



FAMILY HARMONY TOOLKIT

A toolkit for practitioners to strengthen communication within families by facilitating multi-family creative therapy groups.

The quality of the relationship between parents, whether they are together or separated, is increasingly acknowledged as a critical factor in children's long-term mental health and wellbeing. Research conducted by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) for the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) shows that frequent, intense, and unresolved conflicts between parents can significantly harm children's mental health and life prospects.

The Family Harmony Toolkit aims to help practitioners working with families to prevent and reduce conflict. This toolkit provides practical resources, including session guides and activities, that draw from family therapy, music therapy, and art therapy. These approaches are designed to help families improve communication and strengthen their relationships, creating more peaceful and supportive home environments.

By using the Family Harmony Toolkit, practitioners can guide parents and caregivers toward healthier ways of interacting, ultimately helping children thrive in a more harmonious home. This toolkit is a step towards ensuring every child has the chance to grow up in a nurturing environment.

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
A Creative Approach	2
The Intervention	3
Boundaries	4
Connection	5
Emotions	6
Listening	7
Reacting & Responding	8
Mentalising & Attunement	9
Asking for Help	10
Appreciation & Building Strengths	11
Post Intervention	12
Handouts	13-15
Signpost: Resources	16

INTRODUCTION

THE CORAM PARENTING & CREATIVE THERAPY SERVICE - WHO ARE WE?

The Coram Creative Therapy Team consists of music, drama and art therapists, a clinical psychologist, a family therapist and a child mental health practitioner. We have been working with children and their families to support social and emotional development for more than 15 years. We use creative techniques to explore together ways of strengthening family relationships and working through some of life's challenges.

WHO IS THIS TOOLKIT FOR?

This toolkit will be of interest to Early Help professionals, teachers, mental health professionals and support workers. The toolkit will also include activities which will be suitable for families to try at home.

WHAT DOES IT HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

The aim of this toolkit is to provide practitioners with information and resources to assist them in facilitating family groups to help prevent conflict and for those experiencing low level conflict. The toolkit can also be used in isolation when supporting individual families as helpful.

WHAT IS FAMILY HARMONY?

The Family Harmony intervention is a family group programme developed by the Coram Creative Therapy Team with support from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in response to research highlighting the impact of harmful low level conflict on children's lives. The Family Harmony intervention is an innovative and unique strengths based multi-family group programme that integrates music therapy, art therapy, and family therapy, with a strong emphasis on healthy communication, enhancing skills in emotional regulation, mentalising, mindfulness, attentive listening, calming techniques, and family attunement.

THE FAMILY HARMONY INTERVENTION AND TOOLKIT IS DESIGNED TO:

- Reduce conflict by promoting awareness of healthy communication, connection, and calmness.
- Enhance conflict resolution by improving communication, attunement, listening, emotional regulation, and reflective skills
- Support teamwork and the creating of reflective spaces within families.
- Encourage collaboration, decision-making, and curiosity within families.
- Provide families with tools to support communication and build a capacity for the self-recognition of issues and stronger problem-solving strategies.

Music Therapy helps children to express their emotions non-verbally and to build trust by creating an open and safe space with their therapist. It provides a secure base where children and young people can explore their experiences creatively, often with carers and parents alongside them. It can help develop ways of building greater resilience in themselves and in their relationships. More information on music therapy can be found at www.bamt.org

Art Therapy uses art media and art making to help children to communicate their thoughts and feelings. Art therapists can help identify new strategies for managing feelings, thoughts and behaviours at home and at school. It is not dependent on spoken language and can therefore be helpful to anyone who finds it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings verbally. More information on art therapy can be found at www.baart.org

Family Therapy helps families to express and explore potentially difficult emotions and thoughts together safely. It helps families to understand each other's experiences and views, appreciate each other's needs, build on strengths and make useful changes together in their relationships and their lives. More information on family therapy can be found at <https://www.aft.org.uk/>

PROMOTING POSITIVE FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Parental conflict (whether parents are together or separated) places children at risk of poor social, emotional and educational outcomes. Improvement can be achieved through early intervention.

By prioritising and promoting positive family dynamics, we create an environment where children can flourish, conflicts are minimised, and strong, supportive networks are established for future generations. This toolkit aims to provide resources and strategies to foster these essential family relationships.



A CREATIVE APPROACH

By incorporating creative therapeutic approaches into a family intervention, emotional and relational aspects of family dynamics can be explored in a holistic and effective way. Using music and art helps to reduce the stigma of interventions, reduces verbal demands, and can support fun engagement. Creative therapeutic interventions, such as music and art, are particularly effective in family interventions for a variety of reasons:

Enhanced communication: Creative activities provide opportunity for non-verbal ways for family members to express their thoughts and emotions, which can be especially helpful for those who struggle to articulate their feelings with words. This can lead to deeper understanding and more meaningful communication between parent and child (Jacobsen et al., 2014). This can be particularly beneficial for children and young people with SEN.

Emotional expression and regulation: Creative activities within a therapy group can also support individuals to express and process difficult and complex emotions in a safe and contained space. This can help family members to develop their emotional regulation skills, which can improve conflict resolution.

Building connection and trust: Shared creative experiences often break down barriers and build trust, leading to stronger relationships and improved parental responsiveness (Teggelove et al., 2018). Participating in creative activities together can support a sense of connection and teamwork within the family.

Encouraging reflection and insight: Creative processes often involve reflection and introspection, allowing family members to gain insights into their behaviours, emotions, and relationships. This can lead to greater self-awareness and more constructive problem-solving.

