

AN EVALUATION OF F.R.I.E.N.D.S RESILIENCE PROGRAMS IN YSGOL Y LLYS

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Introduction

The F.R.I.E.N.D.S Resilience programs are built from extensive evidence-based research relating to anxiety prevention and treatment, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy. The Adult Resilience Experiential program “Strong not Tough” and the F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life program have been designed for adults 16+ years old and children 8-11 year olds respectively to reduce anxiety, increase resilience and to promote healthy living through 8-12 sessions.

By adopting F.R.I.E.N.D.S Resilience skills in schools, it is expected that staffs and pupils emotional health and wellbeing will improve, children will be better able to learn, bullying will reduce, school connectedness will increase and schools would be able to report their delivery of FRIENDS as evidence of working to deliver on the Whole School Approach [1].

Aims

To evaluate the effectiveness of the program ran in a Denbighshire School. To reduce anxiety and increase resilience in the schools pupils and staff.

Method

The Adult Resilience Experiential program is measured using pre and post data from the **short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (sWEMWBS)**. The sWEMWBS is a 7-item scale validated for use in multiple settings, including schools and the workplace, to measure mental wellbeing for ages 13+ years. Question items are rated using a 5-point Likert scale with scores ranging from 7 to 35. Higher levels of wellbeing are indicated with higher scores, and vice versa. The scale assesses low, moderate and high wellbeing [2].

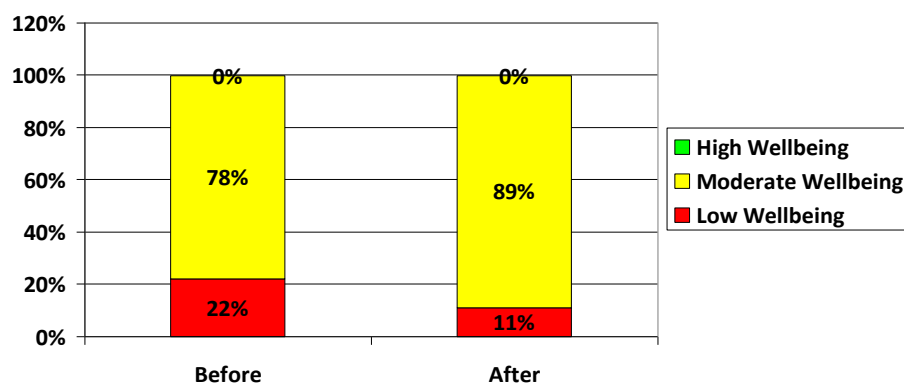
F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life is measured using the **Stirling Children’s Wellbeing Scale (SCWBS)** that pupils complete before and after the program. The SCWBS is used as a measure of change in wellbeing from a positive psychological perspective, and has been standardised for the use with children age 8-15 years. Question items are rated on a Likert scale of 5 levels with a minimum score being 12 and a maximum being 60. The scale covers areas of wellbeing including: optimism, cheerfulness and relaxation, satisfying interpersonal relationships, clear thinking and competence. Scores yield an overall **Total Wellbeing** score along with two subcomponent scores described as ‘Positive Outlook’ and ‘Positive Emotional State’ [3].

A total of 9 teachers completed the sWEMWBS pre and post data. 32 pupils completed the SCWBS pre and post data. Feedback forms were collected at the end of both programs.

Results: Adult Resilience Experiential

Findings show there to be a statistically positive change in sWEMWBS scores from before the course ($M = 24.2, SD = 2.54$) compared to scores after the course ($M = 27.1, SD = 2.69$) $N=9$ (Figure 1). Paired t-test analysis show this difference to be statistically significant, $t(8) = 3.06, p < 0.01, 95\%$ confidence interval, with 44.4% showing a meaningful positive change.

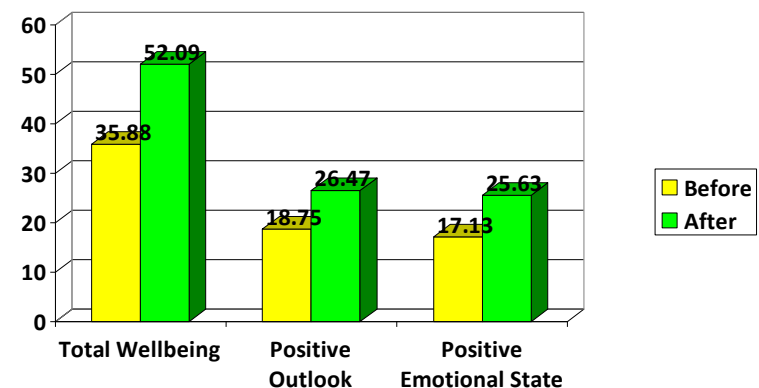
Figure 1. The distribution between pre and post sWEMWBS scores



Results: F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life

Findings show pupils reported higher levels of Total Wellbeing at the end of the program ($M=52.09, SD=5.15$) compared to the start of the program ($M=35.88, SD=7.657.92$). Paired t-test analysis show this difference to be statistically significant, $t(31) = -12.34, p < .001, 95\%$ confidence interval. $N=32$. (Figure 2).

Figure 2. The distribution between pre and post SCWBS scores



Conclusion

Results from the Adult Resilience Experiential “Strong not Tough” and the F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life programs have been proven to be significantly effective in helping reduce anxieties in children and young people, and help build their resilience. This is continually being facilitated in schools across Denbighshire, and also regionally in North Wales. It is the hope that future data can be collected regionally to further strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

Feedback

Adult Resilience Experiential

100% of teachers said that they would recommend the program to others.

100% of teachers rated the course 4 stars or above out of 5 stars.

“A worthwhile experience.”

“Many thanks- it’s nice going home after the sessions feeling less stress and anxiety.”

Most important is the fact that in order to look after others, we must be the best versions of ourselves- mentally and physically.”

F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life

100% of pupils said that they would recommend F.R.I.E.N.D.S for Life to a friend

97% of pupils rated the 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.”

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

References

[1] Together for Mental Health: Delivery Plan 2019 to 2022 in response to COVID 19. Welsh Government.

[2] Warwick Medical School. (2017). *The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS)*. Warwick.ac.uk. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/>

[3] Liddle, I. and Carter, G., 2015. Emotional and psychological well-being in children: the development and validation of the Stirling Children’s Well-being Scale. *Educational Psychology in Practice*, 31(2), pp.174-185.