



## An interactive Programme for People with Intellectual Disabilities

### Report on Trial with Young People (ages 13-21) with Autism with their Caregivers

This trial was conducted to assess

- a) user friendliness of the resources for families and caregiver environment
- b) if and how young people on the Autism Spectrum assimilate and transfer the skills learned into everyday situations.

We were successful in engaging with parents through parenting support networks, i.e. NZ Autism Foundation, Children's Autism Foundation, Autism Aotearoa, Tautoko and Down Syndrom Association. Over 15 parents responded to a notice in the NZ Autism e-newsletter. Eight (8) of them trialled the resources.

Several of these parents in their turn approached the teachers and got good, supportive responses from them. It will be ideal to work in schools AND to approach families and support people directly to reach and involve as many disabled people with their families and other people in their lives as possible.

The parents of the trial families observed that

- a) the programme was easy to use
- b) their children enjoyed doing the activities
- c) their children used the skills in real life

Comments and observations from the parents included the following:

#### Lisa<sup>1</sup>

- It's really helpful. It provides very good discussion points, i.e.
  - L. told me how last year when she went to a new school and did not know anybody at all she did NOT get herself to ask to sit with people. Fortunately a girl invited her to sit with them. It gave me a lot of insight hearing about situations L. encountered.
- I am impressed. I first thought that it is for a much younger group but, looking at the last book, it also covers work situation.
- I'm very pleased how things are going. Lisa is picking it up and doing it by herself. I expected that it would be a battle to do because Lisa has very full days.
- L. likes colouring in the pictures. This turns the characters into actual people for her and makes them personal and related.
- I wondered if Lisa would find situations to use the skills and am very pleased to see that she does;
  - There is a 21-year old bully in her school who behaves inappropriately. Lisa has grown in confidence through doing the role plays. She became more forceful and clearer and is now using the skills to stop the bully from touching her.
  - We went to the dentist this morning. I was able to calm her down by reminding her of the dentist story.
  - Lisa understood that she can ask her friends for help just like Talib and his Fullpower Friends in the 'Bully at Work' story. She came home with a big dilemma. Lisa has a great fear of clocks, especially large ones. She can really melt down and was scared for that to happen in front of her friends. They

<sup>1</sup> All names have been changed for privacy reasons.



had announced at school that they'll go to town the next day. L. knows that there is a large clock. I [mother] said that there are three options: either stay home, stay at school, or go and cope with clock.

We discussed it for a long time in the evening and I expected her to not go to school the next morning. However, Lisa did not hesitate. She went to school and had the courage to tell her friends about her fear. They helped her and when she saw the clock she was able to talk with her friends and stay calm and confident. I am really, really pleased.

This is a significant break through in her life; she was able to put what she learned in the Healthy Relationships programme into practice and to deal with her fear of situations. Up until now she usually just walked away. She related with and confided in her class mates, to talk about her problems with other people, and to treat them as friends who can help. Up until now she only talked with family - if at all - when she had problems."

### **Garry**

- Garry liked it - wanted to have more time to look at what people were doing. Was very interested in the conversation.
- It gave us lots of things to talk about, i.e. when is touching right and when wrong – it was very helpful.

### **Elisabeth**

- Elisabeth loves scenarios on the computer. I use them as prompts for role plays. E. enjoys the role play. Having lots of photos is good idea. The booklets give ideas and directions for how to relate it to her life and her experiences. Cartoon characters are really good..
- It is relevant, really useful.
- The teacher at school was very supportive. Put together a PowerPoint of Elisabeth with relevant scenarios at school.
- The story 'Mei Lin Listens' was excellent for Elisabeth. She certainly understood the 'Staring' story. It was good to talk about appropriate looking at and commenting on different looking people.
- E. talked about feelings too, which is unusual for her.
- She was able to use it in real life.
  - She is really good at saying 'Stop' now.
  - She uses the words quite a lot, i.e. with her cousin on holidays. She is more aware and able to say things.
  - She uses the body language to create a fence when she wants to set a boundary.

### **Walt**

- The programme is nice and simple, easy to use. It does not take any preparation.
- It's really good to do it together.
- Walt got it - he came up with own examples.
- He can certainly relate to doctor and dentist examples.
- We did the role-play of the story of Marama gets a Backrub, which was good, because it showed that sometime it's OK and sometimes it's not OK.
- Walt related the 'Uncomfortable Photos' story to an incident on a school trip when one boy always took photos.
- The hugging story was good since Walt wants to hug often.

### **Johnny**

- Great programme.
- It provides a framework for lots of good discussion.
- Johnny said that it is very useful to know when to interrupt. Talked about the Walk Away Power – he likes that.



- He seems to remember earlier books.

**Daniel** (Did not get far due to illness)

- It helps – yes yes yes – we will keep going for life.

**Jeremy** (Got to mid of 2<sup>nd</sup> book by that stage)

- Jeremy liked to have the time with his mum.
- He retained and used skills from the 1<sup>st</sup> book.

**Carol** (Completed first book only by that stage)

- The resources are easy to understand. I'm happy with the messages.
- It's most beneficial – it's so easy, clear and simple.
- Carol uses skills and the body language to set boundaries.