Cultural sensitivity and flexibility: Another benefit of including creativity within therapeutic interventions is that they can be flexible and adapted to fit the cultural backgrounds of the families who attend, making it inclusive and also an opportunity to explore and celebrate diversity and difference.

Engaging and enjoyment: Creative activities can often provide playful and enjoyable moments making it easier for families to participate and remain engaged in the intervention.

THE INTERVENTION

PREPARATION

HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT:

This toolkit offers an overview of the ten-session Family Harmony intervention. Eight of the sessions are designed for parents, carers, and families to explore specific themes together, with guidance from a facilitator. The toolkit includes session plans and activities to help facilitators lead this creative group intervention. Each page has a session aim and session plan. The roadmap outlines the entire intervention: it begins with a one-on-one triage session between the facilitator and family, followed by a parent-only session, seven group family sessions, and concludes with a reflective session for parents.

At the back of the toolkit, you'll find quick-sheets that can be printed, cut-out, and shared with families. These sheets serve as reminders of the session themes and include suggested activities to help families revisit the themes together at home.

Please adapt this intervention plan depending on family needs (including neurodivergence, age and physical needs).

PREPARATION FOR INTERVENTION:

Set up needs:

A selection of instruments, a music speaker, art materials including blank paper.

A selection of objects for Family Session 5.

A room big enough for multiple families, ideally with storage and a sink.

Sessions:

Prior to the intervention starting it is important to get informed consent from all families. This will ensure that participants are fully aware, prepared, and willing to engage in the process.

Recommended session length is 60-75 minutes, depending on age, needs and size of group. Group sizes can range from 1-5 families and more than one child per family can attend. Link the sessions and themes back to family relationships to support families in beginning to unpick conflict which they may be experiencing at home.

Create and convey a clear structure with each session having a clear beginning, middle, and end.

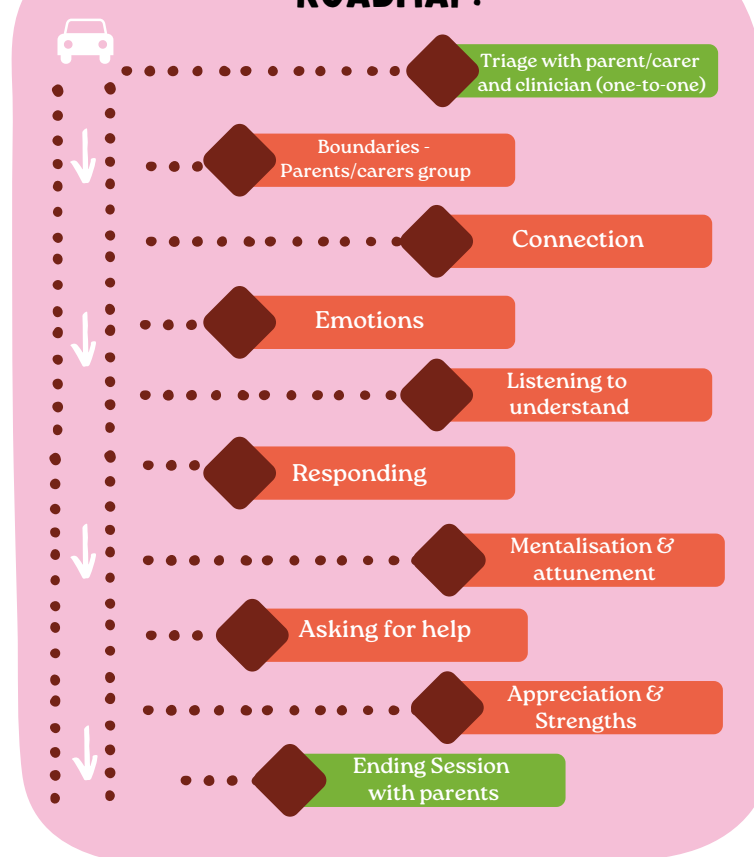
Highlight that the creative and playful exercises are not just for children but for adults too. Parents may struggle with this - highlight that they do not have to be good at art or music - it is about strengthening relationships and modelling play and creativity within the family.

EQUALITY & DIVERSITY:

It is important to remember that in a multi-family therapy group there will be families from different cultures and experiences coming together. We recommend facilitators to hold in mind social graces, and that they are informed to support equality, inclusivity and diversity across the group process.

Social GRRRAACCEESS (Burnham 2012)

ROADMAP:



TRIAGE SESSION WITH PARENT/CARER:

Before beginning the intervention, we recommend conducting a one-to-one session with each family. This initial meeting allows families to ask any questions, gain clarity about what to expect, and provides the facilitator with an opportunity to understand the family's needs and context.

USING CONSTRUCTIVE LANGUAGE

Using non-judgement and externalising language can help people to talk about difficult issues in a more constructive and calmer way, reducing feelings of judgement or shame. Information on externalising language can be found here:

[Externalising video by The Dulwich Centre](#)

BOUNDARIES

PARENT/CARER SESSION

INTRODUCTION

Boundaries are important because they help everyone to understand what the expectations are in any given situation or relationship, and how to be respectful of one another. Having a shared understanding of what the boundaries look like within a situation or relationship helps us to relax and feel comfortable because we know what to expect. Having clear boundaries in place allows us to feel safe because it provides predictability and consistency.

FAMILY HARMONY GROUP AGREEMENT

In the first group session with parents and carers, it's important to model the value of boundaries by establishing a mutual agreement among all participants. This ensures everyone feels comfortable and informed as the sessions progress. For example, agreements might include no phone usage, mutual respect, process for handling situations where a child needs to leave, and maintaining confidentiality. The group can discuss what to include, with the facilitator jotting down all agreed points.

