parkas
PARENTS ACCEPTING RESPONSIBILITY KIDS ARE SAFE

author: Wendy Bunston
developed by: Wendy Bunston & Helen Crean

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL
The parkas program was developed by:

Wendy Bunston – Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY)

Wendy Bunston is a senior social worker, trained family therapist and current manager of the Community Group Program, Royal Children's Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY)/Travancore School. She has specialised in working with children and adolescents considered at 'high risk', within the areas of sexual violence and family violence and has both locally and nationally published and presented her work in these areas.

Helen Crean - Djerriwarrh Health Services

Helen Crean is a senior counsellor within the Djerriwarrh Health Services (DjHS – Melton Campus) counselling team. She is a psychiatric nurse and trained Gestalt therapist. She has worked extensively within the areas of drug and alcohol, child psychiatry and family violence.

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Contents

Foreword...............................................................................................7
A note from the author ...........................................................................9
About this manual................................................................................ 10
Professional acknowledgments ............................................................. 10
Glossary of terms used in parkas .......................................................... 11

Section one – development of the parkas program .................13
  Preamble ............................................................................................ 15
  Introduction......................................................................................... 15
  Childhood trauma and family violence .................................................... 16
  Definitions of family violence .............................................................. 17
  Key elements of the parkas program...................................................... 18
  Model 1 – parkas model........................................................................ 19
  Clinical leadership team ....................................................................... 20

Section two – the parkas program for mothers and kids .........23
  Aims and objectives of the parkas program ............................................ 25
  Summary of objectives ........................................................................ 26
  Theoretical frameworks ........................................................................ 26
  Mother/child dyad................................................................................ 27
  Referrals ............................................................................................. 27
  Assessment procedure ......................................................................... 28
  Ways of working .................................................................................. 28
  Format and process oriented content..................................................... 29
  Supervision ......................................................................................... 30
  Leadership resources ........................................................................... 30
  Evaluation by participants ..................................................................... 31
  Conclusions about the parkas model...................................................... 32

Section three – program session outlines ..............................35
  A word before starting ........................................................................ 37
  Session one – kids............................................................................... 38
  Session one – mothers......................................................................... 40
  Session two – kids .............................................................................. 41
  Session two – mothers ......................................................................... 43
  Session three – kids............................................................................. 44
  Session three – mothers....................................................................... 46
  Session four – kids............................................................................... 47
  Session four – mothers......................................................................... 49
  Session five – kids............................................................................... 50
  Session five – mothers.......................................................................... 52
  Session six – kids ................................................................................ 53
  Session six – mothers.......................................................................... 54
  Session seven – kids............................................................................ 55
  Session seven – mothers................................................................. 56
  Session eight – kids............................................................................ 57
  Session eight – mothers..................................................................... 58
  Session nine – kids............................................................................. 59
  Session nine – mothers..................................................................... 60
  Session ten – joint farewell session and party ........................................ 61
  Two week follow up – individual mother feedback sessions .......... 63
  Reunion .............................................................................................. 63

parkas – parents accepting responsibility kids are safe 3
Appendix C - Poems

Limbo .................................................................i
Undignified ........................................................................................................ ii
A right to live ........................................................................................................ iii
parkas – parents accepting responsibility kids are safe
Foreword

Fortunately the impact of family violence on the psychological, emotional and social development and functioning of children is now taken very seriously in most child centred settings such as schools, health and welfare organisations, and in legal processes including the Children’s Court, Family Court and Juvenile Justice facilities.

Children experience great distress as a result of being involved in a family where violence is present. Frequently, this distress is not heard by the adults in the child’s environment. If it is heard it may not be listened to, and if it is listened to, the communication from the child may not be acted upon in a way that helps the child feel understood and supported, and which enables them to know their burden is shared with a caring, responsive and responsible adult.

The parkas program has evolved to facilitate children and their families to ‘hear’, ‘listen’ and ‘respond’ to each other in relation to the violence they have experienced. Hearing, listening and responding are core principles underpinning the therapeutic leadership and process of parkas.

There are a number of unique features to the parkas model, which differentiates it from other programs in Australia:

- It is a joint mental health and community health program, locating specialist mental health expertise firmly within the community in which the families live and resourcing the community systems the families relate to on a regular basis;
- The same leaders run the children’s and parents’ group, providing connectedness, continuity of relationships and integrated understanding of individual and family issues and dynamics;
- The parkas program is designed and conducted as a process, with each section building on the preceding ones and simultaneously providing the basis for the forthcoming ones;
- Material from the children’s and the parents’ groups is cross-integrated as well as being integrated within their own groups.

As a supervisor to the program in 1998 and 1999 I would like to offer some comments.

The parkas program presented in this document is a new and creative initiative arising from the recognition by the authors, Ms Wendy Bunston and Ms Helen Crean, for the need for more communication between family members about the violence experienced by the children of those families. Consequently the program is a ‘living’ project and the methodology presented here is not set in stone but will develop as knowledge, experience and expertise also develop.

Readers of the document will quickly become aware that conducting a program on the parkas model is complex, requiring a high level of skill in the professional staff. It is also demanding of time, and emotional and physical energy. Therefore, such a program is not to be regarded lightly as a panacea. It demands to be recognised as a specialist option for professional staff who work with children and families who have been affected by family violence.

When conducting a parkas program, leaders need to have the capacity within themselves to be able to respond flexibly to their developing understanding of the emergent issues and their increasing understanding of the psychodynamics present. Clear theoretical frameworks provide the opportunity for this to happen and regular supervision provides the reflective thinking and
personal space to bring clarity to what often appears to be a confused, multidimensional set of experiences and observations.

Supervision has proven to be an essential element in the provision of the parkas program.

During the development of this pilot parkas program a number of changes to format and content were introduced in order to improve this evolving specialist treatment technique. An example of this was the inclusion of a range of different therapeutic mediums through which to engage the children, such as art and music therapy, as well drama and puppetry. The content covered within a particular program was altered according to the unique presentation of each client group.

Provision of the space to play and to have fun, was found to be important in both the children's and the parents' group. In many families playing and humour had never been part of the family experience, or if it had, these had been lost.

This document, designed as a model to assist workers who wish to conduct similar programs, is easily accessible through a clear and detailed index, a discussion of the theoretical underpinning of parkas, the leadership and supervision resources which are needed, and a session by session discussion of the provision of the Program content including the role of the group leaders.

The overarching aims of the parkas program include:

- Creating a space where the child and their parents can discover and experience the means to some emotional healing. It is not designed to present to children what they must, should or may be feeling and how they must or should manage their behaviour;
- Ensuring that the children and their parents feel psychologically and emotionally safe at all times;
- Honouring and supporting children's attachments to their parents and significant others.

The parkas program is an important initiative that focuses on children and the need to listen to and learn from them about their emotional world in relation to family violence.

**Ruth Wraith**

*Head of Department of Child Psychotherapy*

*Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY)*
A note from the author

From its inception, parkas has promoted a group work focus that is child sensitive. As the program has evolved, this premise has remained at its core and is the centre from which the training, the manual, and other parkas projects have flowed. While the parkas model was originally developed and run as a collaborative program by Djerriwarrh Health Services (DjHS) and Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY), in the last eighteen months it has run under the auspice of the Kids Safe From Violence – West (KSFV-W) Collective. This is a collection of eight agencies in western metropolitan Melbourne working collaboratively to promote child sensitive models of practice that privilege the emotional, psychological and physical safety of children.

parkas has provided DjHS and MHSKY with a powerful beginning point in developing a creative therapeutic response to address these children’s often poor experience of being parented. As other agencies and organisations have adopted the parkas model, it has become clear that they have been surprised at the amount of time and energy involved in running the program both physically and psychologically. Groupwork, and specifically groupwork with children and parents who have experienced significant trauma, is very demanding work. The ability to be attuned to and to contain the dynamics that operate across the two groups (the children’s and mothers in particular), is immensely draining, as well as rewarding work.

As this model continues to evolve it is anticipated that its structure will change and different configurations may emerge. This may involve increased joint parent and child sessions. It may mean developing a program that is shorter in its time frame, or maybe extended beyond the time frame suggested within this model. Currently MHSKY and DjHS are experimenting with differing structures that remain true to the underlying philosophy and goals of parkas whilst also considering the program in a different format, including experimenting with adventure based interventions that may involve families camping outdoors.

What will not change, however, is our commitment to honouring the experience and attachments of the child. Nor would we advocate splitting the leadership team to run different components of the program. It is imperative that the same leadership team is involved in all aspects of the program delivery as this acts as the secure base that holds together and integrates the experience of all of the participants (children and parents). It is this factor that differentiates parkas from the other existing groupwork models.

parkas is a process orientated program. Remaining true to a child sensitive focus means remaining true to a process that is child led and not set by the compass of adult expectations. Children feel safe when they are heard, irrespective of whether their communication with us occurs verbally or non-verbally. They also feel safe when their environment can meaningfully tolerate who they are and what they have to offer, and reflects back an affirming and respectful image of self.

Helen and I faced considerable challenges in developing this program. We found the children and families to be great teachers and immensely enjoyed each other’s company, as well as that of the participants. We hope you will find this manual instructive. We also hope that you will continue to evolve this model and bring to it your own unique skills, energy, humour and ideas.

Wendy Bunston
March 2001
About this manual

The parkas manual is the product of a collaborative initiative between the Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY) and Djerriwarrh Health Services (DjHS) – Melton.

Over a five year period the two organisations committed substantial amounts of time and resources into developing a groupwork program that honoured the experience of children who have lived with family violence. This collaboration has drawn in numerous additional organisations and players and resulted in the creative and energetic parkas program. This manual aims to capture the collective practice wisdom of our own and of the many professionals who have been involved in running the parkas program.

This manual is intended to provide counsellors and clinicians with a comprehensive practical guide to running their own groupwork program with children and families affected by family violence after completion of the DjHS and MHSKY two day training workshop – parkas: The theory and application of groupwork methods in working with children and parents affected by family violence.

We recognise that not all primary caregivers of children are mothers, as relatives, foster caregivers and friends of the family, to name a few, can and do take on this role. However, to make it easy on the eyes of the reader we have used the word ‘mother’ throughout the manual rather than ‘mother/carer’.

