



Newsletter Strengthening Families Strengthening Families

Vol. 11
April 2010

From the Program Leader

Hi Families, Schools and Service Providers,

This issue of our Newsletter will include an article on supporting learners with Down Syndrome, an article on 123 magic Emotion Coaching with children,

Managing Challenging Behaviour and information on Firstchance services and our updated Firstchance library.

Another Term has flown by and we are now in the middle of 2010. Our service has become more well known and the amount of families we are supporting is growing. Firstchance has changed in 2010 with the employment of a General Manager and Program Manager to support our ever growing suite of programs. As a result of this we have a Firstchance School Aged Program. This consists of Teen Time, After school care and Vacation Care for Teenagers with a disability and Strengthening Families. We have changed our name to just 'Strengthening Families'.....less of a mouthful Hopefully the Firstchance School Aged Program will continue to grow so we can provide much needed support to more families.

Our team has been up skilling in Term 2

- ◆ Engaging Dad's
- ◆ 123 Magic and Emotion Coaching for children
- ◆ Keeping them Safe Mandatory training to ensure the safety of children
- ◆ Strengths Based Practice

Our staff attendance at these in-services is a valuable asset to the families we support and the organisation as a whole.

We are looking forward to another Term offering our support and helping families to build their capacity to support their child with a disability and their whole family,

Regards,

Sascha Flick



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Our Mail out!

Strengthening Families will now be only emailing Newsletters and Parent Training Calendars. If you would like to continue to receive your SF quarterly Newsletter and Parent Workshop Calendar ensure you are on our email loop by emailing strengthening-families@newcastle.edu.au



1-2-3 Magic and Emotion Coaching

By Kim Talbot, Case Manager, Strengthening Families.

I was first exposed to this program through watching the DVD 1-2-3 Magic—Managing Difficult Behaviour in Children 2-12, last year. I personally found that this reduced my level of verbal communication & reduced my feelings of frustration when met with challenging behaviours at home. I wish that I had had knowledge of the program when my daughter was small. In the opening scenes of the DVD, Thomas W. Phelan, Ph.D. says that being a parent is like being a *'wild animal tamer'* this statement made me feel normal! I employed the strategies at home and found that I always had something to fall back on especially when I was tired or frustrated and my daughter presented me with challenging behaviour. I liked it so much that I took the opportunity to attend the course in May this year to become a facilitator. I was impressed with the program once again and especially liked the way that it incorporated emotion coaching as an important aspect. The leader of the course and the participants attending all held a firm belief that parents are doing the best they can. They also believed that the program could be very helpful in reducing parental frustration and increasing children's listening behaviour. I support anyone that is having difficulties with challenging behaviour with their children to attend a free/ pilot one day course through Strengthening Families and put the strategies into action. The program does require a commitment from parents to consistently employ the strategies in order to get the results. When I put the strategies in place at home I found that having a systematic approach to handling my daughter's challenging behaviour helped decrease arguments within our home and reduced the levels of frustration and upset.

The 123 Magic method may be beneficial for visual learners as the parent uses visuals or gesture to support the program. This means it may be suitable for children who have a disability and can be used as a whole family systematic approach to handling challenging behaviour.

See our Parent Workshop Calendar to register your interest.

Firstchance Inc.

Strengthening Families ASD Support Groups

West Lake Macquarie

When: 20th July, 17th Aug, 21st Sept, 7 - 9pm

Where: Morisset Multi-purpose Centre

What: A chance to chat and socialise with other families, gain information and link with services.

East Lake Macquarie

EVENING MEETING

When: 27th July, 24th Aug, 14th Sept, 7-9pm

Where: Eastlakes Salvation Army Centre

COFFEE MORNING

When: 2nd Aug, 6th Sept at 10am

Where: Jewels Tavern

Natuba Rd, Belmont North

What: A chance to chat and socialise with other families, gain information and link with services and have some coffee and cake.

Jewel's Tavern has a playground to cater for children.

If you have any questions regarding this group don't hesitate to call

Sascha on 49218 723 or 0405537487

ATTENTION!!!!!! Our Eastlake Macquarie and Westlake Macquarie Groups are not well attended. If you want this service to continue.. please come along and help support each other. We will be reviewing attendance and considering whether or not it is viable to continue this service at the end of Term 3, 2010.

Are you on the Strengthening Families email loop? Receive Newsletters, Parent Workshop Calendars and other community notices. If you are not and would like to be added to the email loop please send us an email requesting this.

strengthening-families@newcastle.edu.au and request to be put on our email loop.

Learners with Down Syndrome

Voice, March 2010. Down Syndrome Victoria and Down Syndrome NSW Members Journal.

