality, exercise and diet.

Journal

ACTIVITY!

Allow a few minutes for students to have some time for individual reflection by writing in their journals. Ask each participant to reflect on what they have learned today and create one realistic goal to achieve during the coming week.

- Remind everyone to keep using their mood diaries.
- Remind everyone of the time and place for next week's group.

Close.



Week 4

Theme:

Goals and strengths



Aims:

- Practice setting realistic goals
- Consider the idea that there can be multiple pathways to achieving goals

Materials:

- ✓ Coloured paper
- ✓ Textas

Before the session:

- Set up the chairs in a circle

Warm up:

ACTIVITY!

Check in the same way as the last session.

Review last weeks' goals.

Ask the students if anyone would like to share:

- What was your goal from last session's journaling?
- How did you go with addressing the goal?
- Was it easy or difficult?
- Did you notice any benefits?
- Would you modify the goal in any way?



Group Introduction:



“Who do you admire and why?”

Facilitators ask the group to individually think about this question.

Highlight: This must be someone you know in real life!

Ask the group to think about:

- “Who is the person?”
- “What qualities does that person have that make you admire them?”
- “How does this person make you feel?”



Individual reflection:

Give each student four sheets of A4 paper and ask them to find a space to work in and write the qualities of the person they admire on individual sheets of A4 paper. Each piece of paper should have just one quality, for example; kindness, strength, generosity, hard working, good listener, honest, trust worthy etc.



If the group needs prompting it can be useful to use cards to help them identify strengths, such as the St Luke's Strength Cards. These are available to purchase at

<http://www.innovativeresources.org/default.asp?cmd=product&productid=44233>



Group discussion:

Facilitate a discussion about what the students notice and appreciate in people they admire. Also ask them to comment on how they feel when they are with this person.



Activities:

ACTIVITY!

Individual goal timelines.

Facilitators introduce the idea that sometimes it can feel overwhelming to have a goal and not know the steps towards achieving it. Breaking the long-term goal down into achievable 'baby steps' can help to make the goal feel more manageable and achievable, and also help us to know when we are making progress.

Ask the group to think about:

“Set a goal that you would like to have achieved in five years time. The goal can be in any area of life, education, relationships, health, travel, emotions, spirituality and so on. Write or draw a symbol of the goal on a piece of paper.”

- A symbol can be a picture, a word or a shape, colour or even a line!
- When each member of the group has individually made a symbol of their goal, ask them to regroup into a circle.
- Ask for a volunteer who would be happy to work through their goal with the group.
- This volunteer then places the symbol of their goal on the opposite side of the circle to themselves.
- Three pieces of paper are placed on the ground between the participant and the goal.

Ask the participant to walk to the first piece of paper, one quarter of the way towards the goal. Facilitators then ask prompting questions such as:

“What is it like here, a quarter of the way to your goal?”

“How will you know when you are a quarter of the way there?”

“What will you have achieved?”

“What will be different?” “How will you feel?”

Write or draw a summary on the piece of paper.
Repeat for half way, three quarters of the way, and all the way to goal.



ACTIVITY!

Pairs activity

Ask the students to work in pairs to replicate this process of figuring out the 'baby steps' towards achieving their goals. As facilitators, move around the room and assist students if they are stuck or need some help.



ACTIVITY!

Qualities supermarket

Spread the qualities from the warm up activity around the room. Ask the participants to walk around the room and identify the three most important qualities that they will need in order to reach their goal.

When everyone has identified the qualities they will need, ask the group to come back to sitting in the circle. Go around the circle and have each group member take turns to stand up and go to the qualities they identified, explaining why they need these qualities and giving an example of when they have exhibited these qualities in the past.



ACTIVITY!