This manual predominantly concerns itself with the mothers and children’ s parkas program but includes a special section on a pilot program undertaken with dads and kids in 1999.

In the following pages you will find information about:
- the theoretical frameworks and neurological findings regarding the impact of trauma on children.
- a description of the program content.
- an evaluation and conclusion regarding the parkas program.
- session outlines for the ten week groupwork parkas program.
- activity sheets as well as games for the sessions.
- proformas of administrative documents, flyers, invitations and certificates.

Professional acknowledgments:

The parkas program has received the following professional acknowledgments:

- 1999 - parkas program document published by the Federal/State Government Partnerships Against Domestic Violence Initiative, one of the seven child focused groupwork identified examples of good practice.
- 2000 - Helen Crean and Wendy Bunston received a Djerriwarrh Health Services Meritorious Services Award for the development of the parkas program.
Glossary of terms used in parkas

**Process:** The parkas program focuses on *how* the participants in the group think, rather than what they think about - how do the dynamics emerge in the group, what are the interactions between the individual and their environment, and what are their patterns of relating. It then uses the information gathered from these patterns to respond to these processes within the group. It includes exploring how the person makes sense of their internal world, and how this shows itself in their external world. Rather than what is said, the emphasis is on *how* is it said and sometimes, more importantly, what is not said.

**Holding:** A term which originates from Winnicott (Winnicott, Shepard and Davis, 1989) and refers to the *holding environment* provided by the primary carer in relation to the infant's physical as well as emotional, psychological, physiological and environmental worlds. The reliability and response of this environment lays the foundation for how the child will see her/himself and relate to the external world in the future.

**Containment:** Bion developed the concept of container/contained (Symington and Symington, 1996). This idea involves the notion that parts of the self (that is, the infant) that are *too painful* or perceived as *too bad* are evacuated into the other (that is, the mother). Containment occurs through the ability of the other to tolerate and modify the elements that have been split off. Through this relationship containing the *too painful* or *too bad* elements, the infant (or client) can reintegrate and re-experience these elements, enabling the development of psychological growth and reflective thinking (James, 1984).

**Supervision:** A safe, professional space in which to consult with another professional/s in relation to direct counselling/therapy/group work practice. Ideally a supervisor for the parkas program should have considerable experience and/or training in group work processes and childhood development. The supervisor provides a consistent, reflective and interactive arena for the group leaders to make sense of what has occurred in the context of the group dynamics and to assist in untangling the multiple levels of meaning and emotions that the group provokes for the participants as well as for the leaders.

**Projections:** These function as defense mechanisms, where unacceptable parts of one's self are transferred to another person. The other person is then seen as possessing those unacceptable parts and may be identified as intolerable or persecutory (Wright, 1992).

**Psychodynamic:** The interplay of emotions between group members and group leaders allows some insight into the internal world of individual group members. Interventions and treatment are then guided by dynamics that emerge within the group and can be safely attended to and worked through in this context.

**Intra-psychic:** The internal world of the individual and the mechanisms that regulate the relationship with self at the level of the conscious and unconscious and digest what information the individual brings in from the external world about self.

**Other useful definitions** of terms used in this manual, and also important to understanding childhood trauma, can be found through the Child Trauma Academy Website - [www bcm tmc edu cta Glossary htm](http://www.bcm.tmc.edu/cta/Glossary.htm)
parkas – parents accepting responsibility kids are safe
section one

development of the parkas program
DEVELOPMENT OF THE PARKAS PROGRAM

Preamble

The parents accepting responsibility kids are safe (parkas) model of working with children and their families who have been affected by family violence is one that continues to evolve. This manual encapsulates our learnings four years into what has been both an exciting and tumultuous journey. It is not offered as a definitive program, but as a foundation framework upon which to build further. We are indebted to the families who have joined us on this journey and in particular to the children who have been our constant teachers in showing us how to equip ourselves for such a journey. Remaining open to seeing, hearing, learning and sitting with the experiences of these children has been invaluable. As in any learning experience we have had our assumptions challenged and our horizons broadened. We hope the following pages do justice to the many people who have already contributed to the program. We also hope they assist those who continue the development of the parkas model, thereby adding to an ever-emerging understanding of the complexities involved in working with family violence.

This manual is written with two particular audiences in mind; mental health clinicians, and professionals undertaking work with family violence in community agency settings. It is a program that in all probability could be run in two very different ways; using a psychodynamic model (process orientated) or a behavioural model (content and activity oriented). Whilst we have utilised a psychodynamic model and would advocate a group such as this being run psycho-therapeutically, it does also incorporate behavioural strategies. Those choosing to adhere strictly to the content suggested for each session as well as the utilisation of the activity sheets may find it helpful to inform potential referrers and participants that the group will be run with a greater emphasis on individual behaviour than group dynamics. This provides referrers with a clear idea of the suitability of the parkas program for particular clients and also for the clients themselves to have some idea of what to expect as a participant of the program.

Introduction

Djerriwarrh Health Services (DjHS) is an acute, residential and primary care service for the local government communities of Melton and Moorabool in the outer west of Melbourne. It operates services on three campuses, two of which offer primary care. The DjHS Primary Care Division has for over ten years provided generalist counselling and support services. In addition to generalist counselling and support, DjHS offers specialist programs in family violence prevention. Many clients enter the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) through the generalist duty and counselling assessment service.

Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service (MHSKY) is an integrated mental health service for children and young people, who are in need of mental health services and live in the Melbourne western metropolitan region. MHSKY delivers a range of quality services to its clients through a service model that incorporates a central location (hub) and community locations (spokes and satellites). One such satellite was established in 1996 at the Melton Campus of Djerriwarrh Health Services, previously known as the Melton Community Health Centre. A small team of mental health workers provide assessment and treatment to those children and families requiring services within the local area.
The DjHS and MHSKY collaboration. The DjHS Melton Campus has for many years provided treatment, support and educational programs for men who have been violent and women who have lived with violence. Whilst these programs initially incorporated treatment modules which explored parenting difficulties, the absence of a specific program for children had been apparent. In 1996, when MHSKY was in the process of establishing their out-posted clinic at DjHS, discussions began about the development of a joint specialist child-focused component to the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP). The parkas program is the groupwork model for these client groups that emerged over a four-year period.

Childhood trauma and family violence

Within community health, mental health, and in particular, child and adolescent mental health, clinicians are increasingly recognising the impact of undiagnosed and untreated trauma in childhood as potentially manifesting itself in severe behavioural, social and psychiatric problems during adolescence and adulthood. A child living with family violence is indisputably traumatised. More often than not, violent events are not confined to isolated incidents, but are of an ongoing subversive nature leading to chronic traumatisation. Unresolved trauma in childhood becomes inextricably intertwined with a child’s emerging personality and infiltrates all levels of their intra-psychic functioning (Terr, 1991; Van Der Kolk and Saporta, 1991).

The potential for inter-generational transmission of violence has been clearly identified in the literature on childhood trauma, and has been estimated to occur in about one-third of all individuals who are subjected to severe neglect or abuse (Kaplan and Pinner, 1996; Eth, 1996). Pynoos and Nader (1993) suggest that the ability to regulate aggression and the development of conscience may be affected. Following a violent incident, children can fluctuate between identifying with the perpetrator, the victim, or if someone else was present and intervened, the rescuer. Trauma not worked through can compound over time, and individuals are more prone to rigidly adhere to a predominant identification with one of the roles modeled during the conflict. As Pynoos and Nader (1993) note,

when the trauma is violent and massive, there may be continued risk of life threatening or violent behaviour throughout adolescence. A major goal of therapy is to return the child to a normal developmental path with a maturing conscience, and as a result, to help alleviate dangerous unconscious re-enactment behaviour. Unanswered intervention fantasies can lead to marked changes in behaviour and personality (p 546).

Trauma associated with familial violence lives on well past the cessation of the violence itself (Bunston, 1999). Even when the perpetrator of the violence has gone, the psychological and physiological symptoms associated with being traumatised have seldom abated, despite the best efforts of these children and the adults around them to make it appear otherwise (Perry and Pollard 1998; Perry 1997). We know that the impact of exposure to trauma during childhood is far reaching and all the more so when instigated by those to whom one has strong attachments (Fletcher, 1996; Bretherton 1991). The legacy of traumatisation is that although the events themselves may pass, the psychological effects are unlikely to in the short term.
It is also the case that many children, despite no longer living with the perpetrator, whether it be a male or female parent, will have continued contact with that person. They may have complex family structures, involving step-parents (who may be violent), same-sex parents and/or different children in the family having different fathers. There may be older children who are violent not only towards their siblings, but towards their parents as well. The configurations of family violence can be many and varied.

Consequently, the parkas program was developed to address all forms of family violence and does not prohibit the inclusion of children who still reside in families where there is known to be some risk of ongoing violence. In these instances, great care is taken to ensure the pace of the group is set by the child who we assess may be at the greatest risk. We also enter into a clear contract with the adult who has engaged in perpetrator behaviours in the past - this has occurred on two occasions when the father was attending the men's component of the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) and still resided with the mother and child attending parkas.

The group process is careful not to strip away the sophisticated defense mechanisms developed by children in negotiating their way through the often volatile and chaotic familial environments in which they live. Rather the focus within the group is on containing the conflicts played out within the group, and which may reflect the dynamics that operate within their home lives, through providing a safe sanctuary in which to attain some resolution (see Theoretical Frameworks in section 2).

**Definitions of family violence**

The following definitions have been taken directly from V-NET (now known as No To Violence - NTV. Male Family Violence Prevention Association Incorporated Victoria).

**Emotional violence and controlling behaviour** which does not accord equal importance and respect to another person’s feelings and experiences.

**Physical violence and controlling behaviour** which involves attacks, or threats of attack, on one’s physical safety and integrity.

**Verbal violence and controlling behaviour** which includes verbal put downs and ridicule of any aspect of a person’s or child’s being, such as their body, their beliefs, occupation, cultural background, skills, friends or family.

**Sexual violence and controlling behaviour** which includes all sexual behaviour without consent, or threats of such behaviour, such as unwanted touching, rape, exposing himself/herself and making someone view pornography.

**Social violence or controlling behaviour** which includes all behaviours that limit, control or interfere with a person’s or child’s social activities or relationships with others, such as controlling their movements and denying them access to their family and friends, therefore, effectively isolating them.

