

OUR PHILOSOPHY

SOCIAL SKILLS: *The myriad number of skills involved in relating to other people in a gratifying manner.*

KIDSLINK is much needed to fill the gap in therapeutic services for children and teens with social skills difficulties. Our experience as child therapists told us that children with social skills difficulties responded well to a programme which incorporated a variety of modalities. We employ expressive arts therapies to help children communicate about their social experiences, we present the children with activities aimed at fostering group cooperation, and we teach social understanding and coping strategies through cognitive-behavioural techniques. All of this is offered within a relational and empathetic framework. By combining these different therapeutic approaches our programme is unique and effective. Because our methods encompass using verbal and non-verbal as well as visual communication, we tailor our programme to suit each child's learning style. The therapists give on-the-spot feedback when misperceptions and miscues occur so that children can begin to make more sense of their social interactions and the reactions of their peers. Feedback is given in a positive, caring and specific manner as the therapists help children work on their areas of difficulty and realise their strengths.

The world assumes that intelligent, bright children will learn social skills in an automatic and intuitive way. For some children this process is not so and therefore they need to be taught and shown through example and explanation. Often it is surprising that a child who can easily master cognitive information has difficulty with skills such as making friends, keeping friends, keeping a conversation going, winning and losing games or transitioning from one task to another. Understanding what peers or adults expect from them is often is often a confusing and frustrating place for them to be in. Here at **KIDSLINK** children have a unique experience: **THEY ARE UNDERSTOOD!** From that starting point we assess their strengths and weaknesses in the social realm and tailor services to meet their needs.

We offer:

- small group therapy
- individual therapy
- parent coaching
- family therapy
- teacher training workshops

*Helping
build social
skills and positive
connections*

KIDSLINK is now in its twelfth year and is a place where many children and teens who experience difficulty fitting in with their peers come to feel safe and learn the skills necessary to improve their social world.

Through once weekly groups during the school year the **KIDSLINK** team helps children identify what's getting in their way socially, name it, and learn strategies and coping skills to compensate for these difficulties.

The **KIDSLINK** team, in addition to facilitating the social skills programme, is available to offer training workshops for teachers on how to integrate social skills into the day to day classroom curriculum.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS TO RELATING

Friendship Skills:

- Understanding and respecting boundaries
- Safe friends versus hurtful "friends"
- Having or understanding empathy
- Not being "rule police"
- Knowing when to tell on others
- Respecting personal space / appropriate touching
- Knowing how and when to get help

Dealing with Feelings:

- Anger and frustration
- Excitement
- Making a mistake
- Recognising the feelings of others
- Recognising your own feelings

Ability to control impulses:

- Can stop to think
- Can evaluate different courses of action and consequences
- Ability to use words
- Can stop aggressive reactions (hitting, pushing, etc)

Conversation Skills:

- Eye contact
- Listening
- Taking turns
- Expected subject changes
- How to start a conversation
- Knowing when to edit sensitive topics
- Maintenance skills - asking and answering questions
- Knowing when to stop talking

Successful play skills:

- Sharing
- Compromising
- Knowing rules
- Flexibility
- Winning and losing skills
- Ability to initiate play
- Knowing which kids to pick to play with (safe kids)

*"I feel special
at KIDSLINK. I'm
learning how to keep
friends at school"*
- 11 year-old
group member

*"This is the
only after school group
my child has ever liked to
come to. He always has a smile
when I see him leaving"*
- Parent of a
7 year-old

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KIDSLINK



In small groups teens and children learn to relate and communicate with their peers using the language of art, drama, games and play.

Small Social Skills Groups
Ages 4-19

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www.kidslink.com.au

Children and teens

with social skills deficits often have no difficulty getting along with older or younger children. That is why the groups at KIDSLINK are with the *same* aged children or teens. They have the opportunity to learn new social skills while expressing themselves creatively in fun age-appropriate activities.

The groups are kept small so that the therapists have the opportunity to closely watch, and give guidance and support to each child when needed. The group is kept at no more than six children with two therapists.

The two leaders provide direct but kind feedback to help children develop positive ways to interact socially with their peers.

The central goal of these groups is to help children form and maintain friendships. Through establishing bonds with other group members, the children will improve their understanding of what a friend is and how friends treat each other. The children feel empowered by being encouraged to have a voice about the interactions that are happening in the group, and giving feedback to their peers. Once links are established among the children in the group, the desire to attain approval and be a valued group member enables individuals to take in comments from other group members about their behaviour and to work on improving their patterns of social interaction.

Children and teens gain confidence trying out new behaviours in the group. They are encouraged to try these new skills out at school and in family life.

Children also learn from each other by watching and listening. The children who attend the KIDSLINK program begin to understand how successful social interactions work and what part they must play in order to be included in peer social activities.

Throughout the time that a child participates in the program, the KIDSLINK team maintains contact with the child's teacher and other professionals that are involved. Midway during the term there is a one hour consultation with each child's parents to discuss in detail their child's progress and goals. Parenting strategies are offered during this meeting.

The cost for 9 weekly group sessions over one term plus the parent hour meeting is \$700.

For more information contact KIDSLINK Director Leonie Reisberg on 0414 452 177.
KIDSLINK is located at 6 Dawson Pl, Turramurra 2074