Journal:

As in the previous weeks:

- Set an achievable goal to work on for the week
- Remind everyone to keep using their mood diaries
- Remind everyone of the time and place for next session

Week 5

Theme:

Life Balance

Aims:

Develop understandings of the importance of creating balance in various areas of life, for example; Spiritual, emotional, family, friends, vocation, interests, health. Identify excuses and other avoidant behaviours that act as barriers to a balanced lifestyle.

Materials:

- ✓ A4 paper and textas

Before the session:

- Set up the chairs in a circle

Warm up:

ACTIVITY!

Check in as usual by asking participants what they remember from last week, and any reflections on how they went with their goals for the week.

“Excuses” Role-plays.

ACTIVITY!

When facilitating role-plays it is important to contain the activity in the following ways:

Create a clear performance space, encourage a sense of theatre.

TIP!

Anyone NOT in the role-play takes the role of audience. A circle is NOT the best layout for role-play, move the chairs so that they are facing the performance space, enabling the ‘audience’ to view the role-play.

Have a clearly defined START and FINISH. It can be confusing if the start and finish are sloppy. Make sure everyone is in place on ‘stage’ and ready to go before anyone starts acting. When everyone is ready and the audience is paying attention, say, “Action” to signify the start. When the role-play is finished say “Finished” or “Thank you” and clap with the audience to show that the role-play is over.

Highlight that once the role-play has started, the ‘actors’ remain in role. If they fall out of character, for example, by asking questions of the facilitator or by giggling, say “Time out”, ask them to refocus and remain in role, then restart the role-play by saying “Action”.

When the role-play has finished, ask the actors to de-role, to clearly differentiate between role-play and real life. This can be done physically by ‘shaking’ out the character (simply shaking shoulders, stamping feet, wiggling the body around), or by spinning around three times, or by walking out of the room and coming back in.

The facilitators ask for two participant volunteers to role-play scenes about making up excuses.



You can introduce a role-play something like this:

TIP!

“OK, person A is the teacher and person B is the young person. You are both in the classroom and this young person hasn’t done their homework. Young person, I want you to make up as many excuses as possible about why you haven’t done your homework.”



ACTIVITY!

When the actors and the audience are set up and ready, ask the actors to improvise the following scenarios.

- Telling the teacher why you haven’t done your homework.
- Trying to get out of being fined for not having a train ticket.
- Self talk when you manage to eat a whole packet of tim tams.

If a number of group members want to be actors, swap actors for each role-play. You can add in extra scenarios if this activity is popular, asking the students for real life examples of times when young people may make up excuses.

Afterwards, regroup in a circle and introduce the idea that sometimes we all make excuses for avoiding things, and sometimes this can get in the way of us getting the most out of life.

Activities:

Psycho educational session: "Avoidance – weighing up the pros and cons".



Life pie.

On A4 paper, participants use a pie chart to show the amount of time they dedicate to the various aspects of their life.

The facilitator can demonstrate this on the whiteboard so that everyone understands.

Explain that the pie represents our life, and each piece of the pie represents the amount of time we spend on various parts of life. These parts include:

- Family
- Friends
- School
- Work
- Health
- Spirituality
- Interests



The purpose of this exercise is to encourage self-reflection and encourage students to identify where their lives may be out of balance.

When everyone has completed this exercise, again demonstrate on the whiteboard, this time drawing a pie to show how it might look if life was more balanced.

Ask the group to think about their current life pie, and any pieces of the pie they would like to make bigger or smaller to make life more balanced. Then get everyone to draw a second life pie to represent these changes.

When everyone has finished, regroup in a circle.

Group Discussion.

Ask the group to discuss, “

- What is the difference between the two pies?”
- “What would need to change to make life more balanced?”

Role Play Exercise

ACTIVITY!

TIP!

This exercise needs to be introduced clearly and demonstrated by two facilitators first to ensure that students know what is expected of them.

Introduce the idea that we all have excuses, or things we say to ourselves that get in the way of living a balanced life. For example, some of us might want to do more exercise, or to spend more time with friends, but tell ourselves

- “I don’t have time”,
- “I’m not good at it”,
- “Other things are more important”.