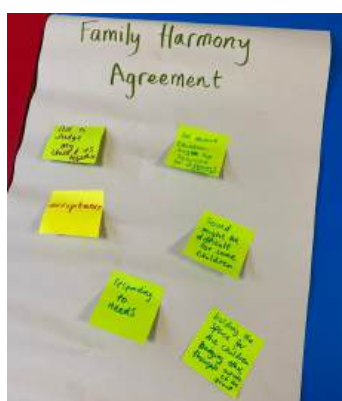
Session aim: Practising healthy boundaries

Session plan:

- Introduction
- Family Harmony Agreement
- Group activity
- Group reflection

TIPS FOR GROUP REFLECTION

Prompts: What was the session like for you today? What was helpful or unhelpful? What do you want more of?



Group Activity: Reflecting on Boundaries

PART 1: Parents to spend some time alone/together thinking about the following:

What boundaries do you put in place for yourself?

What boundaries do you put in place for your children?

What's your experience when boundaries are pushed or broken? What happens?

What stuck out for you when thinking about the questions?

What was it like for you to think about how boundaries happen in your family? Was it easy or difficult?

How important are boundaries to you?



PART 2: Come together as a large group:

Facilitator to invite parent/carers to share ideas and have an open discussion. Facilitator to document on share screen/flip chart.

CONNECTION

FAMILY SESSION #1

Connecting across similarities and differences

INTRODUCTION

Sometimes we may form connections with others when we notice our similarities, shared experiences and the things we have in common. Sometimes we can also connect more deeply when we acknowledge, talk about and seek to understand our different experiences and perspectives as well. In this week's session we will focus on creating opportunities to come together and start getting to know each other. We will create opportunities to find points of connection in both our similarities and our differences, accepting each individual and each family for who they are and what they are bringing. It is important to recognise, accept, and celebrate our similarities and differences.



Session aim: Expression and connection through music and art

Session plan:

- Introductions to each other
- Introduction to theme
- Music activity
- Art activity
- Group reflection

MUSIC ACTIVITY

Activity 1: Song Sharing: (May not be suitable for younger children who may struggle with the talking aspect of this exercise).

Discuss Music: Talk about music that you connect with from your culture and generation. Share your favourite songs and musical memories.

Explore Attitudes: Think about how different generations in your family view music. Discuss any similarities and differences in musical tastes and experiences.

Activity 2: Music Improvisation: (Instruments needed. Suitable for all ages and abilities).

Choose Instruments: Pick an instrument you like and feel drawn to. You do not need to have played this before. Make sure everyone has an instrument of their choosing.

Play Together: Although you will likely have different instruments, try playing together (Facilitator to support with cues if needed e.g. "ready, steady...go!"). What did it feel like to play together? Did you feel able to connect through the music without using words?

ART ACTIVITY

In your families, create a picture using the art materials to help us get to know your family.

The picture can tell us something you would like to share about your family - there is no right or wrong.

Prompt questions: Who is in your family? What do you enjoy doing in your family? What is your family's heritage/culture? What food does your family like to eat?

Each family to have their own table and access to art materials.

Each family makes their own image.

Families given 20+ minutes for this activity.

Families are invited to share their artwork with the group if they feel comfortable doing so. Families can share as much or as little as they like. While reflecting on the activity, look out for subtle connections.

EMOTIONS

FAMILY SESSION #2

Creating a space for emotions

INTRODUCTION

Emotions play an important role in our relationships and often influence how we express ourselves and communicate with others. It can sometimes be hard to talk about our feelings, particularly if we don't know how to put how we are feeling into words. Art and music making can provide helpful ways to connect with and express our emotions without needing to find the right words. In this week's session we aim to create a safe space where we can all find ways to connect with how we are feeling internally and express this externally, using art, music, playing, reflection and talking.

Session aim: Practise noticing emotions and our responses to them

Session plan:

- Introduction to theme
- Creative activity
- Group reflection



CREATIVE ACTIVITY (MUSIC & ART)

How does music influence our emotions, movements, and visual expression?

Prior to the activity create a playlist of music in different styles. Explain that participants will listen to short excerpts from the playlist music and respond with mark-making—a process of creating spontaneous, abstract visual art that captures the emotional reactions to the music.

Mark making:

Play each musical excerpt for 30 seconds, allowing the participants the time to create visual representations of their emotional and physical responses. Encourage them to be spontaneous and intuitive in their mark-making, letting the music guide their hand.

Emphasise that there is no right or wrong. The focus is on personal expression and exploration, not on creating a "perfect" piece of art. Be mindful of those who may be sensitive to certain sounds or textures in the music and offer alternative options if needed. Provide a wide range of art materials to ensure preferences are accommodated. Ask participants to notice where they feel emotions in their bodies as they listened to the music.

Reflection:

After the mark-making session, invite participants to share their artwork together if they feel comfortable doing so. Facilitate a discussion with the following prompts:

- What emotions did you feel while listening to the different musical excerpts? How did these emotions influence your mark-making?
- Did any specific images or memories come to mind as you created your art?
- How did the different mediums and colours you chose reflect the emotions or sensations you experienced?
- Where in your body did you feel these emotions? How did that physical sensation guide your artistic expression?

Children who struggle with verbal communication can point, dance or move to explore bodily feelings and can use drawings to communicate their reflections.

