

Evaluation/feedback

Making childhood memories

“CALD Children in Refuge Matter”

Holiday Program 2014

Melbourne’s Eastern Metropolitan Region



InTouch Multicultural Centre Against Family Violence

working in partnership with

Safe Futures Foundation



A partnership was formed between InTouch and Safe Futures Foundation. The agencies consulted on the needs of CALD children living in Refuges across the Eastern suburbs of Melbourne. Through this process themes were developed and expanded upon to form detailed session outlines. Participants were gathered from Safe Futures clients.

The aim was to engage children with a history of disruption and trauma, resulting from family violence. Using discussions, play, dance and communities based activities the following themes were explored:

Journey and Life in Australia	Exploring trust	Learning about Emotions	Healthy Families and relationships
Adjusting to changes in family relationships	Resolving Conflict	How to express and manage angry feelings	Respectful relationships
Gender roles – and expectations	Healthy and respectful communication		

The Program ran over four sessions (4-6 hour sessions) during January 2014 School Holidays.

General facilitator feedback

Facilitators thought that the children engaged well in the group and benefited from the range of topics presented. It was felt that the group was a good way to better assess the needs of children living in refuge, and that this influenced further support families were provided. In the initial session it became clear that there were some challenges with 2 children that were difficult to engage and a third facilitator was provided in later sessions to work more closely to help these children participate. It was felt that while some children really enjoyed the drawing and talking exercises there were others that found this challenging. There was a combination of quiet reflection and more physically active activities provided in the group.

Session 1.

Children were welcomed to the group with a ball game in which they were encouraged to learn each other's names. The group developed some ground rules which included

- Having fun
- Respecting others
- Including others
- Not hurting others
- Being responsible
- Making new friends
- Using manners
- No swearing

Children then participated in a "getting to know me" activity in which they shared different things about each other.

After lunch, Carol, Nia dance therapist attended the group. She introduced children to different ways of saying hello to each other through dance and music. Afterward they engaged in a clay activity in which they spoke about their names, the meanings and what was special about them. Then they chose their favourite animals and made these out of clay. Facilitators thought that the clay component of the session worked really well and could be expanded in the future.

Carol's reflections

"We began the session with a brief intro to the afternoon and all the children responded well and with interest. As it was a very hot day I suggested we have a run through the sprinkler first. This seemed to be one of the highlights of the day, they said. On such a day we needed to have air-conditioning but the centre only had fans.

We began with 3 songs to dance to, the first one had opportunities to break away from set dance steps to greeting each other in different ways. The second song was a light rap song about shining our lights with set steps that they enjoyed. The last song was a cool down song where we had floor play ending with finger play to get ready for our clay exercise.

We then prepared the area with a large plastic sheet, everyone getting a piece of cardboard, a piece of clay and a dish with water. We spoke about the meaning of our names, what we love about them and also our favourite animals. I then encouraged them to make a base with their names inscribed and then to demonstrate how to attach whatever objects they made. As the need arose I demonstrated different aspects of shaping, attaching and strengthening the objects. The lively boys, in particular, were so engaged that their boisterous and sometimes out-of-control behaviour earlier was brought to focus and they ended up being satisfied and calmed down. The shy girl, who seemed to have little confidence, grew with encouragement, to create a lovely nesting sculpture. We finished off by clearing and cleaning and finally doing a little review. They spoke of how they enjoyed the two activities and they especially appreciated the sprinkler!

The session went really well and it is clear to me that it is very helpful for these children to be engaged in different activities that focus on doing and making, and not too much talking”.

Session 2.

After greetings and reminders of names, the children played a “**Roses and Thorns**” game. Going around the circle everyone was asked to say one Rose since being in group. A Rose was something that may have happened that was nice, made them feel good, or just a positive part of their week. Then they went around again and talked about a Thorn since beginning group. Facilitators explained a thorn to be something that was not such a good thing, something that made them annoyed, upset etc. The girls in particular loved this game. It was an opportunity to check in and see how everyone was, also allowing space to discuss or share something pertinent about their week.

