

FRIENDS RESILIENCE

Outcome of a FRIENDS for LIFE Whole School Program, Ysgol Y Lllys

Facilitated by Rhianwen Mason

Background

Anxiety is the most prevalent psychiatric disorder among children and young people, noting a particular deterioration in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. Poorer mental health (not just anxiety) can have a negative impact on learning and outcomes.

Key workers (1) and parents as examples have also significantly been affected by COVID-19. And so, given the impact of anxiety on the population as a whole, the FRIENDS resilience programs have been advocated as a way to meet the needs of communities, including schools, and build resilience for the future (2).

Built around the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) these fun and interactive programs with peers are recommended by the World Health Organisation (WHO).



Aims

FRIENDS Resilience is an evidence-based set of developmentally appropriate programs. The main aims are to reduce worries/anxiety, increase resilience and self-esteem, and promote healthy living. Sessions help the group to think, feel and act in more positive ways by incorporating mindfulness and other strategies such as healthy eating and sleeping, whilst identifying and using support networks. The course also helps to consider positive contributions to their environment and wider society.

Specific benefits of delivering the Friends Resilience programs in schools include:

1. Improved staff and pupil emotional health and wellbeing.
2. Pupils increased ability and motivation to learn.
3. Increased school connectedness.
4. Reduce bullying.

Programs

Fun FRIENDS = early childhood (4-7years)

FRIENDS for Life = primary school (8-11years)

My FRIENDS Youth = secondary (12-15years)

RESILIENCE for Life = upper secondary & adult (16years+)

Run over 10-12 sessions and all participants receive their own ebook for the course. This includes activities for the course and at home.

The FRIENDS for Life and My FRIENDS Youth include 2 booster sessions to encourage maintenance of gain. For the younger courses, parent information and involvement is provided and encouraged!

Friends for Life Acronym

Feelings
Remember to relax. Have quiet time
I can do it! I can try my best
Explore solutions and Coping Step Plans
Now reward yourself! You've done your best
Do it everyday
Smile! Stay calm and talk to your support networks!



Delivery

The FRIENDS for Life Resilience program was delivered to 32 pupils. Pupils completed the Stirling Children's Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS) **before and after the program**. The SCWB is used as a measure of change in wellbeing from a positive psychological perspective, and has been standardised for use with children aged 8-15 years. The scale covers areas of wellbeing including: optimism, cheerfulness and relaxation; satisfying interpersonal relationships; clear thinking and competence. It gives a **Total Wellbeing** score of between 12 and 60, along with two subcomponent scores described as 'Positive Outlook' and 'Positive Emotional State'.

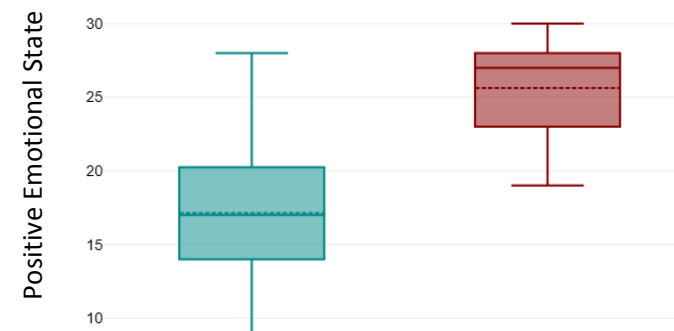
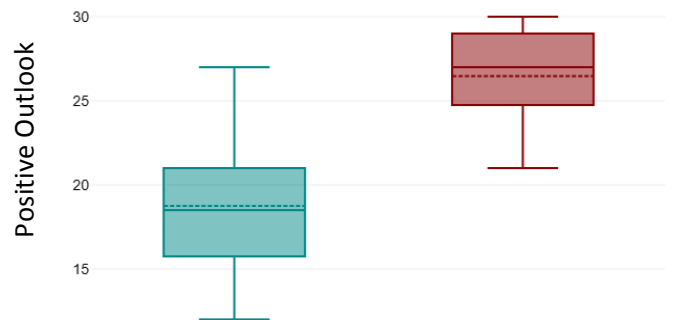
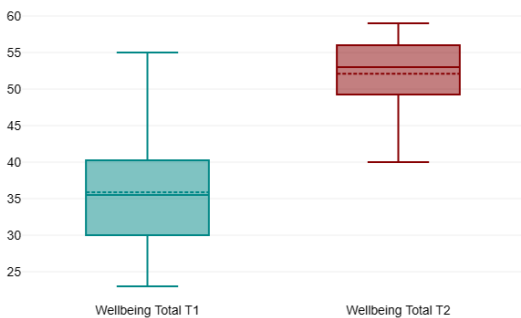
Findings

Following the program:-

- 😊 Pupils **Total Wellbeing** scores **significantly improved by 45.2% ***.
- 😊 Pupils **Positive Outlook** scores **significantly improved by 41.2% ****.
- 😊 Pupils **Positive Emotional State** scores **significantly improved by 49.6% *****.



Total Wellbeing Scores



1. COVID-19 Mental Health and Wellbeing Surveillance Report (2021) www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-surveillance-report
2. Together for Mental Health: Delivery Plan 2019 to 2022 in response to COVID 19. Welsh Government.

* $t(31) = -12.34, p < .001, 95\% \text{ confidence interval}$ ** $t(31) = -10.16, p < .001, 95\% \text{ confidence interval}$ *** $t(31) = -12.65, p < .001, 95\% \text{ confidence interval}$

Children's Emotional Wellbeing significantly increased following the Friends for Life program. Children enjoyed the group and have learnt skills for life 😊

Thank you to Rhianwen Mason for training and delivering the program in the school for the benefit of all the pupils who took part 😊





Your Feedback!

100% of pupils said that they would recommend FRIENDS for Life to a friend!

97% of pupils rated the FRIENDS for Life Program 5 out of 5 stars!



"Friends for Life has really helped me a lot. When I have a Friends session I always feel calmer after."

"It really helped me a lot with difficult times. It helped using my skills with difficult moments."



"I think Friends for Life is amazing. All the skills and tools has helped me so much with my anxiety."

"The program make me feel cheerful and happy."



"I wish more children would have the opportunity to have friends for life programme and to take part."