This activity aims to deepen the participants' understanding of the connection between music, emotion, and bodily sensation, using visual art as a bridge to explore and express these experiences.

LISTENING TO UNDERSTAND

FAMILY SESSION #3

INTRODUCTION

When we are listening, it can be easy to hear what is being said without really trying to understand or show curiosity about the other person's experience or meaning. When we listen in order to understand, it can help us to feel more connected to others. When we feel seen, heard and understood, we usually find it easier to open up and share vulnerability. If this vulnerability is responded to with understanding and empathy, it helps us to build trust in our relationships. In this week's session we will offer activities that focus on listening and understanding in our relationships.

Session aim: Listening to understand

Session plan:

- Introduction to theme
- Music activity
- Art activity
- Group reflection



MUSIC ACTIVITY

Begin by discussing the theme, "Listening to Understand." Explain that listening to music, like in conversation, involves understanding intent, emotions, and messages.

Share that participants will take turns leading and following in a musical improvisation, exploring what it feels like to be heard and understood through music. Start with a simple call-and-response. One person plays a rhythm or melody, and the group echoes it back.

Invite everyone to play an improvised piece of music together. Facilitator to play a steady beat on a drum to support. After a few minutes, introduce the role of the "conductor."

The conductor leads by using gestures to change speed, instruments and dynamics (volume).

Each participant can have a chance to be the conductor. Encourage creativity and expression.

The group should watch and listen carefully and respond to the conductor's cues.

Discuss how it felt to lead and be followed. Did you feel heard and understood? How did it feel to follow someone else's lead? Were you able to respond to the conductor's intentions?

This activity not only nurtures musical creativity but also deepens interpersonal connections by emphasising the importance of being heard and understood within a group setting.

ART ACTIVITY

Let the group know that they will be drawing pictures based on instructions given by the facilitator. Emphasise that there's no right or wrong way to draw—they should just follow the instructions and see where their imagination leads them.

Facilitator to give instructions (for example: 'draw a house... next to the house add a tree... now draw an animal under the tree and some clouds in the sky...').

Give participants a few minutes to draw after each instruction.

Come back together as a group and share the artworks. Notice how each person's drawing looks different, even though they all heard the same instructions.

Have an open discussion. Here are some prompts:

How did you decide where to draw things on the page?

Did you imagine the picture in a specific way as soon as you heard the instructions?

Were you surprised by how different everyone's drawings turned out, even though you all followed the same instructions?

Highlight the idea that even when we hear the same words, we might imagine and create something different. This shows how everyone has their own unique way of thinking and seeing the world.

Link this to instructions that may take place in day-to-day life and how people may interpret things differently. The instructions can be adapted to suit the group's needs.

This activity aims to help participants understand how people can interpret the same instructions differently. By exploring how their individual drawings differ, participants will gain insight into the uniqueness of their perspectives and creative expressions.

REACTING & RESPONDING

FAMILY SESSION #4

INTRODUCTION

It can be helpful to think about the differences between reacting and responding and when each of these may be more and less helpful in our families. When we react, often we express ourselves quickly and impulsively without thinking about what we are communicating. In certain situations this can be very helpful as it can help us to connect with others emotionally. When we respond, we take a moment to think about what we want to express before we express or communicate with others. Making an effort to respond rather than react can help us when disagreements are escalating and we want to find ways to bring emotions down and have more reflective and understanding conversations.

MUSIC ACTIVITY

Participants split into pairs within their families. The pair sits facing away from each other. The group facilitator then invites each family member to play their instruments as if they were having a conversation, expressing their thoughts, feelings, or opinions through sound, rather than words. Participants engage in a back-and-forth interaction, using the instruments to mirror the rhythms of communication—speaking, pausing, and listening.

The facilitator can also emphasise the importance of 'really listening' to the other. Communication isn't just about expressing oneself but also about understanding the other person's perspective and expression.

"We are all able to respond differently" is an important takeaway from this activity. Just as each participant plays their instrument in a unique way, so too can each person respond to conflict and communicate differently. There is no single right way to respond, but the key is in choosing a response that de-escalates rather than heightens conflict. The activity illustrates how even when two instruments (or people) have different "voices," they can create a harmonious conversation if they listen and respond to each other thoughtfully.

The use of music instead of words can be symbolic of how much communication happens non-verbally, through body-language, voice tone, pace, and intensity.

This exercise encourages participants to manage their impulses, listen fully, and to respond in a more controlled, deliberate, and empathetic manner.

Session aim: Paying attention and slowing down communication

Session plan:

- Introduction to theme
- Music activity
- Art activity
- Group reflection

ART ACTIVITY

The Squiggle Game

One person from each family starts by drawing a random, abstract squiggle on a blank sheet of paper. This squiggle can be as simple or complex as they like.

The second person then looks at the squiggle and uses their imagination to transform it into a recognisable picture. They can add to the squiggle, modify it, or incorporate it into a larger drawing.

Take turns switching between being the squiggle drawer or the person turning it into a picture to see what you can come up with!



MENTALISATION & ATTUNEMENT

FAMILY SESSION #5

INTRODUCTION

Mentalising is the ability to understand and interpret others' thoughts and emotions, while attunement involves being emotionally in sync with others by recognising and responding to their needs and signals. Together, they enhance social and emotional intelligence, enabling effective communication and deeper relationships.

The idea behind this theme is that relationships strengthen when we develop our abilities to connect with another's experience, thoughts and feelings. If we can imagine what someone else might be experiencing, thinking and feeling, we can understand, connect with, and relate to them more helpfully.