Next the group played “**Taking a Stand Game**”. Facilitators put up on opposite walls a piece of paper with “Agree”, “Disagree” and “I don’t know”). Stating the following questions, they asked children to stand under the sign that best reflected their response to the statement. Going around the group they were asked to explain their choice. Examples of questions included:

- Children should never be hit
- Both men and women should clean the house
- Both men and women should look after children
- Boys should get more food at dinner
- Girls should be allowed to stay out late at night
- Boys should be allowed to stay out late at night
- My mum is the boss in my house
- My dad is the boss in my house
- I am the boss in my house

Facilitators said that while some children found it difficult, the game did open discussions where children shared their opinions. They spoke about respecting other people’s roles, but that it was important not to do anything that made others feel hurt or angry.

Trust Game

Children were paired and one of the pair was blind folded. Facilitators created some obstacles around the room and “seeing” partners had to safely navigate their friend around the room. Each had turns and afterward they spoke about what helped them feel safe and how to protect each other. They also spoke about what it felt like to be responsible for keeping someone safe and the importance of taking care of each other (especially in the context of siblings within families).

After lunch Reptile Encounters arrived with a tactile and informative presentation about Australian animals, reptiles and birds. They spoke about natural habitats and how to keep safe in the bush if encountering some of the animals. All children engaged well in this activity. Facilitators felt it was an opportunity for more boisterous children who found it hard to engage in other activities to show their knowledge and strength in this area.

Afterward the group had conversations about overcoming their fears.

Session 3



This session took place in the community at Westside Circus venue. Children took part in a workshop teaching circus skills and tricks. They had a warm-up game, performed juggling skills, trapeze, rope activities, trampoline and somersaults and hoola hooping.

The key word for the day was “Respect”

After some engaged reflection children were given two flags connected with each other to form a bunting. They were asked to write something they had enjoyed about the group and something important in a respectful relationship.

These are some of the things they came up with about respect

- respecting and caring for each other working together
- trusting each other
- respecting objects
- respecting other peoples choices
- having fun
- looking after each other

Session 4

This session was also in the community. Children were taken to the Melbourne Aquarium

The key theme of the day was 'Taking Care of Each Other'. Facilitators said that the children loved the aquarium. Some of the older children were given responsibilities as leaders, and took care of younger children (under the supervision of an adult). The group did not have time to complete the exercise on feelings or letter writing to their parents. Safe Futures Facilitators advised that they would follow up with these activities with the children on a one:one basis after the group.

Children were then asked to complete evaluations forms with the help of facilitators.

Children's voices are collated below



Children were asked to "circle things they liked about the group"

- 8 said having fun, making friends, going out on school holidays
- 7 said going to the Aquarium
- 6 said having lunch at cafes
- 5 said Clay Session, Understanding better ways to solve problems and the Reptile show
- 4 said Dance and circus workshop

When asked to circle the face which best showed the emotion they had when they knew they were coming to the group

- 8 said Happy
- 1 said surprised
- None said Confused, Sad or Angry

When asked to circle some of the feelings they had

- 8 said Happy
- 1 said Sad
- None said Angry or confused

When asked to circle whether they felt safe to talk and share feelings

- 6 said Yes
- 3 said Don't know
- None said No

When asked to circle whether they found better ways to react to difficult situations

- 9 said Yes
- 1 said Don't know
- None said No

When asked to write some new and better ways they learnt to react to difficult situations

Responses included

“When the reptiles came I learnt to hold a snake”

“When someone makes you sad you forgive even if they don't say sorry. You still forgive them no matter what”.

When asked what else they wanted to tell us about coming to the group

Responses included

“I made new friends and some were boys I didn't expect to like. I like the holiday program its fun and I can be myself and have fun”

“I like the fun we are having”

‘I really liked the reptile show’

“Having fun”

Learning's for future groups

Children had great insight which was demonstrated in a number of the games and activities in the group. It was an opportunity for children to speak about adjusting to new family dynamics, how to solve conflict and what makes a relationship healthy and respectful. They were also given the opportunity to go out and have fun on school holidays, which are things often difficult for children living in refuge. InTouch and Safe futures worked well in partnership sharing strengths, ideas and support.

It was clear from interacting more closely with the children that the following topics could be revisited in future groups

- conflict resolution
- understanding and regulating emotions

We also felt that it would be ideal to have an opportunity to bring CALD mothers and their children together in a holiday program to help them recover from family violence, by building and strengthening their relationships.

Additionally it was felt that a parenting after family violence group, specifically designed for CALD women would assist Mothers who commonly present with difficulties parenting children.