

childPSYCH News

A newsletter for professionals and parents

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Inside this issue:

Can children be neurotic?

Organisation in the
homeschooling setting



APS Psychologists



Australian
Tutoring
Association



Concentration and Attention Problems?

The cogmed program consists of 25 training sessions of 30-40 minutes each, done over 5 weeks. It is the intensity of this training schedule that is critical to the program's success. The user/family sets the training schedule with the Cogmed Coach, with plenty of flexibility.

Can children be neurotic?

by Philip Gosschalk, Clinical & Educational Psychologist

The short answer is...Yes! But first we need to make sure we understand what "neurotic" means.

What is it?

Neuroticism is a personality trait that is characterised by a tendency to see things negatively. These are the "half glass empty" people. They are more pessimistic than optimistic. Such individuals tend to become worried and sad easily and are easily tired (from stress). They tend to come across as worriers, always looking for the negative in things, seem to have less fun, are critical of everything and have a tendency to think too much about something that upsets them.

How can we tell if a child is neurotic?

Neuroticism in children is identified in much the same way as in adults. These children do not like new situations, may be possessive of their friends, are self-critical, worry a lot and are easily frightened and upset.

What are the consequences of neuroticism?

The usual outcome of this personality trait is that such children become *susceptible* to anxiety and depression. Note how being neurotic does not mean you will become depressed or anxious! It just means you are at increased risk of these problems. If such children are to develop anxiety and/or depression then the usual course is that anxiety develops first, with depression more likely in the adolescent years. Anxiety problems such as separation anxiety, ob-



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sessive and compulsive behaviours, excessive worrying and phobias tend to develop during the ages 6-12.

What can be done for these children?

Fortunately, there are a variety of things we can do. Helping the child to develop a good support network through quality friendships is a good start.

1. *Social support.* To start with the research suggests that a strong sense of family and good quality friendships can "buffer" or reduce the chances of anxiety or depression developing. This makes sense as the support of friends and family helps us to get through stressful times. After all too much stress is usually what brings on anxiety and depression in neurotic individuals. So it makes sense that we need to help these children cope with stress in their lives. In fact, having one good quality friend is more important than being popular with their peers! Therefore, one thing we can do is get such children involved in clubs where they are likely to meet like-minded children. It doesn't matter if the club is sporting or the local computer gamers group - so long as they have an opportunity to make quality best friends.

2. *Quality friends.* So what is a good quality best friend? Well someone the child has the same interests as, listens to their problems, sticks up for them, does not talk about them behind their back and does not argue with them.

3. *Keeping friends.* The only problem is that neurotic children tend to have trouble keeping their friends. They tend to be less skilled at fixing their friendship problems, tend to over react emotionally to problems with their peers (eg., storming off in a huff) and be less assertive. Therefore, neurotic children need to learn not just how to make friends, but how to KEEP them! They need to learn skills like how solve a problem between them and their friends and how to react appropriately when upset with their friends.

Is it as simple as teaching the child social skills?

Teaching social skills is less than a quarter of the solution but is still important. The key to success appears however, to be teaching neurotic children how to be more resilient and positive. Such children need to learn how to think more rationally, not dwell on things so much and to control their emotions better.

What can parents do?

- ✓ Show children how you see the brighter side of life in negative things
- ✓ Don't use negative labels such as "Tom's the whinger in our family"
- ✓ Celebrate achievements and don't down play them
- ✓ Don't over praise your child for everything either, acknowledge

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Organisation in the Home School Setting

by Yevonne Partridge, Behaviour Consultant and Teacher

Organisation is a key tool across the different components of home-school education. It plays an important role in achieving success. There are lots of different ways this tool can be used to achieve your optimum home education learning experiences. Below are some suggestions of how you can organise your home education setting.



Organisation of the learning space
Define a calm/quiet place area or space, away from any distracting stimuli - in the home furniture, curtains, room dividers, posters, and work samples can be used to defined the boundaries of this space. This will assist your child to make the distinction between formal learning time and leisure/play time.

Provide adequate furniture (table and chair) and resources (books, writing tools) to enable learning.

Make this space visually stimulating. Display posters and allow your child to display his/her work in this space.

Make sure all resources can be easily located and have defined spaces for storage.

Organisation of planning
Take the time to learn about your child's learning style through observations, having conversations and interacting with your child during the learning process. Your child's learning style influences many factors of the home education program such as planning and curriculum delivery.

Balance your child's program by incorporating real life experiences into the program.

Use the local community as a resource bank. Each term identify any local resources in the community that could be accessed to support the curriculum.

Make appropriate use of the learning time. Include your child's interests, hobbies as part of learning.

Teach your child to be flexible with his/her learning so that they can manage themselves and their learning when the unexpected happens.

Organisation of the curriculum
Carefully read the complete term curriculum package provided to you by your curriculum provider. It is important to do this at the beginning of the term so that you have adequate time to seek clarification or ask questions before it is too late

Set long term (term goals) and short term (weekly) curriculum goals based on your child's provided curriculum.

Show an interest in what your child is learning by working with him/her, asking questions, having conversations about what he/she is doing.

Plan and teach the activities using a variety of different methods. Basic skills can be taught repetitively using different methods.

Organisation of the learning schedule
Time flexibility – Plan the week before it actually starts. This allows for non-schooling activities to be scheduled into the timetable and alternate learning times to be arranged. This reinforces the importance and value of learning.

Organise the timetable according to your child's learning style.

Implement routines in both the non and home- education settings to promote a more relaxed and stress free environment.

Provide your child with "own learning time". This encourages your child to become an independent and active learner. It takes the focus off the parent.

Organisation of resources
Before commencing the lesson gather all the required resources required. This will encourage your child to take ownership of his/her learning as well as reduce the chances of distraction and loss of concentration.

Make sure only the necessary electronic devices (in working order) are in the learning space before lesson commences

Make sure additional supplies of resources such as pencils, paper, pens, glue, books etc are easily accessible

Further assistance

The childpsych learning centre provides a homeschooling support program. Further information is available on our website.

Autism Behavioural Consultancy Services

childpsych employs a Behaviour Consultant, Yevonne Partridge, to compliment our educational and clinical psychologists. Yevonne has over 10 years experience in special education, and is also trained in Intensive Applied Behaviour Analysis.

Yevonne is able to:

- ◆ Assist parents of young ASD children with in-home behaviour management (this is claimable under FaCHSIA funding, but not Medicare or private health)
- ◆ Consult to schools on educational and behavioural interventions
- ◆ Assist children with moving into, and through, the school environment
- ◆ Advise on curriculum issues and classroom modifications
- ◆ Link parents and children into existing support services

Make an appointment
07 3716 0445

Autism Services

childpsych provides a specialist autism clinic focused on assessment and diagnosis and intervention services. Our autism interventions are delivered by psychologists accredited to work with children with autism spectrum disorders.

- ✓ Assessment and diagnosis of autism
- ✓ Management of children with autism to age 18 years
- ✓ Behavioural interventions, social skills, transition to school, treatment of other conditions such as anxiety, depression
- ✓ Special education development classes and remedial teaching classes

childpsych.net.au/autismclinic