Ask the group members to think about the question:

- “What are some of the things you say to yourself that get in the way of a balanced life?”

Ask everyone to write a couple of their excuses for not doing things they would like to do on a piece of paper.

Students then divide into pairs and make a space in the room to sit opposite one another.

Explain that in this exercise, they are going to role-play a debate and the aim is to try and win the debate!

The students exchange papers, so that person one has person two’s paper and vice versa.

Person one’s character is “Excuses” and person two’s character is “Strengths”.

Person one “Excuses” reads out person two’s statements, role-playing. Person two role-plays “Strengths”, arguing against the statement, trying to convince “Excuses” that their statements are flawed.



For example, the conversation might go something like this:

Excuses: "I can't get any exercise because I have too much homework and I don't have time"

Strengths: "What about all the time you spend watching TV after school?"

Excuses: "But I am tired after school and I need to relax"

Strengths: "If you go for a walk with the dog it will wake you up and you will feel more energetic"

Excuses: "But I feel embarrassed because I look fat"

Strengths: "You are no fatter than anyone else, you are normal, and if you do some exercise you will feel more confident and fitter, you might even run into your friends and enjoy yourself"

Excuses: "I can't think of any more excuses!"



In reality it may be hard for some students to argue against their own excuses. Facilitators should walk around the room and help any students who are having trouble. This is done easily by sitting next to them and quietly offering suggestions in their ear, encouraging them to try arguing against the excuses.

Allow about 5 minutes for each role-play and then swap roles so that everyone has a turn.

Afterwards regroup and ask the students if anyone learned anything from this exercise. Let them make their own meaning and just thank them for their insights. Compliment everyone on doing well in such a difficult exercise!

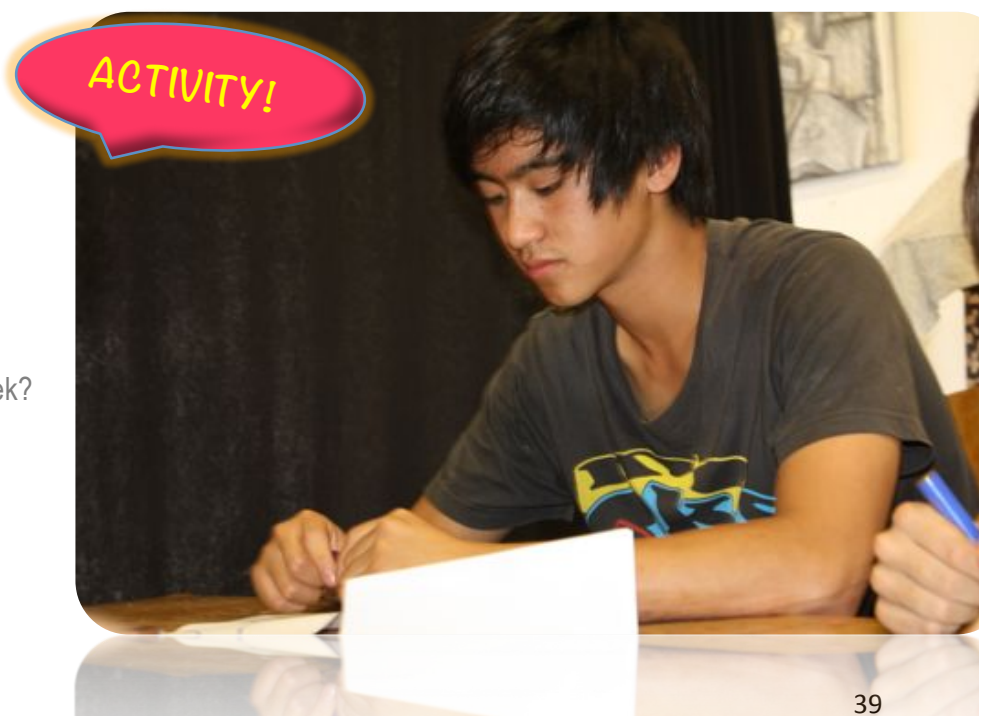
Journal:

Ask everyone to take a few minutes of quiet reflective time to write in their journals about the question:

- How can I create more balance in my life this week?