**Financial violence and controlling behaviour** which includes not giving a person access to their share of the shared resource, expecting them to manage the household on an impossibly low amount of money, and criticism and blame of them when they are unable to manage.
Spiritual violence or controlling behaviour which includes all behaviour that denigrates a person’s or child’s religious or spiritual beliefs and prevents them from attending religious gatherings or practising their faith. It also includes harming, or threatening to harm, a person or child in religious or occultist rituals.

Other controlling behaviour which denies a person’s right to autonomy and equality especially when used frequently or in combination with violence (Younger 1995).

Key elements of the parkas program

The age group targeted for children is eight to twelve years of age. Developmentally, this is an age group that can begin to recognise and acknowledge the impact of trauma in their lives, as well as to verbalise their experience of having lived with violence. Mothers referred into the group are expected to have undertaken either individual and/or group work in relation to their own exposure and experience of domestic violence and are required to be available to the emotional issues that may be generated for their child through involvement in the children’s group.

The age group for this program could certainly vary outside of the age range specified above, as long as the activities utilised were modified accordingly. It is important to recognise the relevant developmental differences for children of varying ages with regard to cognitive functioning, their ability for self-awareness and reflection, and their awareness of others. That is, for younger children, the use of more expressive mediums such as art, play, music and drama could be more developmentally appropriate. This is not to say that these mediums are not similarly useful for an older age group. The older the age group, the more likely it is that the group will also want space to articulate their experience. This provides them with opportunities to interact and bond with others in the group as much as it allows them to give voice to their experiences.

The criteria for eligibility for children to participate in the group has remained flexible, since the gamut of family violence is broad and incorporates a range of differing configurations. Children who have experienced violence at the hands of siblings, same-sex parents, step-parents, and extended family members, have all been included in the groups. In addition, some of the children continued to live with the perpetrator where these fathers were members or graduates of the DjHS men’s groupwork program. These fathers were required to actively support their child’s involvement in the program. Some of the children had continued contact with their fathers, or had fathers who were seeking contact through the Family Court.

As emphasised earlier, a defining factor of parkas is that the same leaders run both the children’s group and the mothers’ group. This has allowed leaders to access and integrate the material of the children with that of their mothers. Drawing on a collaborative community development model, the program has also incorporated a number of other important players, including childcare workers from a local family support agency, social work students and volunteer community leaders who were participants in the DjHS community leadership training program (see section 5 DjHS – FVPP, Community Leadership).

parkas has been split over two days with the children’s group occurring on a weekday from 1.30pm to 3.00pm and the mothers’ group on the following day from 10.00am to 12.00noon. DjHS provided resources to assist with transport for those mothers facing transport difficulties. The weekly supervision sessions were scheduled for the afternoon of the day the
mothers’ group was held. This allowed the content of both groups to remain fresh in our minds whilst also providing us with sufficient time to reflect upon and process both our own experiences within the group and our responses to the group dynamics and material generated within the groups.

The last session (week 10) is a joint session. This involves the children meeting at their usual time with their mother’s joining them an hour later for a final farewell celebration and party (see section 3 – Session Outlines).

**Model 1 - parkas model**

- The same leadership team runs both the children's and the mothers’ groups.
- Material from each group is integrated into the other.
- The children’s group runs for 1½ hours on a weekday afternoon.
- The mothers’ group runs for 2 hours the following morning.
- Weekly supervision for the leadership team is held as soon as possible after mothers’ group.
- The group sessions are held for 8 to 10 weeks.
- The final group is a joint session, which is also a farewell celebration.
- An individual feedback session is provided to each mother.
- A follow-up reunion is held two months after the completion of the groupwork.
Clinical leadership team

An integral component of the parkas model has been that the same leaders run both the children’s and the mothers’ group. This has provided an invaluable grounding in, and integration of, the material produced within both groups, as each group informs the subsequent groups. The two clinicians that developed the parkas model have been involved in running all of the parkas programs referred to in this manual, and have been assisted by a variety of different people undertaking various support roles. These have included social work students, other allied health professionals interested in being trained in the parkas model, and community participants from the women’s and men’s community leadership program (see section 5 DjHS – Family Violence Prevention Program).

It is imperative to the success of the parkas model that the clinical staff members work across the two groups. Within the body of this document, references to the group leaders or leadership team essentially refers to the clinical staff (whether this is the two developers of parkas or the two developers plus other trained professional staff members) who have operated as the core facilitators. This is not, however, intended to detract from the other vital contributions made by those who have provided supportive and/or co-leadership roles within the group. Two community leaders (from the DjHS - FVPP) have been involved in assisting with the children’s or the mothers’ group, but have not been involved across both groups.

The need to define what we mean when referring to the leadership team is in recognition of the need for people running these groups to have a suitable level of professional training and expertise in the area of mental health and/or counselling.
section two

the parkas program for mothers and kids
THE PARKAS PROGRAM FOR MOTHERS AND KIDS

Aims and objectives of the parkas program

The overall aim of this program is to create a psychologically safe space for children to begin to acknowledge and process both their traumatic experiences and the accompanying feelings of loss and pain. This occurs within the context of a psychotherapeutic group work structure that builds a bridge of communication through the leadership team facilitating both the children’s and mothers’ groups, which enables immediate access to, and integration of, each group’s experience of family violence.

The program endeavours to provide an opportunity for children to emotionally and psychologically re-connect with their mothers around what has often been a shared experience of trauma. Concurrently there is a recognition that these children may still feel strong attachments towards the perpetrators of the violence.

The specific objectives of the program are:

- To provide an emotionally contained environment for these children to acknowledge and articulate their own personal experience of family violence, and for this to be validated in the presence of a group of their peers who have similarly lived with emotional, physical and psychological trauma. This involves a process of ‘bearing witness’ (Blackwell, 1997) through giving recognition to what has been the experience of living with family violence, which may still be ongoing for some children.

- To facilitate the space for a positive shared experience between children and their mothers, by opening the way for them to communicate about some very painful and unresolved issues from their past, and within their ongoing relationship with one another.

- To provide a positive therapeutic experience as a potential prelude to other future work. Providing these children with an enjoyable, safe and positive experience of working within a therapeutic group may plant the seed for advanced work to be undertaken within future therapy. It is also intended to enhance their self-esteem, establishing a foundation through which the power, control and gender issues inherent in violent relationships may be challenged.

- To acknowledge the significance of the father or step-parent in the lives of these children, despite the level of violence they may have perpetrated. Failure to acknowledge the relationship with their father, stepfather or step-parent, whom these children often love, and sometimes even idolise, risks not honouring the complexity of their internal world and their frequently conflicting loyalties. This may bring about their emotional, and even physical, withdrawal from the group. The treatment must address the pre-existing relationship with the perpetrator … complicated issues of identification, intense conflicts of loyalty, issues related to loss and often pre-existing vulnerability arising from a chronic impulse ridden environment (Pynoos and Nader, 1993, p545).

- To raise the awareness of parents about the sustained and debilitating impact that family violence has both on their children, and themselves as carers.

- To assist parents to gain an understanding of the inter-generational transmission of violence, in order to facilitate the breaking of the cycle of abuse.
To support children in developing appropriate, creative and safe ways of managing their feelings, such as depression and anger.

To support children and parents in challenging rigidly held gender prescriptions and maladaptive patterns of relating. This involves encouraging a positive shared experience that can begin to deconstruct the estrangement or enmeshment that may have evolved in their relationship during past efforts to survive the violence.

**Summary of objectives**

- Providing a safe space to acknowledge their experience of living with violence.
- Building safe connections between children and their mothers.
- Providing a positive therapeutic experience as a prelude to possible future work.
- Honouring the attachments of the child.
- Educating parents about the impact of family violence on children.
- Enabling constructive expression of feelings.
- Challenging gender stereotypes.

**Theoretical Frameworks**

Parkas is informed by systemic thinking which promotes a collaborative and competency-based approach with children and families, whilst building on the existing strengths of clients and their connections with local services (Gambrill, 1983). It also incorporates a strong psychodynamic framework that privileges the processes and dynamics operating in the group, in particular, Winnicott’s concept of ‘holding’ and Bion’s concept of ‘containment’ (James, 1984; Winnicott, 1971).

It has been important to have a solid working knowledge of attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988) which recognises the need for children to have a secure emotional base, in conjunction with an appreciation of childhood development within a context of emotional and physical abuse (Donovan and McIntyre, 1990). All this is set against a backdrop that recognises the impediments affecting a client group who have been significantly traumatised by family violence, and one which also acknowledges the multiple levels of attachment evident in family work (James, 1984; Burnham, 1986).

An essential theoretical cornerstone of this program has been securing appropriate supervision which incorporates the dual focus of childhood developmental theory and group process. This has provided the leaders of the group with the opportunity to integrate the range of theoretical frameworks necessary to inform the ongoing development of the program and to build upon existing skills and expertise in refining and responding to the unique presentation and circumstances of each group program.

More recently the clinical staff within the leadership team have familiarised themselves with the neurological impact of trauma on infant’s and children’s developing brains. This has involved understanding that the sensitised neural response of infants and children to trauma can, over an extended period of time, result in the emotional states aroused to cope with the trauma, developing into longstanding personality traits (Perry, Pollard, Blakely, Baker and
Vigilante, 1995). This heightens the preventative and educative importance of intervention groups such as parkas.

Mother/child dyad

An infant’s sense of self is taken from its relationship with its primary caregiver. Often in our society this is the relationship with mother. The way in which this primary caregiver emotionally holds the emerging internal world of the infant directly contributes to how this infant will perceive and know themselves as their personality develops (Wright, 1992).

This is overlaid by the infant or child’s relationship with significant others; father, siblings, step-parent or step-siblings, or others closely involved with them. In a healthy, familial environment these relationships can be expected to complement and strengthen an infant or child’s growing sense of self and their place in the world.

Where family violence is a significant feature of an infant/child’s world, a healthy emotional developmental path may not be realised. The need to survive becomes the organising principal through which all relationship dynamics are then filtered. An environment of violence can damage the important ingredients of consistency, stability, nurturing and security necessary for the healthy emotional development of the individual and their relationship with their immediate external world. Creating therapeutic opportunities to begin to develop or rebuild strong and healthy attachments becomes the focus of our work within parkas.

