

INFORMATION SHEET

SCOTS Peer Group Sessions

Our peer group sessions are generally run on a school term basis with one hour sessions held once weekly. At times we also run week long school holiday intensive peer group programs and a Summer Intensive program in January. The goals of the peer group program are based on the functional emotional developmental levels (FEDL's) that provide us with a framework for the development of healthy social emotional functioning. The FEDLs are supported by scientific research and we use them to determine where each child is functioning and individualise the group program to meet each child's unique developmental and neurobiological profile.

Our peer group programs aim to support the development of a child's capacity to -:

1. Calm and maintain **REGULATION** (emotional and physiological arousal states) so that they can sustain shared attention with other children in group settings.
2. Relate with peers with warmth and **ENGAGEMENT**, as well as to manage a range of feelings including negative emotions such as frustration and anger while staying in a relationship.
3. Become **RECIPROCAL**- Respond and initiate simple back and forth interactions with peers, initially this is around sensory motor based play.
4. Build this interaction into a “ continuous flow” of physical and social **PROBLEM SOLVING** interactions during the activity and play with the goal of building the child's ability to think, plan, sequence, adapt and show flexibility and empathy, and be able to register and perceive different social perspectives. We want our children to develop a complex sense of themselves a competent problem solver and thinker, who can manage a range of feelings when interacting with peers.

5. Build IDEATION – Register and express a range of ideas and feelings through words /language, gestures, pretend play, art forms, during interactions with peers.

6. Bridge their ideas and thinking into logical thinking, developing REASONING capacities and the ability to negotiate their needs/wants with peers, while regulating their emotions/sensations. Our goal is to support children to be empathic, reflective and multicausal thinkers.

It is important that children are developmentally ready before they move into group work. Our pre requisite criteria is that the child has strong engagement and reciprocal interaction with parents/and other adult caregivers. Although we do very much consider the child's chronological age our focus is on matching children to their developmental age so there is often a variation of ages in the group.

Children will not show a capacity or skill with another child, that they don't already have with an adult, in fact they will drop several developmental levels usually in a peer group as the other child will not accommodate for any processing or regulatory challenges so it is important to ensure that your child is developmentally ready for supported peer group work.

We also find that it is important to consider the child's unique processing profile when we match them in a group with one or two other children. Many of the children we work with struggle to keep up with other typically developing children in regular group settings and by practicing and building their capacities with another child who is carefully matched in terms of processing, sensory motor, language and cognitive strengths and challenges, it gives each child a chance to be both the leader and initiator, as well as the responder at times during the session.

We find that during our individual therapy sessions with children, we are able to work with the child at a higher developmental level and focus on different goals that we are able to cover in a group setting. We encourage you to think of the individual and group sessions as complementary aspects of your child's intervention program.

For further information about our Floortime Peer Group Programs please contact Kathy Walmsley.

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