Reminders as usual: Mood diaries and next session time and place

Close



Week 6

Theme:

Self-care and Coping skills

Aims:

Identify:

- sources of wellbeing,
- fears, worries and concerns,
- coping skills

Materials:

- ✓ Relaxation CD
- ✓ Whiteboard and markers



Before the session:

- Set up chairs in a circle

Warm up:

Check in as usual



Group Discussion

Facilitators lead a group discussion, asking students to give their answers to the questions:

- When do I feel happy?

Who am I with? Where am I? What am I doing?

- When do I experience fear?

Who am I with? Where am I? What am I doing?

- When have I coped well with difficult emotions?

Who am I with? Where am I? What am I doing?

Draw a diagram on the whiteboard and make notes of the students' answers



ACTIVITY!

Activities:

Full body relaxation

Introduce the idea that learning relaxation skills is a very effective coping strategy for managing anxiety, and that anyone can learn these skills.

Let the students know that today we are going to practice relaxing. Ask everyone to be respectful of allowing each other to get the most out of this experience.

Invite everyone to find a space where they feel comfortable. Ideally this would be lying on the floor, however if students are not comfortable lying on the floor it is OK to sit comfortably against a wall or in a chair.

Let everyone know that it would be great if they feel comfortable enough to close their eyes. If they are not comfortable with this, just try to look down wards and relax the eyes. Avoid making eye contact with anyone else, as this is distracting. This exercise is all about tuning in to ourselves in our own space.

When everyone is comfortable, begin the relaxation.

There is a relaxation script in the resources section of this manual that facilitators can read. Do this very slowly in a calm low pitched voice, allowing plenty of time between instructions for participants to really tune in to their own bodies and breathing.

Alternatively, you might prefer to play a relaxation CD for students and afterwards give them a copy to play through their MP3 players when they need to relax.

Group discussion

ACTIVITY!

When the relaxation session is over, regroup in a circle and ask the participants what the relaxation was like for them.

Some questions that might help are:

- What did you enjoy or not enjoy?
- Do others feel the same or differently? (encourage different perspectives and let everyone know it is healthy to have your own opinion)
- What was easy or difficult?
- Can you think of how relaxation skills might be useful in your broader life?

Journal:

ACTIVITY!

Ask the students to take a few minutes to write in their journals about the following questions:

- What are the external sources of happiness and relaxation in my life?
- What are the internal skills I have to make myself feel happy and relaxed?

Reminders as usual: Mood diaries and next session time and place

Close



Week 7

Theme:

Early warning signs, help seeking and affirmations

Aims:

- Identify individual early warning signs of escalating anxiety
- Identify individual support networks for each student
- Create affirmation cards

Materials:

- ✓ Reflective work sheets; 'My Early Warning Signs' and 'My Helping Hand'
- ✓ Coloured cardboard cut into wallet size pieces
- ✓ Textas
- ✓ Stickers
- ✓ Positive affirmations on A4 paper

Before the session:

- Place the chairs in a circle
- Prepare the positive affirmation statements on A4 paper (examples of affirmations are in the resources section of this manual)

ACTIVITY!

Warm up:

Check in as usual

Brief relaxation. Facilitate this in a similar way as last session, but a briefer version. The purpose is to remind students that they can use their relaxation and mindfulness skills to calm down quite quickly when they need to.



ACTIVITY!

Activities:

Facilitators lead a discussion, acknowledging that the Chill Skills program is coming towards the end, and congratulating all the participants for the amount of progress they have made.