An awareness of the history of violence within a family can assist in understanding how the mother/child dyad may have been compromised and what aspects of their attachment to one another are positive and can be further enhanced (Holmes 1993). The leadership team can model the formation of healthy attachments through their work in emotionally ‘holding’ and ‘containing’ the anxiety, anger, shame, guilt or sadness, which mothers often feel in relation to how they have been mothered and how they themselves mother. This can in turn allow space for the mothers to develop emotionally and to come to terms with the reality of their own emotional trauma as a parent. When mothers feel that they have had an experience of being held and understood, they may be better placed to translate that into holding and understanding their child.

Referrals

Referrals for children and their mothers have generally come from within DjHS Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) or from MHSKY, with the occasional referral originating from local schools or the local council.

Flyers advertising upcoming groups (see Appendix A) provide a clear outline of the goals and objectives of the program: the importance of the mother having undertaken their own work in addressing the impact family violence has had on them individually, and; an ability to create space in their mind to understand and hold the experience of their child. Referral forms specific to parkas have been developed (see appendix A). A one to two hour assessment session follows in which the purpose and format of the groups is clearly explained, a full family history is collected, and the extent and forms of violence (physical, emotional, verbal, financial, psychological, sexual) that the child has been subjected to is documented.
Assessment procedure

It is important from the outset for the worker to clearly identify, or name, what has happened, and not to collude with the secrecy and/or minimisation that those who have lived with violence have often been socialised into. This is done respectfully, with consideration of the hurt, anxiety and embarrassment that this may engender. The child is included in this assessment process, and is sometimes asked to relate their perception of events in the presence of their mothers. At times, without being prompted, the child chips in with their version or recollections anyway, often surprising mothers with their recall of events. The information asked of the child and mother is detailed in the Assessment Form (see Appendix A).

We also believe it is important to gain some understanding of the emotional availability of the mother to the issues that may be generated for the child through their involvement in the children’s group (see Appendix A – Information Flyer for Professionals). Should they appear to lack significant insight into, or appreciation of, the world of their child it may be advisable to recommend they undertake some individual and/or groupwork for themselves before proceeding with parkas. In some instances, despite the mother having already undertaken a considerable amount of their own work, they may demonstrate an impaired ability to connect with their child’s experiences. The powerful group dynamics between the mothers themselves, and/or the material that flows between the children’s and mothers’ group may provide the impetus for a shift in the ability of the mother to place themselves in the ‘emotional world’ of their child. At times the program may prove to be more significant for the child alone, in offering them a safe place to affirm their experience of family violence in the presence of other children and the group leaders.

We are clear from the outset as to the formal policy of both our agencies, as well as our professional commitment, to make a notification to the Child Protection Service if we assess any child to be ‘at risk’ at any time. We request all participants to sign a contract acknowledging their awareness of this condition, as well as their commitment to respect the confidentiality of others in the group. Informed consent is also sought in relation to evaluating the program (see Appendix A). Permission is sought before contacting outside agencies, such as schools, and in using any materials from the group for professional training purposes, writing or presenting papers at conferences. This highlights to parents the principles of honesty and transparency within which parkas operates, and also models accountable and truthful behaviour from the outset.

Ways of working

Creating safe, enjoyable and imaginative ways of working has been imperative to the success of the parkas program. This has helped sustain the energy necessary to run such a professionally and emotionally demanding project. It has also required a commitment by the leadership team to work flexibly and honestly. Recognising when to change the tempo of an activity, replacing ideas that do not successfully match with a particular group, and a willingness to acknowledge and explore what has not worked well, have all required a high level of trust and confidence within the whole leadership team.

Each group work program is unique and challenging. This is due to the amalgam of factors brought to each one. These include the existing skills and expertise of the clinical (core) group leaders drawn upon, the strengths and experiences of the community leaders who
participate, and the fact that each program in itself teaches the leaders something new about the dimensions of family violence.

The ability of all of the group leaders to ‘hold’ and ‘contain’ the emotional undercurrents that ripple throughout the life of the group, and within the lives of the participants, has been paramount. Equally important has been creating clear boundaries to keep the program firmly child focussed, providing access to alternative individual supports to participants if required, and ensuring that we as leaders are ‘held’ through accessing good quality supervision.

Format and process oriented content

There are a range of themes which are important to cover in each session and these guide the content of the parkas program. These are, however, secondary to the ability to stay with the material that emerges from the group dynamics - what the children themselves articulate and what they act out. It has been particularly powerful to match the mothers’ group content with that of the children’s group, endeavouring to cover similar themes to those that have emerged from the children’s group and to play at least one of the games that the children have played together.

This mirroring process allows for connection points to be built between the mother and child. Material produced in the children’s group, for example, the drawing of their family or What you would wish for work sheets (see Appendix B) has often been taken into the mothers’ group and vice versa. With the mothers and children’s knowledge and informed consent, the mothers and children have been keen to see what the other has produced. Creating mutual opportunities for parents and children to explore their playfulness and have fun is a powerful therapeutic intervention utilised within this model.

The content within the groups has incorporated a variety of overarching themes, such as healthy ways of expressing anger, the definitions and the impact of emotional abuse, conflict management, gender relations and family relationships. However, the primary content of these groups has been produced by the children and not the leaders. It is imperative that the psychological safety of these children is protected through allowing them to set the emotional pace of the group. Children who have experienced violence will automatically engage some level of psychic shut-down to protect themselves from further re-traumatisation; “avoidance and psychological numbing indicate that a child continues to restrict behaviour or regulate emotions in an effort to control their recurrent impressions and negative affect” (Pynoos, 1993, p 217).

This is usually reflected in a child’s inability to stay with a particular activity, or a heightened need for individual members of the group to ‘act out’. Rather than prohibiting this behaviour, it is important to understand what this information is suggesting about the emotional life and fragility of the children, and to alter the content and tempo through particular activities to bring the children back to a position of safety. Containing these impasses through the use of humour and creative redirection within the group allows the children to experience a different and hopefully more healthy resolution of emotionally traumatic and stressful events. The extent to which the leaders can absorb and tolerate the projections of these children and mothers creates a space for some small intra-psychic healing. Similarly, it is important that leaders are able to deconstruct these projections within the safety of their own supervision sessions and are then able to use what material has been transferred onto them as leaders to inform their therapeutic role within the groups.
The focus of the program is on the experience of the children. This is not to suggest, however, that this is separate to the experience of their mothers, as the often enmeshed nature of the mother-child relationship sees a paralleling process that operates at all levels, both consciously and unconsciously within their relationship. A constant challenge for the group leaders is to assist the mothers within the program to refrain from interpreting their "children's avoidance of any mention of the trauma as successfully putting it behind them" (Pynoos, 1993, p 219).

The children's participation in the program is about giving them permission to safely retrieve these emotions as opposed to coaching them in the fine art of suppression. This is about the children having their feelings recognised and validated by other people, helping them to understand those feelings and finding ways to express them that are appropriate for themselves and the various social contexts within which they live.

Often parents can equate their children's good behaviour with having overcome their trauma, rather than appreciating that their child's acting out may in fact prove to be a far healthier and accessible expression of their rage, helplessness, confusion or angst. This is to prevent the child from silently embedding the trauma so deeply into their psyche that it pervades the very core of their emerging personalities (Herman 1992). Sometimes the most traumatised children in a group are those who demand little outside attention, yet whose internalised world presents as very disturbed. An example of this was a young girl within one of the groups who would quietly and methodically set about annihilating her toy animals when playing alone in her bedroom. Another was a boy who gave little verbal acknowledgment of his trauma but whose graphic and violent drawings within the group spoke volumes about the horrors he had endured.

**Supervision**

Critical to the success of any therapeutic group work is the provision of adequate, regular and supportive professional supervision. This mirrors the 'holding' process that the leaders endeavour to provide for the mothers to 'hold' and contain the emotional experience of the children in the group. **p a r k a s** has been fortunate in accessing a range of professionals to provide supervision. We began with a supervisor who was Gestalt trained and extremely experienced in group therapy processes. Subsequent supervisors have included a child and adolescent psychiatrist and two supervisors who were qualified in child psychotherapy with considerable knowledge in childhood development. This latter child psychotherapist was also a specialist in childhood trauma.

The importance and value of the broad-sweeping meta-perspective that supervisors can provide on the dynamics that permeate all levels of functioning within groupwork practice cannot be underestimated. This can include the agency context, the schools the children attend, the relationship between the leaders, through to the relationships between mothers and their children, and the group participants themselves.

**Leadership resources**

**p a r k a s** has had as few as three, and up to five, leaders running particular programs. The initial program was led by the two developers of the **p a r k a s** model with a social work student assisting. This worked particularly well as the two facilitators were backed up by the invaluable practical and energetic support of the student. The student was eager to help with
pre and post interviews with the children’s teachers, preparing certain activities, assisting with transport and organising afternoon tea for the children’s group.

The clarity of roles was also very important. The two developers of the parkas model were clearly carrying the leadership role, whilst the student provided support to the leadership team within a learning context. In subsequent groups we have included up to two extra clinical staff, as a way of providing direct training in the parkas model, and found the roles have become more disparate. Too many leaders can both overwhelm participants and dilute the security the leadership team offers to them. Negotiating the tricky attachment issues that are generated within the participant-leader relationship are perhaps better managed with fewer leaders. Given these experiences the optimal number of leaders recommended would be three. However, we recommend four leaders for groups where there are more than eight children in the group, or one or more of the children experience significant behavioural problems.

The introduction of community leaders (see Section 5 – DjHS FVPP) has been an effective and most important co-leadership resource. A mother who had participated in a previous parkas group became a peer leader in the mothers’ group, offering a level of support and guidance to other mothers that affirmed and acknowledged their struggles in bringing about change in their relationships with their children. We have also had a male community leader co-lead two of the children’s groups.

Evaluation by participants

The children and mothers participating in the very first three parkas groups were given simple qualitative pre and post-questionnaires (see Appendix A). The children’s questionnaire focused on how they felt about family, school and self, and their thoughts about participating in parkas. The mother’s questionnaire focused on how they viewed the quality of their life, the quality of their relationship with their child, their child’s behaviour, and their level of understanding of the impact the family violence had on their child.

Where parent and child consent was given for contact with the child’s teacher, group leaders made contact pre- and post- parkas to gauge any changes in children at school. This involved an unstructured interview focusing on the child’s academic ability, their behaviour at school, and the quality of their peer relationships.

