

Wellbeing Research

In Term 2, our school is participating in a research project comparing two group-based therapy programs aimed at preventing anxiety and depression in young people. The research is being run by a team from University of Adelaide and SAHMRI.

A program called "Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy for Children" (MBCT-C) has been developed for children aged 9-12 years. The current research will examine how well MBCT-C compares to an established CBT program that has an extremely strong research base and evidence. Both programs aim to prevent depression and anxiety in young people.

MBCT-C was subject to two research studies in South Australian primary schools in 2013-2014, and these studies found that it has similar effectiveness to CBT. What is not yet known, is:

- Whether MBCT-C is effective over a longer-term period (up to 15-months)
- Whether adding a parent module to MBCT-C can increase its effectiveness

What happens in the MBCT-C Program?

The group-based sessions aim to help children bring their attention to the present moment, through activities such as mindful movements, mindful listening to sounds, and mindful breathing. The sessions also help children to identify their thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, to be able to name them, and to see the links between thoughts/feelings/body sensations and their behaviours. Most children who participated in the pilot test in 2013 reported enjoying the program, and there was evidence of a reduction in symptoms of depression, and increases in attention.

What happens in the CBT Program?

Also a group-based program, CBT focuses on helping children to identify the links between thoughts, feelings, and body sensations, and focusses more on aspects such as identifying and adapting unhelpful thinking styles, and developing problem solving and coping skills.

What happens in the parent/guardian modules?

The parent modules will provide an opportunity for parents to experience 'first hand' what their child is learning in the children's groups. They also provide tips or practices to help children manage strong emotions or worries, and information for parents about stress management. Separate modules will be held for parents of children in MBCT-C or CBT.

Who will be involved?

The research is targeting children aged 9-12, who may sometimes experience difficulties with anxiety, worry, feeling down a lot, or being very shy. Parents/Guardians of children who are identified by their teacher as fitting one or more of these descriptors will be sent a letter inviting them to participate in the program. This letter will provide detailed information about what is involved in the program and research. Participation is entirely voluntary, and participants are free to withdraw from the research at any time.

Can I nominate my child to participate?

Yes, if your child is in Year 4 to 6 and aged 9-12 years. However please keep in mind that nomination does not guarantee that your child a place, as it is possible that we will receive more nominations than there are available places. Please contact your school.

Can I select which group my child will be in?

No. Children will be randomly selected to either the MBCT-C or CBT program.

Can my child still participate in the children's program if I cannot participate in the parent module?

Yes.

Can I participate if my child is not participating?

No. The parent modules are only available to parents/guardians of participating children. If you are interested in finding out more about mindfulness or CBT you are welcome to contact our research team for further info. Please ask your school principal/teacher to forward your query to us.

I have more questions, who do I contact?

Please contact your child's teacher or school principal in the first instance. If necessary, they can provide you with our contact details, or pass your query on to the research team.

Please note that there will be a **Parent Information Session** held at the school from **3-4pm on Wednesday 5th April**.

We would also like to invite one parent/guardian to join an advisory board to give input on the research. If you are interested, please contact Joy Starling.