Introduce the idea that as we prepare to finish the program it is important to reflect on how we will know when and where to get help in the future.

Give each student a copy of reflective worksheets, "My Early Warning Signs" and "My Helping Hand" like those in the illustration. You can draw them up and photocopy or get students to create their own.

TIP!

Discuss how the participants might notice if their anxiety is starting to be a problem.

Encourage reflection on mood, life style choices, participation in enjoyable activities, attendance at school, changes in sleeping or eating patterns and personal relationships.

Also discuss that everyone needs to have a handful of people that they can turn to when they need a helping hand. Get the students to come up with suggestions about who they could talk to if they need support in the future. Stimulate discussion to include friends, family and professionals. For example, the school welfare team, headspace, the local youth services and their local GP.

Give some time for the participants to work individually on their reflective worksheets. Go around the room and ensure that everyone can fill in both sheets.

When everyone has completed the exercise, regroup in a circle and briefly get each participant to share their worksheets. Thank them when they have explained their early warning signs and helping hand. If there are any students who have found it difficult to fill in either sheet get the rest of the group members to help them think about it and fill it in.





Affirmation cards:

This exercise is intended to be a chance for participants to celebrate their own unique worth, value, strengths and skills that they have developed through their time in the Chill Skills program.

You will have prepared about 30 – 40 affirmation statements on sheets of A4 paper. You can make up affirmations, look them up on the internet or use the suggestions in the resources section of this manual.

Simply write or print the statements on to A4 paper. If you have the resources you can laminate these for future use.

- Place the affirmations all around the room on the floor, tables and chairs. Invite the students to walk through the space, reading the affirmations as they go. Ask them to pay careful attention to the affirmations because there is one in this room that holds special meaning just for them. Ask them to tune in to which affirmation seems to ‘speak’ to them, or ‘resonate’, or hold special meaning.
- When everyone has found a meaningful affirmation, invite the participants to select a piece of coloured card, some textas and stickers and create their own personal affirmation card. Remind them that this card is wallet sized so they can keep it in their wallet so they can see it daily.
- When everyone is finished ask them if they would like to share their affirmation and what it means to them with the rest of the group.

Journal:

Ask the students to reflect on the question

- “What are the three most important things I have learned in Chill Skills?”

Remind students that next week will be an excursion and let them know where and when to meet.

Close

Week 8

Theme:

Excursion to the local youth services (in our pilot project this was **headspace** Western Melbourne and the other co-located youth services such as housing, vocational, legal and recreational youth services).

Aims:

- Familiarise participants with the local youth services as a place that is youth friendly, accessible, and where help is available.
- Closure / Celebration

Materials:

- ✓ Music
- ✓ Paper plates
- ✓ Transport
- ✓ Balloons
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Sand



ACTIVITY!

Warm up:

Fish bowl exercise.

The purpose of this exercise is for staff to model positive feedback. The staff sit in the middle and the students sit in a circle around the outside.

Staff draw names out of a hat and take turns to discuss the positive aspects and progress of each student. The students role is to watch and listen.

ACTIVITY!

Stress balls.

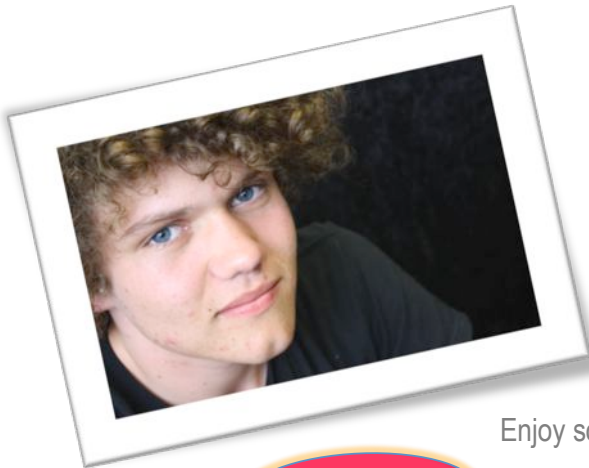
- Everyone gets to make a stress ball! The instructions for making stress balls are in the resources section of this manual.