Approximately sixty children and mothers participated in these first few groups, and of those, only 15% did not complete the entire program. Contact was made with those who dropped out in an attempt to identify what had contributed to their withdrawal and if they required any further assistance. This contact showed that withdrawal was usually the result of a combination of factors, particularly significant family issues. Questionnaires completed by the participants completing the full program revealed that 85% found the group useful and the remaining 15% reported some disappointment. Negative feedback was usually associated with the format of the group or lack of improvement in their child’s behaviour.

More recently we have incorporated some quantitative measures to help evaluate the program. The instruments employed are the ‘Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaires’ (Goodman 1999) which include parent, teacher and self-report forms, chosen for their brevity and sensitivity to behavioural changes. However, if one wanted a more detailed assessment we would recommend the ‘Behavioral Assessment System for Children’ (BASC: Reynolds
and Kamphaus 1992). As these children have been exposed to traumatic events, their post-traumatic stress and related psychological symptomology could be assessed with the ‘Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children’ (TSCC: Briere 1996).

**Conclusions about the parkas model**

**Key elements of what we have learned in parkas**

- **Listening**
  - Hearing what the kids are telling us through non verbal representations
  - Behaviour
  - Re-enactment/play

- **Flexibility**
  - Creating material which is ‘child sensitive’
  - Their needs
  - Their likes
  - Their wants

- **Connecting**
  - Honouring the child’s connections
  - Recognise attachments
  - Group work for both parents
  - What are the parent’s attachment issues

- **Challenging**
  - Recognising the dynamics of Family Violence
  - Promoting alternative ways of interacting
  - Modeling positive behaviour
  - Overting abusive patterns or thinking
  (See ‘Cycle of Violence’ - FVPP Section 5)

**How we have learned it**

- **Experiential**
  - Empathically engaging and containing:
    - Group drives the process
    - Learning from one Group informs subsequent Groups
    - Building trust within the Leadership Team
    - The ‘dance’ of the therapists

- **Supervision**
  - Crucial to the work we do:
    - Ensure workers are available to do the above
    - Stay focused on aims and objectives
    - Assist in integrating theory with practice
    - Seeing and understanding beyond the obvious
**section two – the parkas program for mothers and kids**

Parkas has been an exciting initiative undertaken in a spirit of inter-agency collaboration and community participation. It has attracted support from a number of different services and the Parkas mothers and children’s model was recently adopted by Kids Safe From Violence – West (KSFV-West). This is a collective of some eight agencies in the Melbourne western metropolitan region formed specifically to provide services to children who have been subjected to family violence. KSFV-West is particularly interested in expanding the Parkas model to work with specific NESB communities, and adapting the model to cater for those children and parents who have experienced life as a refugee.

The Parkas model will continue to evolve as different agencies and personalities become involved in its delivery. Opportunities to create more interactive sessions for parents and children are an important area for future development. One suggestion we believe worthy of further investigation is for the mothers and children’s groups to come together prior to the final celebration. We have also considered developing a similar ongoing support group for Parkas kids to those that are currently being provided in the women’s and men’s component of the FVPP. This of course would require additional leadership resources from both agencies, but would be an invaluable future project aligning the allocation of time and resources committed to the children’s component of the FVPP to that of the women’s and men’s groups. This would further assist in working towards breaking the inter-generational cycle of violence.

Within the father’s group program, (see section 4 – Pilot Parkas program for dads and kids) we intend to develop a specific parenting module before inviting men to attend further Parkas programs. We are also very interested in video taping particular sessions. This would give us direct material with which to work when exploring father/child interactions within the men’s individual feedback sessions. It was also apparent that despite the age variation in the children, they would have benefited from some separate group time away from their fathers, similar to the opportunity provided in the mothers and children’s program.

The strength of this model has been its commitment to flexibility, and using as our compass for future work, the learnings we have gathered from the emotional lives and experiences of the children who have participated in Parkas. However, we are not prepared to be flexible in the few significant principles underpinning the Parkas program. These principles are:

- to ensure the psychological and physical safety and wellbeing of the children in our groups
- to allow the children to set the emotional pace of the material covered
- to honour the children’s attachments to others.
- to ensure a secure, integrated holding environment is provided through the leadership team’s involvement in all aspects of the Parkas program delivery.

As the leadership team, we honour the importance of this work through accessing high quality supervision and facilitate the sessions in a manner that ensures they are an experience of healing, safety and fun for all participants.
section three

parkas program session outlines
PROGRAM SESSION OUTLINES

A word before starting ...

Session outlines for the ten-week group program follow, but before you jump into them, please read and consider our advice.

What differentiates parkas from other existing groupwork models is that the same leadership team runs the mothers’ group and the children’s group. It is imperative that the same leadership team is involved in all aspects of the program delivery as this acts as the secure base that holds together and integrates the experience of all of the participants, both children and parents.

parkas has been run as a psychotherapeutic group, with process rather than content steering each group’s unique journey. The task of the group leaders is to build a positive and honest bridge between the children’s and mothers group, and to keep the group members safely on board. The focus has been on creating a safe and enjoyable space for both the children and mothers alike so they can discover their own paths of communication and healing within the program.

The following program session outlines provide the structure, activities, games and tools that we have found useful and are intended as a guide only. You will find all the games and activity sheets referred to in the session outlines in Appendix B. They represent the culmination of all of the activities used across the five parkas programs we have run to date. That is, they are chock-a-block, and if used as presented, would result in the exhaustion of both the participants and the leaders! Our advice is to cut and paste the activities identified to best fit with the particular members within each group, and to encourage the skills and ideas of the group leaders and participants to grow with the identity of each group. We do recommend that the specific objectives of each session guide the structure you develop, and that you let the needs of the children steer the course, combined with your reflections through supervision.
SESSION ONE ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Formation of emotional and psychological safety within the group.
★ Introduction of the participants to each other.
★ Explanation of the relationship between the children’s group and the mothers’ group.
★ Overview of the group program, the number of sessions, finishing dates, the final session is the only joint session, and so on. Introduce the notion that the mothers’ group will do some of the same games and activities that the kids do.

MATERIALS
Name tags, soft rubber balls, variety of small plastic animals (mix of wild, farm, domesticated), butchers paper, pencils and textacolours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, Strength Cards (these are cartoon like cards that identify particular strengths – see Reading List Section) and a large piece of paper for the ‘group picture’.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS
Before you proceed please make sure you have read the previous page, A word before starting ...

The assessment session has already provided a powerful foundation upon which the subsequent groupwork sessions will build. This is often the first occasion the child and mother have so openly, in the presence of the other, voiced their experiences of the violence that has occurred within their family. We have found that it is not necessary to constantly raise the issue of family violence as it is a theme that weaves its way throughout the content and processes the children themselves create within parkas.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: Name game using ball/balls (see Appendix B). Then pair up with another person, ask three things about them and introduce them to the group.
2. Chat about group members, for example, school, footy, family, oldest/youngest.
3. Help kids to develop their own set of ‘ground rules’ for the group - that make them feel safe both in and about the group. Write these rules on butchers paper and bring along each week so they can be put up as a reminder of what was agreed.
4. Game: Poison Ball (see Appendix B).
5. Game: Dead Fish (see Appendix B).

BREAK
6. Draw a picture of your family. Introduce your family to the others in the group and tell everyone what things each person you have drawn likes.
7. Animals (which is most like you, which is most like your mum).
8. Strength Cards (which card/s is most like you, like your mum).

**GROUP CLOSURE**

★ Begin children’s collective large group picture – get each person to leave a hand print, draw or write one thing that has been important for them about the group each week. This is an emerging group picture that everybody, including the leaders, contributes to each week. It is a way of marking the groups’ collective journey throughout the life of the program and also serves to bring closure to the session each week. Paralleling this activity, the mothers also create a group picture in their sessions, with both pictures being put on display at the final group session which is a joint session of the two groups.
SESSION ONE ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Formation of emotional and psychological safety within the group.
★ Introduction to each other and explanation of the relationship between the children’s group and the mothers’ group.
★ Overview of the group program, and introduce the notion that the mothers’ group will ‘mirror’ activities of the children’s group.
★ Establish the child-sensitive focus of the group through activities that encourage the mothers to see things from their child’s perspective.

MATERIALS
Name tags, soft rubber balls, variety of small plastic animals (mix of wild, farm, and domesticated), butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea, Strength Cards and a large piece of paper for the group picture.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Ask the mothers to introduce themselves and talk about their child attending the group.
2. Game: Name game using ball/balls.
3. Mothers talk about what they would like to get from the group, what they’d like their kids to get from the group.
4. Mothers develop their own set of ‘ground rules’ that would make them feel both safe in and about the group.
5. Activity: ‘Getting To Know You’ (same as children’s).
6. Draw a family picture, introduce the picture to the group, stating what things each person you have drawn likes.
7. Activity: Select the animal and Strength Card that best represents their child and best represents them.

BREAK
8. Provide feedback from the children’s group on their activities.
9. What animals children picked for themselves and picked for their mothers.
10. Show the mothers the pictures the children drew of their family, and state what they described about those people.
11. Allow time to discuss similarities and differences between their child’s picture/animal representations and what they had drawn or selected for themselves.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Begin mothers’ collective large group picture - leave a hand print, draw or write something that has been important to them about the group – see Session One ~ Kids.
SESSION TWO ~ KIDS

Specific Objectives

★ Begin to build connections between the group members.
★ Bring the material produced by the mums in Session One to the children’s group.
   Feedback to the children the comments each mother made about her work.
★ Introduce themes associated with living with family violence.

Materials

Name tags, soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, Strength Cards, activity sheet, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games and large group picture.

Notes For Group Leaders

Group Leaders need to attune themselves to the emerging dynamics and specific identity of this particular group. Begin to elicit which activities seem to work well – are the participants more sedentary, more active, more talking, less talking, prefer activity sheets, drawings and artwork, use of music - and which do not. It is helpful to place the ground rules developed in Session One up on the wall each week.

It is important to make a judgement about just how much of the feedback material from the mothers’ group is appropriate to provide to the children’s group, and whether this is best provided to the group as a whole or to children individually. This might be around material that is considered particularly sensitive, counter-therapeutic in its content, or simply not appropriate to the issues the children need to address.