Reviewed by Sascha Flick

The only feature all individuals with Down Syndrome have in common is some form of intellectual disability. Most children with Down Syndrome experience some delays in all areas of development. All children with Down Syndrome are individuals they will have individual strengths and weaknesses and have their own learning characteristics. This is like all people with or without a disability. Each person is an individual and as parents, educators and service providers we must try to avoid categorising children. To support children with Down Syndrome to learn we can expect them to:

- ◆ Adhere to the same behavioural and social norms that are expected of their peers.
- ◆ Participate in all the same learning activities as their peers with appropriate modification of the material and appropriate additional support.
- ◆ Take longer to learn new things and to complete work than other learners.
- ◆ Require learning to be broken down into smaller units and scaffolded to a greater degree than is needed for other learners of their age group
- ◆ Benefit from visual cues and reinforcement in all areas of learning
- ◆ Benefit significantly from errorless learning techniques
- ◆ Require explicit teaching of skills which other learners may acquire informally
- ◆ Require significantly more repetition and consolidation to retain new information.
- ◆ Understand considerably more than their verbal abilities may suggest.

Some important points to consider:

Errorless Learning

Children with Down Syndrome Learn best from success. And generally do not learn from mistakes.

Sensitivity to failure and disempowerment;

Many children with Down Syndrome demonstrate sensitivity to failure. Continuous failure can result in a reluctance to learn and students may engage in avoidance behaviours. It is therefore critical to plan for success and offer specific 'labelled' praise.

Learned Helplessness

It is important to maintain high expectations for the students and aim for the highest possible level of independence and learning. This 'learned helplessness' is often seen in people with Down Syndrome who have been over assisted and provides a real barrier to ongoing learning.

Medical Issues

If a child has an underlying medical condition or physical ailment it will have an impact on their learning. If your child has a medical condition or is prone to illness and infection it is important to communicate this with the child's school. Inform the school of how you manage the condition and make them aware of possible signs your child is getting sick. As an educator it is important to take these things into consideration when teaching children with Down Syndrome.

Medicare Items for Children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.



Medicare has 4 options for helping parents/carers to get money back for private therapy programs for children with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

Phone **1300 978 611**

Email: autismadvisor@autism-spectrum.org.au

To ask an Autism Advisor for a Medicare Information Factsheet

Managing Challenging

Behaviour by Sascha Flick

A child with a disability can often present with challenging behaviour in a variety of different environments. This can occur for many reasons usually attributed to communication difficulties. These children may have difficulty expressing how they feel or understanding what others are trying to say.

There are a variety of strategies used to support challenging behaviour but the first point of call is to determine what is the motivation behind the behaviour

- ◆ Avoiding a task
- ◆ Attention seeking
- ◆ I want behaviour (tangible)
- ◆ Sensory seeking

(Motivational Assessment Scale is a good tool to determine this.. just Google it to download a copy)

Once the motivation is determined there are a variety of strategies that can be used to reduce the behaviour and teach the child new skills and offer new ways of communicating.

What to do?

Attention seeking—redirect/ignore inappropriate behaviour as much as possible and reward/ praise appropriate interactions

Avoidance—Look at your expectations (have you set them too high) break down the task into smaller, more achievable steps and increase the level of reward and praise.

I want (tangible) - Teach appropriate ways to communicate wants/needs (ie visuals), reward/praise attempts.

Sensory Seeking—Complete a sensory profile and provide appropriate sensory experiences to avoid seeking.

Positive Behaviour support focuses on rewarding positive behaviour rather than punishing negative behaviour. Other effective strategies include establishing clear rules and routines, giving specific immediate praise, using visual support.

References: Understanding Challenging Behaviour 'Strengthening Families' parent workshop, 2010.

Firstchance Teen Time by

Mia Christiansen

Firstchance Teen Time operates from Lakeside SSP. Our service currently has vacancies for teens with a diagnosed disability in both the after school care and vacation care programs.

During the Winter Vacation Care period service users enjoyed a range of outings including; Pelican Feeding at the Entrance, a drive to Maitland Park, a game of Ten Pin Bowling and shared a picnic at the Heather Brae Botanical Gardens.

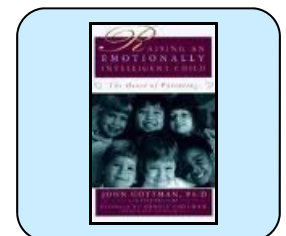
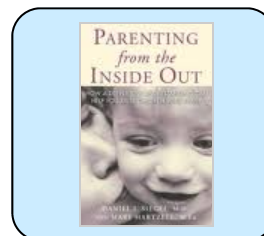
If you are interested in finding out more about the service please contact

ADHC intake on 1300 205 268

Or contact Mia Christiansen at Strengthening Families for more information.

Firstchance Library

The Firstchance Library has been restocked after replacing some missing items. Strengthening Families clients are able to borrow for free while parents outside of region and professionals pay a small Firstchance Annual Membership fee of \$10. Some new books in our library are...



Firstchance Movie Club 2010

By Mia Christiansen

The Firstchance Movie Club program will commence on Tuesday the 27th July 2010. Firstchance received a high number of applications from families throughout the Hunter for the 2010 program.

This year the program has been funded by the Commonwealth Banks Staff Community Fund.

The program will run from Broadmeadow PCYC on Tuesday evenings throughout school terms three and four. The format for this years program has been modified from last years and participants will engage in a number of social activities including Laser Skirmish at Maitland Gaol and Sandboarding at Port Stephens as part of the program.

We are looking forward to another fun filled and action packed Movie Club experience.