Session aim: Connection with others

Session plan:

- Introduction to theme
- Meaningful object activity
- Drama activity
- Group reflection

MEANINGFUL OBJECTS ACTIVITY

This interactive exercise fosters connection and understanding.

Facilitators bring in a selection of objects – these might include things like toys, books, shells, and household items.

Instructions:

Facilitators first demonstrate the activity by selecting objects and explaining and sharing their choices in the group.

1. The parent chooses an object to represent themselves
2. The parent then selects an object that represents their child. They explain why they chose the object, highlighting the child's personality or qualities.
3. The child chooses an object to represent themselves
4. The child then picks an object representing their parent and shares their reasons.

Reflection:

- How do the objects change your understanding of each other?
- What new insights did you gain?

DRAMA ACTIVITY

This activity encourages empathy and understanding by allowing family members to think about life from each other's perspective.

Instructions:

Each family member draws around their shoes on a separate sheet of paper.

Place the drawn outlines on the floor, and have everyone stand on another person's shoe outline. As they do, reflect on what it might feel like to be that family member.

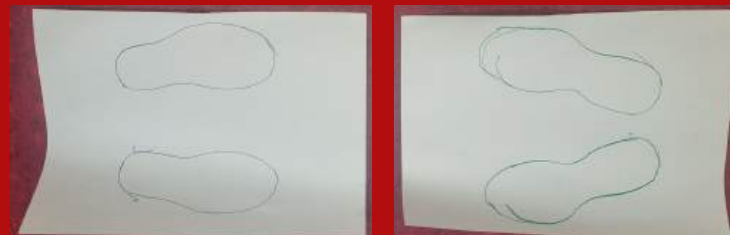
Discussion: What was it like stepping into someone else's shoes? Did it change how you view that person?

Consider the roles of family members not present. Discuss how their absence or dual roles (e.g., a parent juggling additional responsibilities) affects the family.

Reflection Questions:

How do we hold a space for the voices of others?

How can we better support those with multiple roles?



YOU'RE NOT ALONE ASKING FOR HELP



FAMILY SESSION #6

INTRODUCTION

Asking for help is an important step in fostering growth and healing within a family. It opens doors to understanding, support, and solutions that might otherwise remain closed. Acknowledging the need for assistance can be difficult, it requires us to confront vulnerabilities and fears, often rooted in pride or past experiences. However, reaching out for help can strengthen family bonds and promote resilience. When we ask for help, we invite others to share their perspectives, offer guidance, and stand by us in times of need. Embracing this practice can remind us that we are not alone in our difficulties.

Session aim: Practising safe vulnerability

Session plan:

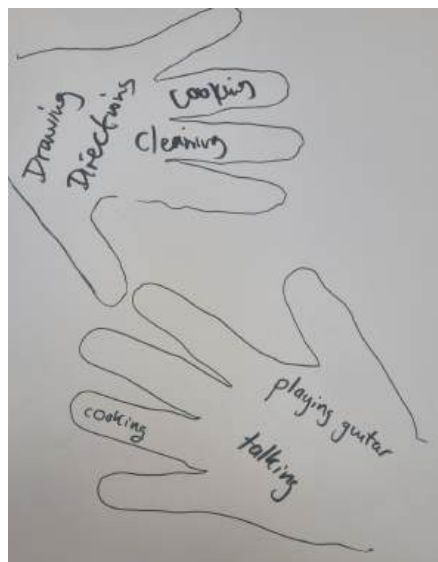
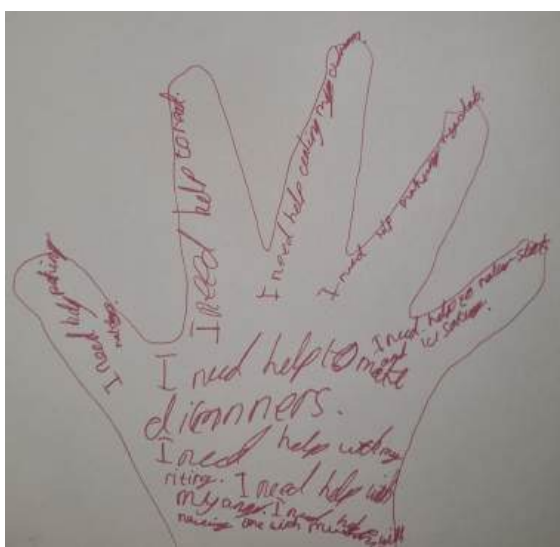
- Introduction to theme
- Art activity
- Activity: strengths and resources
- Group reflection

ART ACTIVITY

Begin by discussing the theme of 'asking for help'.

- Invite each family member to draw around both of their hands on a sheet of paper.
- On each hand, ask family members to write or draw something they might need help with. It might be a task, an emotion, a challenge, or anything else they feel comfortable sharing.
- After everyone has contributed, take turns sharing what was written or drawn in the hand outlines.

Facilitate a discussion about the importance of asking for help and the benefits it brings.



ACTIVITY: STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES ECO MAP

This activity helps parents map out their strengths and support systems, creating a visual eco map to take home.

STEPS:

Personal Strengths: Reflect on your own strengths—what qualities help you through tough times? Where do these come from? What are you proud of?

Partner's Strengths: Consider your co-parent or partner's strengths and what they bring to the family dynamic.

Children's Strengths: Identify your children's unique strengths and how they contribute to the family.

Broader Support: List further people or resources like friends, family, or the community that support you.

Draw Connections: Connect individuals on the eco map, using lines to represent the strength of each relationship.

Reflection: How does seeing your strengths visually change your perspective? What new resources have you uncovered?