The game ‘Dead Fish’ is very popular with the children and works particularly well if the group proves difficult to contain, and can be interspersed throughout the whole program. In one particular group we collected raffle tickets with the name of the winner of each game of dead fish to put in a box. During the celebration at the end of group we drew a ‘winner’ who received a voucher donated by the local ‘Pizza Hut’.

Warm Up and Check In

1. Game: Poison Ball.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check in about the week with each child.
3. Show children the family pictures their mothers drew the week before and allow for discussion.
4. Whiteboard or Butchers paper - generate a list of things that kids in the group think they may have in common with each other and encourage discussion about them.
5. Game: Duck, Duck, Goose.
**BREAK**

6. Activity sheet - for example. *Happiest dreams, scariest dreams* (see Appendix B).
7. Feedback to the children the *Strength Cards* and animal representations each mother selected for her self and what she selected for them.

**GROUP CLOSURE**

★ Add to the children’s collective large group picture started the week before.
SESSION TWO ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Encourage the formation of the group identity, and a sense of what experiences they share as parents who have lived with family violence.
★ Bring the material produced by children into the mothers’ group and facilitate a safe space to discuss and sit with the feelings generated by the work of the children.
★ Begin to explore the impact family violence has on children.

MATERIALS

Name tags, soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, activity sheet, morning tea and the group picture.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Briefly check with each mother on how the past week has been.
2. Discuss what may have been significant for the mothers from the first week.
3. Discuss how the mothers think their children have found their group so far.
4. Game: Duck, Duck, Goose - using chairs in a circle rather than sitting on floor.
5. Using a whiteboard or butchers paper, generate a list of what the mothers think they have in common with each other, and what things they think their children would describe as being in common with the other children.
6. Compare the list generated by the children and allow for discussion.

BREAK

7. Activity sheet: Happiest dream, scariest dream. Ask the mothers to imagine they are their child and complete the sheet.
8. Compare these drawings with their child’s drawing. Hand them out individually with the option for group discussion if they feel comfortable.
9. Explore ideas regarding what issues and experiences their children have faced in living with family violence.
10. Open up discussion about the experiences the mothers have of their own parenting.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Add to mothers’ collective large group picture started the week before.
SESSION THREE ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Group leaders facilitate the strengthening of the connections children are making with other members in the group, and their identification with the group itself.
★ Tease out perceptions of gender. Identify if their associated descriptions include how men and women express anger as well as the role it has in their relationships.
★ Assist children to select and identify with their own positive role models.

MATERIALS

Name tags, soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, Strength Cards, activity sheet, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games and the large group picture.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

Sub groups or dyads begin to emerge around this phase of the group with some tussling for the top spot. Given the family modeling the children have been exposed to, the group may well provide the perfect vehicle for re-enacting the dynamics that have played themselves out with a degree of repetition at home. When managing the impasses that are likely to re-emerge for these children, group leaders need to utilise considerable skill in creating humorous, emotionally containing and constructive alternatives in helping these children move safely through their anxiety about the growing emotional importance they may feel about the group.

It is important to ensure that the content generated by different activities is child-led, and that group leaders endeavour to resist imparting their own beliefs, attitudes and assumptions about gender, and expressions of anger. The children have at times experienced both men and women as angry, and men and women as inappropriately passive. Interpreting, or assisting children with their answers may inhibit them from sharing their own personal experiences. Similarly, it is wise to monitor the content and tempo of activities, and move onto other activities or games if the group becomes increasingly agitated or avoidant through material they may experience as distressing.

The intention of parkas is to emotionally hold children safely through the experience of the group, not to re-activate traumatic interactions where they are again left feeling traumatised and powerless.
WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Partners ball game.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check in with each child how their week has been.
3. Revisit Activity Sheet: Happiest Dreams, Scariest Dreams they filled in the week before and compare it with the sheet their mothers filled in about them.
4. Game: Octopus.
5. Explore definitions of gender, what words describe men and women, what things do they like?
6. What words describe boys and girls, what do they like?

BREAK

7. Game: Ship Ahoy!
8. Activity: Who are your Heroes - ask the children who they would like to grow up to be like and why.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Ask children to select a Strength Card that best describes another child in the group.
★ Add to children’s collective large group picture.
SESSION THREE ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Strengthen the connections between group members and their identification with the group as an activity in itself.
★ Tease out perceptions of gender, explored if their associated descriptions include how men and women express anger and the role anger has in relationships.
★ Assist the women to recognise the people they have positively identified with and the qualities they wish for in their children.

MATERIALS

Name tags, soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, Strength Cards, activity sheet, morning tea (which they can now probably contribute to) and the large group picture.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Partners ball game.
2. Briefly check with each mother how the past week has been.
3. Invite comments on how they think their child is finding the group.
4. Explore their definitions of gender and compare this with the definitions generated by the children. Encourage discussion around these things.
5. Identify what has shaped each mother’s perceptions around gender.
6. Identify from their experiences how men and women express anger and exert power and control. Also identify their ideas of how anger can be expressed in positive ways.

BREAK

7. Discussion: Who are the people in their lives who have acted as positive role models? Who were their heroes?
8. Guess which hero their child selected.
9. Who would they like their child to model themselves upon. What qualities do the mothers possess which they would like to pass onto their children.
10. Share the role models selected by their children and allow for discussion.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Select a Strength Card they would like for their child and for themselves.
★ Add to mothers’ collective large group picture.
SESSION FOUR ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Explore the children’s experience of anger, that of both others and of themselves.
★ Facilitate discussion about how children can safely express their anger and identify how they have protected themselves from the anger of other people.
★ Create a safe space for children to voice their feelings in relation to other people’s anger and their own.

MATERIALS

Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, and the group picture.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

We have found that the children are capable of giving quite graphic descriptions of both violence and angry responses, particularly when encouraged by the comments of their peers. They do, however, struggle to make sense of these experiences particularly when the violence has been perpetrated by somebody they love. A particularly powerful activity has been the introduction of Aggro Avenue. The children give visual representations of their experience of violence within the safety of the group and a collective story emerges.

It is important to respect the survival/defense mechanisms of the children and to restrain from imposing conflict resolution strategies onto the children. To do this may in fact place these children at greater risk in potentially volatile situations with their parents. Most children in the group will continue to have contact with the perpetrator (fortnightly, weekend contact, etc), and unless the perpetrator has undergone their own therapeutic work, they are unlikely to respect new behavioural strategies their child may have discovered in order to stand up more appropriately for their rights.

When undertaking activities such as Aggro Avenue that may directly tap into traumatic memories and experiences it is imperative that the children are not left emotionally vulnerable and in a state of arousal when they leave the group. The trauma needs to be honoured and acknowledged, with the children again setting the pace, and leaders allowing a safe space to talk, and walk through what they may be feeling. This involves being alert to the children’s feelings and listening to what they are telling you, rather than imposing what you think or feel they should be feeling.

As a facilitator it may be important to give voice to what they might be feeling when it is appropriate to do so, for example “That must have felt very frightening”, “I wonder if you felt like nobody cared about you”, and so on. Knowing when and
how to speak for children, and when and how not to, sometimes boils down to practice wisdom and experience. Returning to a space of safety means bringing the children back to the here and now, assisting them to safely engage with their own defense mechanisms and ending with an activity that is positive and fun.

Supervision, debriefing with the other facilitators, and critical self reflection helps in developing good therapeutic judgement around when it is helpful to give voice or meaning to something significant that happens for our clients within groupwork settings. Ensuring that any traumatic and painful issues that may arise for individuals, and/or the group, are respectfully attended to, assists the children to return to a level of safety and emotional functioning. This allows for that individual, and the entire group, to walk out of the session feeling they are able to adequately undertake whatever commitments and activities they have planned in their lives once the group is finished for the week.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Game: Treasure Chest.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check how each child’s week has been.
3. Feedback to the children the heroes the mothers identified for themselves and the hero they thought their child selected.
4. Inform the children which hero the mothers would like them to have and what qualities they possess that they would like to pass on to their child.
5. Game: Charades.
6. Activity: Aggro Avenue. Encourage the children to create their own Aggro Avenue and place themselves in it. This activity involves placing a large long stretch of butchers paper along one wall and asking the kid’s to draw what they think would make up an Aggro Avenue.

BREAK

7. How do you express anger? Have there been times when you have expressed anger in ways that were useful, and in ways that weren’t useful? Use the whiteboard and encourage discussion.
8. How does anger feel? Where do you feel it?
9. Using butchers paper draw an outline of a body and ask the children to identify where in the body their different feelings sit.
10. Game: Duck, Duck, Goose.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Add to children’s collective large group picture.
SESSION FOUR ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Explore how the mothers express their anger and the children’s perceptions of how anger is expressed by themselves and others.
★ Facilitate discussion about how the mothers can safely express their anger and the ways they have protected themselves, or others, successfully from the anger of others.
★ Explore how they think their children experience anger and identify the strategies the children have learnt to protect themselves.
★ Create a safe space for mothers to voice their feelings about anger directed towards them by other people, and their own anger in response to the anger of others.

MATERIALS

Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea and the group picture.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Game: Treasure Chest.
2. Ask each mother to identify two things for themselves and two things for their child that have been important about the group so far.
3. How do people express anger? Can you express anger in useful ways, and in ways that aren’t useful? Use the whiteboard and encourage discussion.
4. Show the mothers their children’s Aggro Avenue, and give them the opportunity to contribute and place themselves on Aggro Avenue. Discussion.

BREAK

5. How does anger feel? Where do you feel it?
6. Using the outline of a body on butchers paper ask the mothers to identify where different feelings sit in their body.
7. Compare the body outline drawn in the children’s group with that of the mothers.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Add to mothers’ collective large group picture.
SESSION FIVE ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Exploration of how children keep themselves safe and how they think adults have kept them safe in the past and can keep them safe in the present and in the future.

★ Encourage validation and normalisation of the children’s responses to anger through peer discussion about ‘how do you keep yourself safe?’.

MATERIALS

Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games and the group picture.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

The group is starting to move towards termination at this stage and it is necessary to begin preparing group members for closure. The very last session is a joint session; the only one in which the two groups come together. The introduction of a special activity for the final joint session should be raised during session five. We have experienced sessions four and five to be critical in holding the anxiety of group members about whether they really want to be part of the group and revisit issues they may now consider to be in and of the past. This is occurring simultaneously with the group moving towards ending.