Activities:

ACTIVITY!

Feedback exercise. Play music. Every student's name is written on a paper plate and passed around for all the others to write words of encouragement and appreciation. The plates are returned to the owners and key words are chosen and written on to the stress balls.

Reflection on the program. Using visual resources such as St Luke's Innovative Resources "Sign Posts" cards, ask each student to select one of the most important things they have gained from the program. Discuss as a group.



Enjoy some food and drink!

Journal:

ACTIVITY!

Ask the group members to write themselves a short letter to remind themselves of their closing thoughts and thoughts for the future

- Ensure that all group members complete the Post Tests and Evaluation
- Hand out resource kits with information about local youth services
- Talk about the individual follow up sessions for facilitators to give individual feedback and discuss getting more help if / when needed and having any ongoing contact.

Thank everyone and congratulate them on their contribution, caring, support of others and courage.

Wish everyone well!. Close!



Resources

Example of a parent consent form

Dear Parents/Guardians,

The program '**Chill Skills**' is a program aimed at reducing anxiety and building skills to help young people cope with anxiety. Your child has been selected to participate because we believe he or she is motivated to develop these skills and will benefit from involvement.

The program will begin on (DATES – we suggest fourth term for year 10 or first term for years 11 and 12) and will run for 8 weeks. It will run on Mondays for 90 minutes per week during class time. In order for students not to miss 8 weeks of a particular class, the program will run during different periods every week. The student's coordinator and teachers will be made aware of the student's participation in the **Chill Skills** program and absence from class will not affect their academic progress. The final week will entail a site visit to Headspace Western Melbourne, traveling by train with staff from the Wellbeing Team.

Please visit www.headspace.org.au/wmh to learn more about headspace, the National Youth Mental Health Foundation.

Headspace Western Melbourne will be present at the Parent Teacher Interviews from 3pm-6pm to answer any of your questions or concerns. Alternatively you can contact the Wellbeing Team at the school on (PHONE NUMBER).

Please return your attached signed consent to the school general office by the (DATE).

Yours Sincerely,

Example of pre and post project evaluation surveys

The same form can be used for pre and post surveys. The results can be compared to show changes in student awareness, strategies and access to help.

Name (initials are OK)

Date

Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible, there is no right or wrong answer, and your feedback will help us to make Chill Skills as useful as possible for you. This survey will be completely confidential.

Name three ways that anxiety stops you from getting the most out of life

1

2

3

Name three early warning signs that you are feeling anxious

1

2

3

Name three things that trigger anxiety for you

1

2

3

Name three strategies you have to manage anxiety

1

2

3

Name three people or places that you could go to for help with managing anxiety

1

2

3

Relaxation Script

Allow plenty of pauses and space as you talk the students through this relaxation. Lie or sit down yourself and model having your eyes downcast. Students will feel more comfortable if they don't feel that they are being watched during relaxation.

Everybody find a comfortable place in the room.

You can lie on your back on the floor or sit comfortably, whatever is more relaxing for you. Make sure you have enough space around you so that you are not touching anyone else.

Just focus your attention internally, towards yourself. You can close your eyes. If you don't want to completely close your eyes you can just look down with your eyes half closed. Avoid making eye contact with anyone else so that you don't interfere with their relaxation.

Now, I'm just inviting you to start to notice your breath. There is nothing else you have to do, just pay attention to the in breath and then the out breath.

Notice the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you breath in and out. Slow your breathing down slightly. Focus on breathing deeply right into your lower abdomen, your middle abdomen and then your chest. As you exhale push al the air out until your lungs are completely empty.

Do this three times and then just breathe normally, watching the breath go in and come out.