APPRECIATION & BUILDING STRENGTHS

FAMILY SESSION #7

INTRODUCTION

Appreciation is important in families and in other relationships as it reminds us to notice the positives and the value we and others bring to relationships. This is particularly relevant when we notice we are focusing a lot on the problems and the negatives. Showing appreciation for family members and others can be motivating, validating, and confidence-building, especially when everyone in the family makes an effort to appreciate one another. Family members will often feel seen, understood and valued when they feel appreciated. Through reminding ourselves to appreciate one another, we can build stronger and more hopeful relationships.



Session aim: Practising appreciation

Session plan:

- Introduction to theme
- Music activity
- Art activity
- Group reflection

MUSIC ACTIVITY

Everyone in the group sits in a circle with instruments in the middle.

Invite each person to choose an instrument that represents a strength of another family member, such as patience, creativity, or resilience, and share the instrument and the strength with the group, explaining their reasons.

Family members then reflect on the choice, reinforcing positive communication and building self-esteem.

After sharing, the group creates a collaborative improvisation which symbolises how their strengths come together to support one another.

This process emphasises the importance of all contributions whether bold and subtle, mirroring the dynamics of a family or group where every individual plays a valuable and complementary role.

This activity can highlight that different strengths working together may create something greater than the sum of its parts.

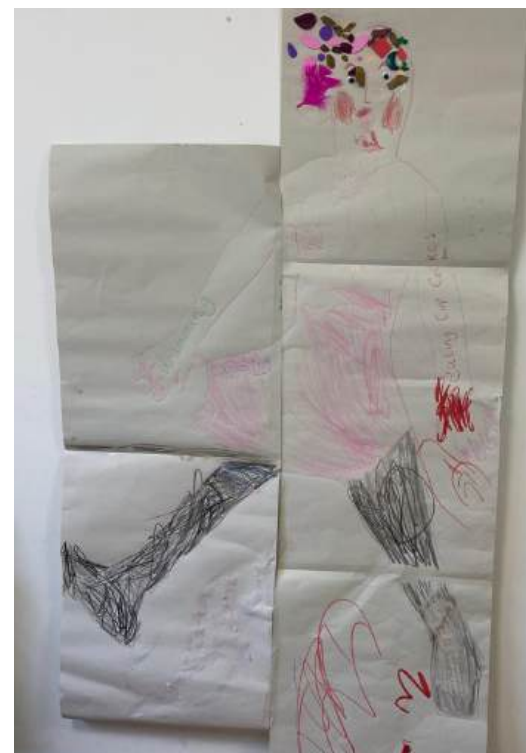
It ultimately fosters emotional expression, bonding, and a celebration of the positive qualities that make each participant unique.

ART ACTIVITY

Each family is invited to use a big piece of paper. The child lies down on it, and the parent draws around the child's body. The parent and child then spend time writing and drawing what they appreciate about the child, what their strengths are, what the family's strengths are etc., inside the body outline.

Idea prompt

Is the child: kind, fun, bold, confident, caring, curious, helpful, instinctive, sporty, energetic, friendly, creative, imaginative, flexible, strong, determined, wonderful? Something else?



POST- INTERVENTION

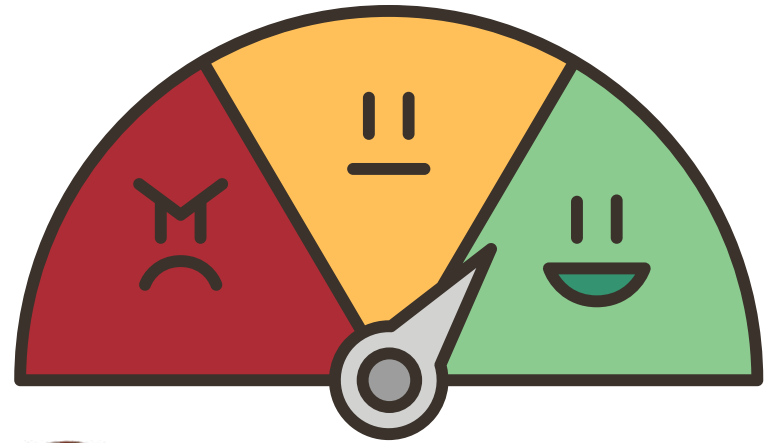
FEEDBACK

ENDING SESSION WITH PARENT(S)/CARER(S):

Once the multi-family group intervention was complete, we found it helpful to meet individually with each family's parent(s)/carer(s). During this meeting the practitioner invited the parent(s)/carer(s) to reflect on the intervention, exploring what was helpful, unhelpful, what would they would have liked more of.

This session was also an opportunity for the practitioner to reflect back to the parent(s)/carer(s) what they had observed. This could include shifts in communication, and play, highlighting strengths noticed within the child and family relationships.

The practitioner was also able to signpost other resources or services to the families in this session (please see page 16 for suggestions).



