



Cool Kids Anxiety Program

(Children and Adolescents)

Overview:

The Cool Kids program is aimed at treating anxiety disorders in children and adolescents aged 13-17 years. It is a structured cognitive behavioural and skills-based program that teaches children and their parents how to better manage anxiety. The program is designed to help children recognise emotions such as fear, stress and anxiety, help them to challenge beliefs associated with feeling nervous, and encourages them to gradually engage with fearful activities in more positive ways

The program involves the participation of both children and their parents, and focuses on teaching clear and practical skills. The program has several additional components that are also included such as dealing with teasing, social skills training and problem solving.

The program has undergone continual scientific evaluation and has been developed by Macquarie University and includes the latest understanding of anxiety and its treatment.

The goals of Cool Kids are to :

- Reduce symptoms and amount of life's interferences caused by anxiety
- Increased school attendance,
- Improved academic achievement,
- Increased confidence,
- Improved peer relationships
- Increase engagement in extra-curricular activities
- Reduced worry, shyness, fear and family distress.



The essential components of *Cool Kids* include:

- **Psychoeducation:** Including understanding of the components, presentation and nature of anxiety as well as factors involved in its development. Understanding of the relevant components to treatment and their purpose
- **Cognitive restructuring:** Including learning to act like a detective and gather evidence about whether feared events are really highly likely
- **Parent skills:** Including helping parents to manage their anxious child better and reducing their urge to control and overprotect; also teaching parents strategies to help manage their own anxious feelings
- **In-vivo exposure:** Including the development of stepladders for the child that allows them to gradually face their fears and learn that feared events are unlikely to happen and that they can cope
- **Social skills:** Including how to act in a more skilled manner and engage better with people and to act more assertively with peers
- **Improved coping strategies:** Including dealing more effectively with teasing and bullying, developing a range of coping strategies such as relaxation and reducing poor coping such as drug-taking, and problem solving



Cool Kids includes a homework component:

Skills learned in sessions are implemented and practiced for homework. This includes monitoring of symptoms, cognitive restructuring practice, in-vivo exposure practice, and practice of relevant skills. Parents also practice child management and anxiety management.

Program Structure and Delivery:

The *Cool Kids* program incorporates 3 elements:

1. Initial Intake Assessment

To determine the suitability of our program participants will be required to complete a clinical assessment which typically takes 2 hours. The clinical assessment includes interviewing separately the child and his/her parents. Parents will also be asked to complete a questionnaire about the child's thoughts, feelings and behaviours and questions related to your own behaviours.

2. Parent information session (2 hours in length)

The Parent Information sessions are as follows

- Session 1 – Program Overview and Early Skills
- Session 2 – Behaviour Management and Stepladders

Parents learn how to manage children differently, how to manage their own anxieties, and how to help their child implement their new skills outside the therapy sessions

3. 10 x one hour group sessions for children

- Session 1 – What, Why and How? An Overview of the Program
- Session 2 – Learning to Think Realistically
- Session 3 – Rewards
- Session 4 – Fighting Fear by Facing Fear
- Session 5 – Creative Exposure
- Session 6-9 – Building Skills While Facing Fears
- Session 10 – Maintaining Gains and Coping with Set-Backs

4. 1-2 individual consultations with parents

The Individual Parent Consultations are designed to provide specific information about their child's fears and worries, and to provide 1:1 trouble shooting advice for implementation of skills at home.

Other options

We also offer individual therapy for both the Cool Kids Program and treatment for other mental health difficulties with registered psychologists and clinical psychologists.

Call Thinkahead for further information or to reserve your spot in the next group