



# Cholmondeley

*Value Our Children*

## **Building mindfulness capabilities at Cholmondeley Children's Centre**

Cholmondeley Children's Centre would like to thank the Cognition Education Trust for the donation of \$4604 for our Building Mindfulness Capability programme.

Cholmondeley Children's Centre offers short term respite care for whanau with children aged 3-12. Respite care can be accessed in times of whanau stress or crisis, or this can be a planned stay and allows for a greater focus on wellbeing for everyone and is accessible to whanau through referrals. Children stay for a variety of reasons including but not limited to family harm, bereavement, financial difficulties, mental and physical health or ongoing stresses from events in the wider community.

At Cholmondeley we aim to create a safe, stimulating environment that supports children to enhance resilience and reduce whanau vulnerable. All children are given the opportunity to participate in our Activities Based Learning (ABL) program designed to identify children's strengths and develop resilience.

The aim for our building mindfulness capability programme was to train 15 of our core staff in mindfulness practice to ensure there is always 2-3 staff on site at any one time who can support, lead and implement mindfulness in our childrens day, and support needs when emotions are high.

In September 2019, Rita from Mindfulness in New Zealand facilitated a two day mindfulness training seminar on site at Cholmondeley for 15 core staff. The training was completed over a two day period with a total of 16 hours of learning. This was then followed by 8 weeks of online learning.

### **Onsite Training**

The aim of the two day seminar was to first focus on equipping staff with the skills to embed mindfulness into their practice therefore enhancing staff wellbeing, which in turn means better outcomes for the children who use our service. Often staff who work with vulnerable children suffer from compassion fatigue, the training focused on giving our staff a set of tools to reduce this impact by clearing their minds of this emotional baggage and helping decrease the impact they feel of this in their personal lives.

The staff explored how mindfulness could help achieve the power of being present in the moment and how that can lead to a better quality of care for the children we work with. One of Cholmondeley core elements of practice is focusing on the relationship building between staff and children. Mindfulness techniques have given our staff the techniques to focus their attention on the immediate moment with the child. This includes teaching staff the 4 qualities that are required for this way of thinking – attention, intention, presence and openness.

Many of the children who use our service have experienced whanau stress or crisis. There has been evidence to suggest mindfulness as being a successful approach to working with children who are experiencing a heightened emotional response which stems from stress or trauma. The staff were taught specific activities that they can then teach to children to use during a triggering moment. This included breathing techniques using nature as a grounding tool, meditation in the moment, calming body positions and sensory distractions.

### Online Course

Following the completion of onsite training, staff completed an 8 week course for a total of 24 hours of learning. This focused on the staff's own application of mindfulness into their daily lives, embedding it in their day to day, to 'normalise' this approach. The training acknowledged that to teach mindfulness, adults needed to cultivate it in their personal practice. The training came in the form of an audio narrative that helped staff learn new ways of redirecting attention from stressful thoughts to feelings in the body. Staff were also encouraged to keep a journal of how they practiced these techniques for 15-20 minutes per day.

### Day to day practice

The training is now embedded into our daily Kura programme in two ways- creation of resources and tool kits for using with children on a 1-1 basis, and whole group activities that are used in our weekly programme to increase children ability to focus, reduce stress and feel more present in the moment.


We now have many physical sensory objects to use as part of practice and intend to now create a sensory reduction room for children that really benefit from these techniques. Activities in Kura include using taste and touch as a way to ground feelings and make tamariki focus on how their body is feeling, rather than what is going on around them. Additionally we have begun using emotions journals, a gratitude tree and a worry jar to acknowledge and discuss feelings.

Bedtime settling routine- many of the tamariki we work with struggle to self-settle at night. Many of the adverse experiences of life, or events that have happened during that day, come to the forefront of their minds at night, therefore being in the right state of mind to sleep, is sometimes a challenge for our children. Using strategies such as bubble baths and cloud music have been extremely beneficial in calming their minds and reaching a relaxing state.

Staff have also been practicing a meditation technique that works well for children called the body scan. By mentally scanning yourself from head to toe, you are bringing awareness to every single part of your body, noticing how each part of your body is feeling. With the staff helping the tamariki stay present to their breathing, it has helped bring a calming relief for many tamariki.

Thank you again to the Cognition Education trust for making this training possible.

Kindest Regards



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