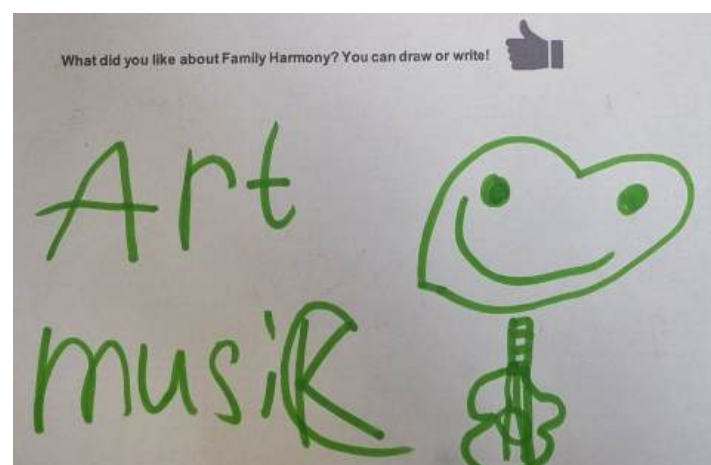
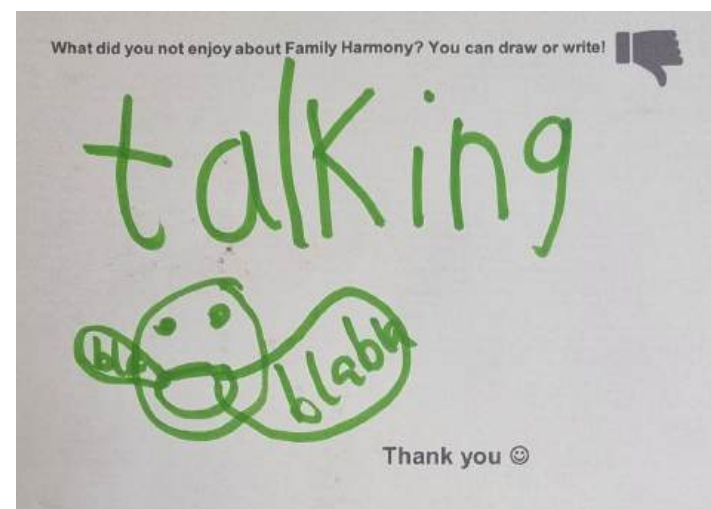
FEEDBACK FROM FAMILIES

It is helpful and important to get feedback from families about their experience.

To collect feedback we used the following methods:

- Goal Based Outcome Measure (GBO) (CORC, 2024).
- Creative feedback - we invited group participants to draw feedback so that it was not all reliant on verbal communication.
- Spontaneous feedback - documenting spontaneous feedback that occurred during the sessions including from the ending session with parent(s)/carer(s).

You may also wish to use an anonymous end of service questionnaire that fits with your service offer.



THE FOLLOWING PAGES CONTAIN FAMILY HARMONY CARDS WHICH CAN BE PRINTED AND GIVEN TO FAMILIES. THE CARDS MAY BE CUT OUT AND REFERRED TO AT HOME TO CONTINUE THINKING ABOUT THE THEMES THAT HAVE BEEN EXPLORED WITHIN THE SESSIONS.



BOUNDARIES

Boundaries are important because they help everyone to understand what the expectations are in any given situation or relationship, and how to be respectful of one another. Having a shared understanding of what the boundaries look like within a situation or relationship helps us to relax and feel comfortable because we know what to expect. Having clear boundaries in place allows us to feel safe because it provides predictability and consistency.

CONNECTING

Connections with others often come from noticing the things we have in common, like shared experiences and interests. These similarities can help us feel close and connected. However, we can also form even deeper bonds when we take the time to recognise and talk about our different life experiences and views. When we explore and treasure what makes each of us unique, we learn to appreciate different perspectives and experiences, which can enrich our relationships.

EMOTIONS

Emotions play an important role in our relationships and often influence how we express ourselves and communicate with others. Our emotions can affect the way we interpret, express, and react to the world around us. It can sometimes be hard to talk about our feelings, particularly if we don't know how to put how we are feeling into words.

Art and music-making can provide helpful ways to connect with and express our emotions without needing to find the right words.

LISTENING

When we are listening, it can be easy to hear what is being said without really trying to understand or show curiosity about the other person's experience or meaning. When we listen in order to understand, it can help us to feel more connected to others. When we feel seen, heard and understood, we usually find it easier to open up and share vulnerability. If this vulnerability is responded to with understanding and empathy, it helps us to build trust in our relationships. By focusing on listening it can help us to slow down and be present in our relationships.

REACTING & RESPONDING

It can be helpful to think about the differences between reacting and responding and when each of these may be more or less helpful in our families. When we react, often we express ourselves quickly and impulsively without thinking about what we are communicating. In certain situations this can be very helpful as it can help us to emotionally connect with others. When we respond, we take a moment to think about what we want to express before we express or communicate with others. Making an effort to respond rather than react can help us when disagreements are escalating and we want to find ways to regulate emotions and have more reflective and understanding conversations.

MENTALISING & ATTUNEMENT

Mentalising is the ability to understand and interpret others' thoughts and emotions, while attunement involves being emotionally in sync with others by recognising and responding to their needs and signals. Together, they enhance social and emotional intelligence, enabling effective communication and deeper relationships. The idea behind this theme is that relationships strengthen when we develop our abilities to connect with another's experience, thoughts and feelings. If we can imagine what someone else might be experiencing, thinking and feeling, we can understand, connect with and relate to them more helpfully.

ASKING FOR HELP

Asking for help is an important step in fostering growth and healing within a family. It opens doors to understanding, support, and solutions that might otherwise remain closed. Acknowledging the need for assistance can be difficult, it requires us to confront vulnerabilities and fears, often rooted in pride or past experiences. However, reaching out for help can strengthen family bonds and promote resilience. When we ask for help, we invite others to share their perspectives, offer guidance, and stand by us in times of need. Embracing this practice can remind us that we are not alone in our difficulties.