Now, I'm inviting you to draw your attention to your feet. Notice where they are touching the floor, where the ground underneath you supports them. Notice any areas of tension in your feet; wiggle them a little if you need to. Then, just let your feet go floppy, soft, and relaxed.

Bring your attention to your calf muscles, your shin and your knee. Notice any sensations, tightness, tension, tingling or anything else you can feel in your lower leg. Allow your leg to feel supported by the floor, squeeze your muscles tight, hold it for a moment, and then, as you breathe out, let all the tension go. Let your lower leg go soft and floppy, let it just relax.

Now, I'm inviting you to notice the area of your upper leg, thigh and buttocks. Again, bring your attention to any sensations or tensions in these areas. Again, notice where they are resting on the floor, and what it is like to feel supported by the ground beneath you. Tense up the muscles in these areas and hold it for a moment, and then, with the out breath, let it all go. Feel any tension you have just slip out of your body and into the floor. Your whole upper leg, thigh and buttocks area is feeling heavy, soft, supple and relaxed.

Enjoy the feeling of relaxation in your lower body. There is nothing else you need to do, just be here and now.

And now draw your focus to your pelvic area and stomach. Notice where they feel round and open and soft. Notice where they feel restricted, tight or hard. Breathe into these areas, letting your breath expand and open them.

With a big breath in, pull the muscles in your pelvic and stomach areas tight, squeezing them together firmly and holding the tension in them. Hold it, hold it, hold, then, breathe out and let it all go, let it all relax. Feel the softness and openness in these areas as let go of the tension and just relax.

We're going to do the same thing with our backs. Notice your back, your spine, your ribs, the muscles of your ribs, and your chest, your lungs and heart. Notice the sensations in your back and spine. Notice your ribs and the rise and fall of your chest as you breathe in and out. Notice your lungs expand and contract. Notice your heart beating. Don't try to change anything, just pay attention to all of these internal workings of your body. Just be present, here and now.

With a big breath in, back, your spine, your ribs, the muscles of your ribs, and your chest, your lungs and heart areas tight, squeezing them together firmly and holding the tension in them. Hold it, hold it, hold, then, breathe out and let it all go, let it all relax. Feel the softness and openness in these areas as let go of the tension and just relax.

We're moving our attention now up to our shoulder blades, shoulders and neck. Maybe you'd like to shrug your shoulders up and down a few times, rotate them forwards and backwards. Now just let them be still. Pay attention to these areas. Notice the feelings inside your shoulder blades, shoulder area and neck. Notice any areas of tension, stiffness or pain. Notice too any areas that are not drawing your attention, the areas that are just OK.

And now, tense this whole area, tense your shoulder blades, tense your shoulder area and tense your neck. Hold it as you hold a big breath in. And now, as you breathe out, let it go, and just relax. Feel any tension sliding out of your body and into floor, the ground beneath you. Letting all the tension go, so that your shoulder blades, the whole shoulder area and your neck are soft, supple, and relaxed.

Breathe calmly as we move our attention to our face. Scrunch up your whole face like a tiny little prune. Scrunch it as hard as you can, screwing up your nose, squinting your eyes and pursing your lips. Breathe right in deep, and then, with a big exhale, open up your mouth as wide as possible and say “Aaaah” with your breath. Do this three times, and then relax. Feel your mouth relax, your cheeks relax, your nose relax, your eyes relax, your ears relax, your eyebrows relax, the area in between the eyebrows relax, the temples relax, and your forehead relax. Your whole face is peaceful, calm, and relaxed.

And now, just notice the back and the crown of your head. Pay attention to it. Allow yourself to notice any sensations, tensions, tingles, the feeling of your hairs, and anything else going on in the back and the crown of your head. There is no need to judge whatever is happening. Just be present, pay it attention and accept whatever is present in the back and the crown of your head. Try to squeeze the muscles in the back and crown of head area; feeling what it is like to hold tension in there. Then, as you breathe out, just let it go, let it all relax. The back of your head and the crown of your head are calm, peaceful, and relaxed.

