

# From Feeling Smart to Tuesday Club



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# Why social skills groups as an intervention for this age group?

- Middle childhood seen as a time of consolidation in preparation for adolescence but has its challenges.
- Children face increasing expectations to cooperate with peers, teachers and parents, and in Erikson's terms need to develop a sense of competency.
- Estimated 15% of primary school children in Australia have behavioural difficulties which cause them to experience problematic peer relationships.
- Timely programs such as social skills training for this age group may lead to more positive social development.

# The challenge for practitioners

- Groups are recommended to address self-esteem issues for children.
- For social skills training 3 major areas are crucial
  - identifying and expressing feelings
  - communicating with others
  - strategy for self-management in particular **STOP, THINK, DO**
- Groups need to
  - have transparent intake process
  - provide clear expectations for members
  - choice to attend lies with client
  - allow members to be held and heard
  - Be fun and engaging as well as therapeutic

# Agency Context

- Provides family counselling, financial counselling and a range of youth services
- Strength based, solution focused and narrative approaches used when working in groups and with families.
- Works of White and Epston (1989), Selekman (1997), Durrant (1994), and Berg & Dolan (2001) inform the practitioners.
- Use range of products developed by St. Luke's Innovative Resources Bendigo.(i.e. Strength Cards and Bear Cards)

# Feeling Smart – The precursor

- Developed in 1998 for children to interact in small group context closely monitored by adult facilitators
- Activities based around playing indoor and outdoor games
- Ran during term time for 9 weeks from 4.30-6.00 p.m.
- First few sessions tightly structured to develop trust and establish group norms

# Feeling Smart – Target Group

- Primary school children experiencing difficulty in their social interactions including those
  - Lacking confidence in their skills
  - Identified as having low self-esteem
  - Demonstrating challenging behaviours such as anger