APPRECIATION

Appreciation is important in families and in other relationships as it reminds us to notice the positives and the value we and others bring to relationships. This is particularly relevant when we notice we are focusing a lot on the problems and the negatives. Showing appreciation for family members and others can be motivating, validating, and confidence-building, especially when everyone in the family makes an effort to appreciate one another. Family members will often feel seen, understood and valued when they feel appreciated. Through reminding ourselves to appreciate one another, we can build stronger and more hopeful relationships.

STEP INTO YOUR SHOES

Each family member draws around their shoes on a separate sheet of paper. Place the drawn outlines on the floor, and have everyone stand on another person's shoe outline. As they do, reflect on what it might feel like to be that family member.



This activity encourages empathy and understanding by allowing family members to experience life from each other's perspective.

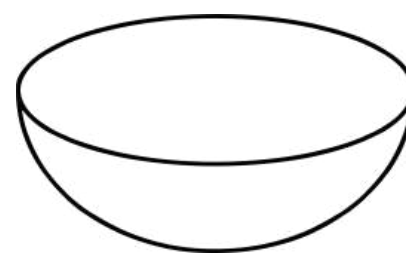
FAMILY HARMONY SOUP

This is an activity you can do as a family. Think about the following question together:

If your family were a harmonious soup, what ingredients would it include?

(Hint: Laughter, watching films, hugs, communication)

Draw a soup bowl on a sheet of paper (or get a real one!) and write or draw your family harmony ingredients inside the bowl.



This activity can highlight the unique strengths and special qualities of your family!

THE SQUIGGLE GAME

One person from each family starts by drawing a random, abstract squiggle on a blank sheet of paper. This squiggle can be as simple or complex as they like.

The second person then looks at the squiggle and uses their imagination to transform it into a recognisable picture. They can add to the squiggle, modify it, or incorporate it into a larger drawing.

Take turns switching between being the squiggle drawer or the person turning it into a picture to see what you can come up with!

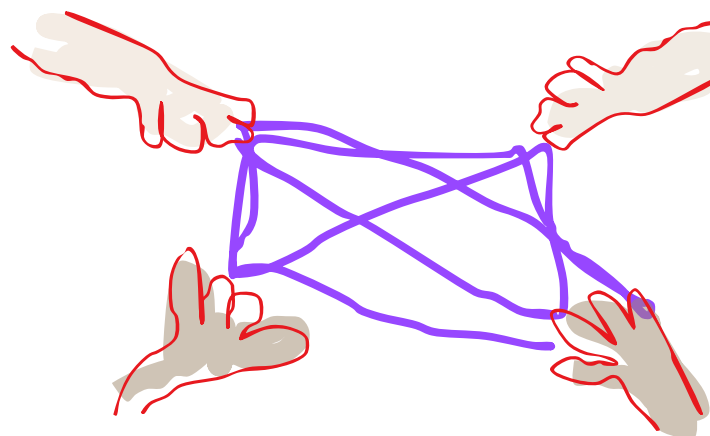
This activity allows you to have a conversation without using words, and gain insight into each other's imaginations!

WEB OF CONNECTION

In a group of three or more:

One person holds a ball of string, saying something they like or dislike. Someone else who connects with this in some way takes the ball of string, leaving a strand behind.

The ball is passed around the group (or family) with different likes and dislikes amongst the group being shared. At the end, a web is created which visualises the connections within the group or family.



SIGN POST: RESOURCES

USEFUL LINKS:

- Reducing Parental Conflict: training and tools for practitioners and their managers www.gov.uk/guidance/reducing-parental-conflict-training-and-tools-for-practitioners-and-their-managers
- SOCIAL GRACES: www.basw.co.uk/articles/social-graces-practical-tool-address-inequality
- What is the PACE approach: www.ddpnetwork.org/about-ddp/meant-pace/
- Externalising language: www.dulwichcentre.com.au/courses/what-is-narrative-practice-a-free-course/lessons/externalising/
- Self care for children & young people: www.annafreud.org/resources/children-and-young-peoples-wellbeing/self-care/
- Self care for parents & carers: www.annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/self-care-for-parents-and-carers/
- Advice for parents & carers in conflict: www.annafreud.org/resources/family-wellbeing/advice-and-guidance-for-parents-and-carers-in-conflict-or-separating/
- Creative activities for children: www.place2be.org.uk/our-services/parents-and-carers/wellbeing-resources-for-families/activities-from-the-art-room/
- Art Therapy: www.baat.org/art-therapy/what-is-art-therapy/
- Music Therapy: www.bamt.org/music-therapy/what-is-music-therapy

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- Brown, N.W., 2023. Creative activities for group therapy. Oxon: Routledge.
- Burnham, J., 2012. Developments in Social GRRRAAACCEEESSS: Visible-invisible and voiced-unvoiced. In I.-B. Krause (Ed.), Culture and reflexivity in systemic psychotherapy: Mutual perspectives (pp. 139–160). Karnac Books.
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- Teggelove, K., Thompson, G., & Tamplin, J. (2019). Supporting positive parenting practices within a community-based music therapy group program: Pilot study findings. Journal of Community Psychology, 47, 712–726. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.22148>
- Visser, M. and Van Lawick, J., 2021. Group Therapy for High-Conflict Divorce: The 'No Kids in the Middle' Intervention Programme. Oxon: Routledge.

EMOTIONS CARDS:

- The Bear Cards : Feelings (Q cards).
- A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of Strengths & Self Esteem Cards (Jessica Kingsley Publishers).
- A Therapeutic Treasure Deck of grounding, soothing, coping and regulation cards (Jessica Kingsley Publishers).