Your whole entire body is soft, open, supple, peaceful, calm and relaxed. Right here, right now, in this present moment, there is nothing at all you need to do. Just be. Enjoy the feeling of calmness and relaxation. Let your mind relax too. Let the thoughts come and go like clouds through the sky. Just drifting through. There is nothing in your mind that you need to hang on to. Just let it go, and let your mind relax.

Spend a few minutes enjoying the sensations of relaxation.

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In your own time, draw your attention back to the room around you. Hear the sounds. Gently wriggle your toes and fingers. Roll your head gently from side to side. Stretch your arms and legs. Slowly open your eyes and come back to the room. When you are ready, roll gently to one side and sit up.

Example Affirmations

Affirmations for Health

Every cell in my body vibrates with energy and health
Loving myself heals my life
I nourish my mind, body and soul
My body heals quickly and easily

Affirmations for Abundance

I deserve good things of all kinds
The more grateful I am, the more reasons I find to be grateful
I do my work with love and abundance flows freely through me

Affirmations for Love

I know that I deserve Love and accept it now
I give out Love and it is returned to me multiplied
I rejoice in the Love I encounter everyday

Affirmations for Relationships

I have wonderful relationships and we are all caring to each other
I am a good friend and have good friendships
I attract only healthy relationships

Affirmations for Healthy Body Image

I am a unique and beautiful person, just like everyone else
I make positive healthy choices for myself
I choose to exercise regularly

Affirmations for Self Esteem

When I believe in myself, so do others
I express my needs and feelings
I am my own unique self - special, creative and wonderful

Affirmations for Peace and Harmony

All my relationships are loving and harmonious
I am at peace
I trust in the process of life

Affirmations for Joy and Happiness

Life is a joy filled with delightful surprises
My life is a joy filled with love, fun and friendship
I am forgiving, relaxed and open
I choose love, joy and freedom
I open my heart and allow wonderful things to flow into my life

How to make Stress Balls

A stress ball is an excellent tool to use to relieve stress, and to exercise your hands and fingers. With a cup of sand and a couple common household items, you will be squeezing your cares away before you know it.

Things You'll Need

- 1 cup clean dry play sand (approximately)
- 1 small funnel
- 2 small balloons (about 3 inches inflated)

1

Measure 1 cup of sand into an easy-to-pour container.

2

Insert the tip of a funnel into a balloon, pulling the end of the balloon up tight against the sides of the funnel spout.

3

Hold the end of the balloon tight to the funnel, and slowly pour the sand into the balloon. Remove the funnel.

4

Squeeze out any excess air from the balloon. Tie it tightly.

5

Cut some small holes into the second balloon and stretch it over the first balloon to create a spotty colourful effect!

About the author

Carla van Laar is an Arts Therapist who worked in community capacity building and management roles at headspace Western Melbourne for two years. She has twenty years' experience working with young people in community, educational, health and forensic settings and specialises in experiential, arts based and creative methods. Carla teaches Experiential and Creative Arts Therapy and Counselling at VET and Higher Education levels, and is currently Head of Arts Therapy at Phoenix Institute in Melbourne. She works as a therapist with young people with complex needs. Carla's Master's research evolved into her book, "Bereaved Mother's Heart", published by St Luke's Innovative Resources. She has co-authored chapters in a number of international publications including "Healing the Inner City Child" (Jessica Kingsley Publishers) and "Knowing Differently" (Nova Press). Carla's Doctoral arts based auto-ethnographic research is an investigation into the use of visual arts in sharing women's stories and making webs of meaning. She loves her work, especially facilitating groups.



It's been a privilege sharing the Chill Skills journey with you!

I hope that, as facilitators, you have also learned some skills to take into your own lives.

Remember that you deserve to relax, have fun and be loved too!

And, on behalf of the young people you work with, thanks for caring.

Carla