It may be useful at this point for the facilitators to imagine that for some participants it is almost as though they are journeying across a lake. They are now almost to the middle where they can see both the place where they began their journey and the place they have yet to reach. Participants often experience ambivalence about returning to the place they already know, or moving forward to the other side of the lake, which is as yet, unknown. Our job as facilitators is to assist them to safely and constructively complete this particular therapeutic journey across to the other side.

During this phase mothers and/or children may fail to attend, for example people ring in sick or other appointments suddenly arise. To assist with this we will often telephone mothers and/or kids in advance to see how they are faring and to encourage their attendance at the next session. Given the subject matter of parkas the children in particular become quite anxious if other children are absent, fearing they may have come to some harm. As much as possible it is the task of group leaders to both verbally and emotionally hold and contain the children’s anxieties and fantasies. If you have been forewarned by the parent about their own or their child’s non-attendance it is critical to inform the rest of the group about these planned absences.

Follow up for a parent or child who chooses not to return is important so that facilitators can provide feedback that their decision has been respected. If it is the case that the group program was not the most helpful support for them at this
time the facilitator can offer them assistance to find another more appropriate means of support. It is also an opportunity to say goodbye – for both members and leaders.

**WARM UP AND CHECK IN**

1. Game: *Footy Frenzy*.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check how the week has been for each child.
3. Bring in *Aggro Avenue* and give children the opportunity to look at the contributions of their mothers.
4. Discuss with the children how the mothers thought their children expressed anger. Look at the outline of the body image that the children produced and the body image the mothers produced.
5. Game: *Ship Ahoy*.

**BREAK**

6. Using butchers paper or the whiteboard create a list of things the kids think they can do to keep themselves safe.
7. Develop a list of things adults can do to keep kids safe.
9. Brainstorm ideas with the children about a special end of group activity to show their mothers at the final session’s joint group party.

**GROUP CLOSURE**

★ Add to the children’s collective large group picture.
SESSION FIVE ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Facilitate an awareness of the survival-protective mechanisms both the children and mothers have developed.
★ Facilitate discussion of children’s rights to safety and how and what parents can do realistically in situations where children still have contact with the perpetrator.
★ How do we respect/facilitate/support the attachments of the child whilst keeping them safe.
★ Encourage validation and normalisation of the mother’s responses to anger through peer discussion about ‘how do you keep yourself safe?’

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea and the group picture.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Game: Charades.
2. Identify one significant interaction (positive or negative) that has taken place between yourself and your child during the past week.
3. Discuss the Continuum of Anger, that is, the range of emotional responses that can reflect anger – sadness, withdrawn, belligerent, from passive to aggressive, and so on.
4. Discussion: How do you keep yourself safe? Who makes you feel safe? How do you keep your kids safe?
5. Feedback the suggestions the children produced about how adults can keep children safe.
6. Develop a list of things adults can do to keep children safe.
7. Activity Sheet: Wishes. Get the mothers to complete for themselves and then share the results from the children’s. Allow for discussion.

BREAK

8. Brainstorm ideas for mothers to design a special end of group activity to show their children at our final session joint group party.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Continue work on the collective large group picture.
SESSION SIX ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ To identify the cycle of anger.
★ To identify what are the triggers to make us angry.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg., CD player, video camera etc.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS

This session recognises not only behaviours of others that are abusive but also ways in which we may well abuse ourselves or be abusive of ourselves.

It explores the triggers that leave group members feeling vulnerable and powerless and what activities and behaviours people engage in to make them feel better and/or back in control.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: 'What's the time Mr/Mrs Wolf'.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check with each child how the week has been.
3. Discussion: How I feel about coming to Parkas?
4. Discussion and activity: What different feelings are there? This is to broaden children's familiarity with the range of different emotional responses (see post it notes – to assist kids in picking out what feelings might apply to them and/or posting in a box the top 3 things they feel the most).
5. Select any additional Activity Sheet leaders think is appropriate for this time.

BREAK
6. Game: Hangman or Celebrity Heads (the name of a celebrity is stuck above head, three kids up front, take turns to guess who they are through ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers from rest of the kids. If the question asked gets a ‘yes’ the child gets to ask another question. Whoever guesses the correct Celebrity Head first wins).
7. Ask the children to create a list of the ways in which they think adults do not ‘take care’ of themselves (the adult) or of children.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Add to children’s collective large group picture.
SESSION SIX ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ To explore the breadth and depth of emotions we experience as human beings and the behaviours stemming from our feeling states.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg., CD player, video camera etc.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: *Hangman*.
2. Feedback from the children’s group discussion regarding ‘How do I feel about coming to parkas’. How do you think your kids feel about coming to parkas?
3. Discuss the range of different feelings and how you behave when you feel them, for example, ‘when I feel sad I … go for a walk, cry, drink’ … and so on.
4. Activity: Simply choose one of the activity sheets not used thus far and complete it imagining you are your child.

BREAK

5. In what ways do we not take care of ourselves; in what self-abusive behaviours do we engage? Feedback from the children’s group about the ways in which they think adults do not ‘take care’ of themselves?
6. Generate discussion around how mothers think their children lack self care and self-esteem?

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Add to mothers’ large group picture.
SESSION SEVEN ~ KIDS

**Specific Objectives**

- To identify the resources and strengths of the children.
- To facilitate a shared experience for the children’s group through creating and contributing to a team activity.
- To assist and encourage the children in working together as a group.

**Materials**

Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg., CD player, video camera etc.

**Notes For Group Leaders**

The final themes covered in parkas focus on the strength and resilience of both the children and mothers. The children's group activity provides them with a vehicle through which they can symbolically re-enact the issues generated within these sessions and endeavour to access a healthy and respectful resolution of these issues.

The last two sessions require significant levels of energy by the team leaders in supporting the children and the mothers to organise an activity to present to each other at the week ten joint farewell session. This involves assisting both the children and mothers to create their own 'show piece', for example a song, a dance or a play. This will also include gathering props for the performance and a rehearsal.

In our experience this group activity, for the children in particular, tends to replicate both the content covered thus far, and the dynamics modeled within their interactions with each other and the group leaders.

**Warm Up and Check In**

1. Game: Scarecrow Tiggy.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check in with each child how the week has been.
5. Game: Celebrity Heads.

**Break**

6. Design and rehearse the children's ideas for the end of group activity.

**Group Closure**

- Add to children’s large group picture.
SESSION SEVEN ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ To identify the resources and strengths of the mothers.
★ To facilitate a shared experience for the group through creating and contributing as a team activity.
★ To assist and encourage the mothers to work together as a group.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg. CD player, video camera, etc.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: Celebrity Heads.
2. Exercise: List two things your child has done well in the last week.
3. Exercise: What do I do well? Ask the mothers to create a list of the things they do well.
4. Activity Sheet: Stars – complete as though they were their kids.
5. Feedback the Stars Activity Sheet completed by the children’s group.

BREAK
6. Design and rehearse the mothers’ ideas for the end of group activity.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Add to mothers’ collective large group picture.
SESSION EIGHT ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Create a holding structure that enables the children to create their own stories via the group activity whilst recognising that they may struggle with a sense of loss about moving towards the final stages of the group program.
★ Assist the children to access their own ideas and confidence in creating their shared story.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg., CD player, video camera etc.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS
The main focus of this session for the children is to begin winding down and adjusting to the impending closure of the program. The mothers are encouraged to consider broader contextual and inter-generational issues relating to family violence. Implicit is the challenge to end the cycle of violence within their children’s generation.

We have found that the mothers may, more so than the children, encounter some awkwardness in their preparations for their final group activity. The group leaders can assist the mothers to stay on track and sit with possible feelings of embarrassment and discomfort, in coming together to play. Having fun and enjoying one’s playfulness is one of the first things lost in the context of family violence. This activity also creates a special space to enjoy the intimacy of the group and is a very important tribute to offer their children in the final session.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: Musical Chairs.
2. Sit in a circle and briefly check with each child to see how the week has been.
3. Exercise: parkas Sentence Completion Sheet.
4. Game: Poison Ball.

BREAK
5. Feedback from mothers’ group on their Activity Sheet: Stars - what the mothers thought their children were good at.
6. Continue work for the final group activity.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Add to the children’s large group picture.
SESSION EIGHT ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

★ Maintain energy levels around the mothers’ contribution to creating a shared group activity.
★ Facilitate a discussion about inter-generational family violence and broader contextual considerations.
★ Encourage the mothers to embrace the strengths and resources they want to pass down to their children.

MATERIALS

Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, morning tea, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg., CD player, video camera etc.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN

1. Game: Musical Chairs.
2. Exercise: Identify two things they consider they have done really well in the past week.
3. Exercise: parkas Sentence Completion Sheet fill in as though they were the children.
4. Feedback from the children’s group on the content of their Activity Sheet.

BREAK

6. Exercise: How do you want your children to learn these things? Generate a list.
7. Continue work for the final group activity.

GROUP CLOSURE

★ Add to the mothers’ collective large group picture.
SESSION NINE ~ KIDS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Dress rehearsal for the children’s group activity.
★ Provide space for the children to acknowledge the importance of the group and of each other whilst maintaining the excitement and anticipation surrounding the final weeks farewell celebration.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, Strength Cards, drinks and snacks for the break, lollies for games, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg. CD player, video camera etc.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS
Week nine is the last time the children and mothers will meet as separate groups. It is important to provide some time for members to acknowledge this ending as the energy put into the final preparations for the joint session can overshadow the importance of creating some time for closure.

Some structured activities like the Sentence Completion Sheet, Pass the Parcel (with inserted notes, for example, “to the person with the longest hair”, or “my best time ever was”) can help to create a quiet center in which to connect with one another. However, if the tempo of the group does not permit this, the final Strength Card activity becomes important. It is a safe way for the children and mothers to acknowledge the importance of each other.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: Sharks and Islands.
2. Sit in a circle and ask each child to identify what has been the best and the worst thing for them about the parkas Program.
3. Game: Pass the parcel.
4. Feedback from the parkas Sentence Completion Sheets from the mothers’ group.