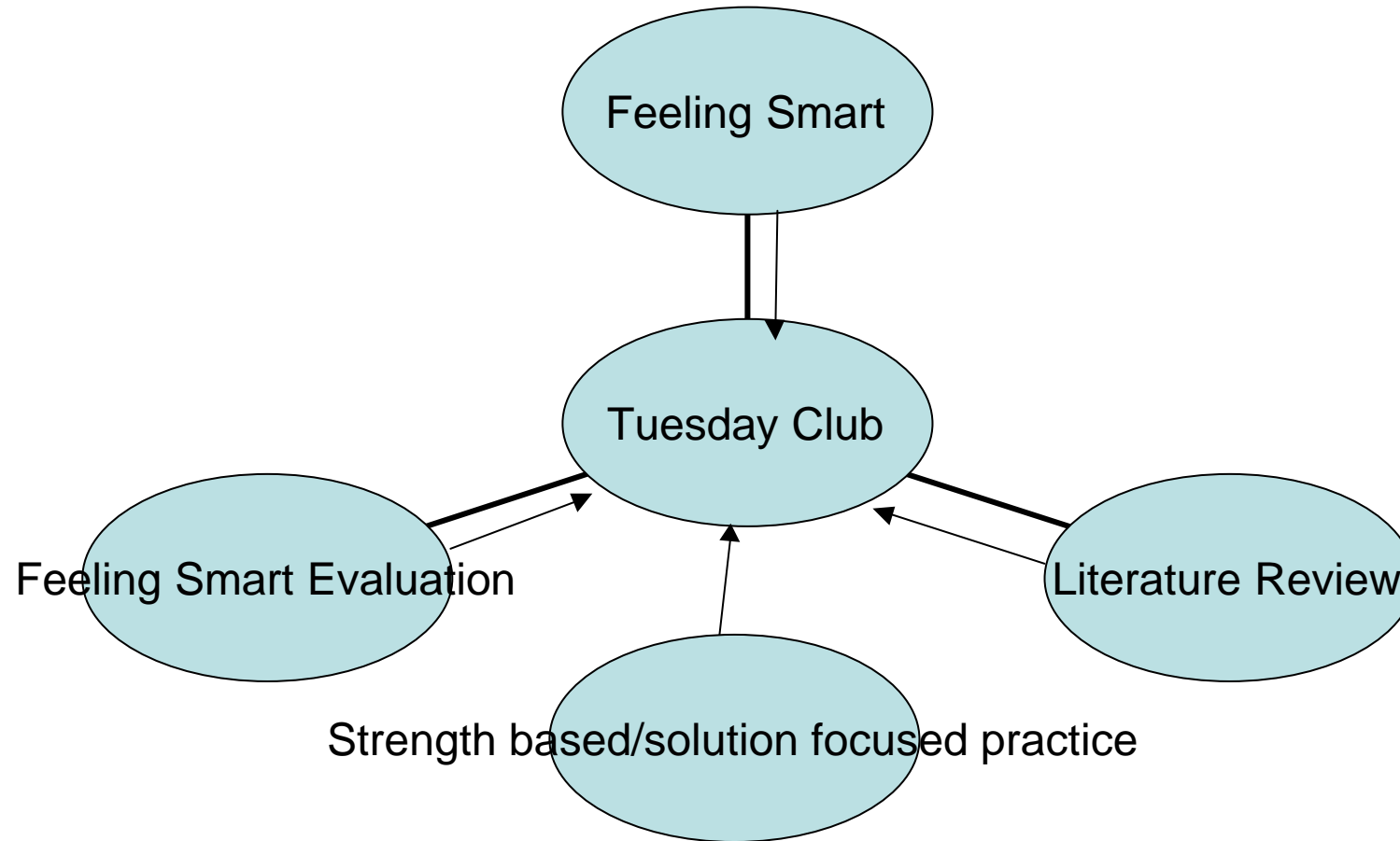
# Feeling Smart - Evaluation

- Undertaken by Psychology Department at Melbourne's Monash University during 2001
- Comprised 12 months/4 terms of service delivery
- Range of instruments used
- Included a pre-, post-, and follow-up assessment design to see if changes maintained

# Feeling Smart – Evaluation Results

- Program successful in attracting desired target group
- Correlation found between parenting styles and children's behaviour
- Program lead to positive changes in children's behaviour both for “internalising” and “externalising” behaviours

# Development of Tuesday Club



# Tuesday Club – Intake Process

- Children and parent/s attend prior to group's commencement
- Meet with facilitator who outlines program
- Children asked to select some “Strength Cards” which are discussed
- Children select one “Strength” for poster during second session
- Children and parent asked to identify goals for participating in group
- Children invited to join group

# Tuesday Club Session Outlines

1. Getting to Know One Another and Bonding the Group
2. Self-Esteem Exercise and Further Bonding
3. Identifying Feelings
4. Further Identification of Feelings – Self and Others

# Tuesday Club Session Outlines

5. Angry Feelings and Introduction of the Self-Management Technique
6. Using Stop Think Do in the Playground – A Video Presentation
7. Cool Ways to Solve Problems and Some Anti -Teasing Tricks
8. Celebrating What We Have Learned and Saying Good-Bye

# Parallel Parenting Session

1. Why we parent the way we do; influences, expectations and strengths
2. Strategies for problem solving including Stop Think Do
3. Video presentation; STOP and THINK Friendship Neighborhood
4. Supporting your child's self-esteem and promoting change

# Narrative and Strength Based/Solution Focused Analysis

- Tuesday Club allows an alternative story to emerge – one of positive participation and new friendships
- Children are the experts on what works in the playground and elsewhere
- Materials used to trigger solution building and identification
- Children's contributions and successes are supported and celebrated

# Group Process – An Analysis

- Children are “heard” in both formal and informal processes
- Children’s participation in various ways encouraged to increase motivation and cohesion
- First few sessions more highly structured as norms developing with regular reminders of group rules
- Tensions between socio-emotional and task-oriented behaviour require flexibility from leaders regarding group schedule

# Results of last 2 years