BREAK
5. Final dress rehearsal.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Sit in a circle and pick a Strength Card for each member of the group.
★ Complete the collective group picture to be shown at final joint session.
SESSION NINE ~ MOTHERS

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Dress rehearsal of the mothers’ group activity.
★ Provide space for the mothers to acknowledge the importance of the group both for their children and for each other, whilst maintaining the excitement and anticipation surrounding the final weeks joint party and farewell.

MATERIALS
Soft rubber balls, ground rules, butchers paper, pencils and texta colours, Strength Cards, morning tea, continue large group picture and any materials for the final group activity eg. CD player, video camera etc.

WARM UP AND CHECK IN
1. Game: Pass the parcel.
2. Ask the mothers to identify what has been the best and the worst thing for their kids about being in the parkas program.
3. Discussion about ‘self care’. What things do you do to take care of yourself and to take care of your children?

BREAK
4. Final dress rehearsal for the next week.
5. Housekeeping preparations for the farewell session, food and beverages for party.

GROUP CLOSURE
★ Mothers pick a Strength Card for each member of the group.
★ Finish the mothers’ collective large group picture.

60 parkas – parents accepting responsibility kids are safe
SESSION TEN ~

JOINT FAREWELL SESSION AND PARTY

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES
★ Create a sense of occasion that honours the importance of the relationships and shared experiences within the group.
★ Symbolic re-connection of the mothers with the children through the shared activities and presentations.

MATERIALS
Award Certificates for each child and mother – (see Appendix A), camera, video camera – (if consent given), some food and beverages from the agency, materials necessary for both final group activities – ie. CD player, CD’s, video recorder, props, etc.

NOTES FOR GROUP LEADERS
The final combined group operates both as a closure ceremony and a journey back from the separateness of the mothers and children’s groups to the mother-child dyad. This is achieved through the kids having between an hour to an hour and a half for their final dress rehearsal and room set up, before the mothers arrive. One group decided to quickly make tickets for their mums before they were allowed in. The children have traditionally presented their performance first to their mothers as the audience. This is then reversed with the children observing the mothers’ performance. As well as the performances of each group, the final session marked the unveiling of the collective art work created by both groups during the course of the group work program.

The next phase engages the mother and child dyad. Through the presentation of certificates to the mothers and children, with all the pomp and ceremony we can muster, an official photo of mother and child is taken for them to keep as a memento of their time in parkas. All participants are provided an opportunity to make a speech, but not everyone takes up this offer. At different times mother and kids have chosen to address the group. The nurturing ritual of sharing a meal together is followed by the final farewells.
We have recorded these occasions on video for some groups who have then taken responsibility for getting copies made for each participant. If you are planning to hold a reunion (see Appendix A) handing out the invitations at this final session is recommended, or at the very least, providing information about the timing of this event.

We suggest that the format for the final joint farewell session is planned around the individual needs of each group. The key is finding the appropriate fit for your group within the resources you have at your disposal. We do strongly recommend that you provide a memento, for example, a Certificate, of the occasion.

*Use your initiative, be creative, but above all have fun and celebrate!!*
Two Week Follow Up –
Individual Mother Feedback Sessions

This has been an important forum for both the mothers and the group leaders. The two week follow up sessions have been organised as an individual feedback and review session with the mother to discuss their child’s behaviour and progress in the group program. Leaders provide recommendations for the participants, for example, ongoing individual or family work.

We also value the feedback from the mothers about their individual experience of the group and ask for specific ideas about what could be improved, and which activities would benefit from more or less time. Additionally, we explore their assessment of their own participation within the group, the strengths apparent to us in their relationship with their child, and what strengths they may identify in themselves and their child. This again adds to the sense of closure of the group program and brings the focus back to the mother/child dyad. An important element of the review is receiving their feedback. This is also the time to attend to any unfinished business in relation to group dynamics which require addressing.

Reunion

The energy and excitement that abounds during the final joint session often precludes the opportunity for participants to say goodbye fully. The reunion, which we have held approximately two months after completion of the program, has a much slower pace and allows, albeit sometimes reluctantly, the recognition that parkas has finished and provides a chance to say goodbye and finish up. This is amidst the inevitable catch-up and enjoyment of the day. Thus far, the events we have arranged for the reunion have generally taken up most of the day, with the added incentive of missing a day of school for the children.

Flexibility exists about who attends the reunion. In some group programs, it has been very clear that the children need their own space, while for others, the children have been very vocal in wanting their mothers to participate. Another important factor to consider is the level of cohesion in the mothers’ group. One particular mothers’ group we ran proved particularly difficult for the leaders to hold together, leading us to assess that it may have been counter-therapeutic to involve the mothers in that reunion. Essentially, we were more confident of the children’s attendance than their mother’s.

The reunions to date have occurred in a place away from the venue where the groups were held, and have introduced the children to a completely new activity. Our most popular activity involved employing a sessional music therapist who brought along a range of very cool instruments for participants to play, including drums and electric guitars. The children produced a ‘demo tape’ of their mornings work, which provided a special memento for them to take home. The ‘jamming session’ was followed by a lunch stop at McDonalds and then an opportunity for final farewells.

As the reunion occurs approximately two months after the final group session we have been able to see how the children have fared. We have often been pleasantly surprised at the internal shifts made by many of the kids as they have voluntarily shared details of their lives, for example, that they have not been in trouble at school or that they talk to their mums more.
section four

pilot parkas program for dads and kids
section four – pilot parkas program for dads and kids

PILOT PARKAS PROGRAM FOR DADS AND KIDS

Background

In mid 1999 we piloted our first parkas group for fathers and children, and at the time of printing this is the only fathers' and children's group we have run.

The pilot program was initiated and developed in response to requests made by clients within the men's component of the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) at DjHS (see section 5) for assistance in learning how to appropriately 'parent'. The aim was to facilitate a shared, enjoyable and safe interactive experience between the fathers and their child/ren. The primary focus was on the father/child relationship and providing an opportunity for these men to experience 'being' with their children. Within the mothers group the emphasis is on both building/rebuilding healthy connections between them and their children, and using peer affirmation to assist in the healing process. Within the fathers group, our assumption was that these men, who had been perpetrators of violence within the family, had at best fragile and/or ambivalent attachments with their children. Upon reflection, we have perhaps made some misguided assumptions about the quality of the attachments of the children with the mothers and think that our learnings from the dads group could have some useful applications in the mothers program.

These assumptions, however, led to thinking differently about the configuration of the children's component of the group. Rather than focusing on a developmentally peer appropriate climate for the children, we zeroed in on the father/child dyad as our pivotal point for group dynamics. The activities within the group included art, music and activity based therapy, with four children, aged between four and thirteen, participating. The intent was to creatively and gently introduce these fathers to an experience of learning to 'be with', 'listen to' and 'recognise and tolerate' their children's need to play. The activities encouraged the father and child/ren to create things together, rather than on the group necessarily forming as a whole. Also built into the program were opportunities to give direct feedback to the fathers on their interactions with their child/ren.

The men involved in this group were three fathers who had almost completed the men's component of the FVPP, who were invited to attend the seven week dads and kids group. We had a smaller pool of clients (ie. men attending the DjHS FVPP treatment groups to address their violence) from which to draw referrals, as distinct from the mothers group (ie. where referrals were taken from a number of different sources). Furthermore, only a small number of men currently attending the FVPP were identified as potentially suitable referrals for the group. Their suitability was determined by the progress they had made within the men's component of the FVPP, their capacity to acknowledge the impact of their violent behaviour on their children, and their level of commitment to change in relation to their parenting role.

As the groupwork content was primarily designed to create opportunities for the children and fathers to bond, over and above activities that would bond the children together, we were surprised at how connected the children became with each other. What made this most surprising was that the ages ranged from a four-year-old female up to a thirteen-year-old male. Once again the children were our teachers. They enjoyed each others company immensely and interacted along the lines of a pseudo-sibling group, adopting specific roles in relation to one another. The thirteen year old was quite protective of the two youngest
section four – pilot p a r k a s  program for dads and kids

children (siblings aged four and six) and also good humoured and patient with a somewhat precocious eleven year old female in the group.

Aims and objectives

- To facilitate a shared, enjoyable and safe interactive experience between the father and child/ren.
- To introduce fathers to an experience of learning to be with their child.
- To provide fathers with an experiential opportunity to empathically engage with their child.
- To facilitate each father’s ability to listen to their child’s needs over their own.
- To provide an opportunity for the father to learn to recognise and tolerate their child’s need to play.
- To provide a safe, contained environment for father and child to experiment with intimacy and play.

Assessment procedure

The fathers involved in the program were selected by one of the group leaders who had also been involved in running the Men’s Treatment Program of the FVPP. As this was our first father-child group, we were careful to invite only the involvement of men who had demonstrated significant progress in their work to date. We held formal assessment interviews, as we did with the mothers group, to gauge their capacity to sit with, and demonstrate some insight into, the needs of their children. We also required the support of the children’s mothers for the kids to attend the group.

Involving both the children and fathers in the interview process provided a very clear message to the fathers of our commitment to privileging the experience and reality of the child over that of the father. It also gave us a first hand opportunity to see how comfortable, or uncomfortable, the children felt in the presence of their father.

Assessment interviews were conducted for four father-child dyads. Three of the fathers presented as committed to improving their relationship with their children, while the fourth father demonstrated little insight into his child’s needs and appeared punitive in his interactions with him during the interview. This father subsequently decided he had little need for p a r k a s  as he believed he already had a very good relationship with his child and in fact dropped out of the FVPP altogether not long after the assessment interview. As many of these men are voluntary participants in the FVPP, leaders are powerless to proceed with any further interventions unless any reportable offence/s come to their attention.

Leadership team

The leadership team within this pilot program varied considerably from previous p a r k a s  groups. The two clinical staff who had developed the p a r k a s  model were joined by a male community leader who had previously assisted in running the children’s side of the mothers and children’s groups. A qualified music therapist joined the leadership team in week three and week six to facilitate the activities undertaken during these two sessions. In week four and week five, two art teachers from the Travancore School (a specialist school that
provides educational services to Royal Children’s Hospital Mental Health Service - MHSKY clients), joined the leadership team. As a complete leadership team, we met on two occasions outside of the group sessions, first to plan, and then to review, the work we had undertaken. This was invaluable in terms of sharing ideas and observations from varying perspectives and learning from one another.

Overview of the program for dads and kids
The dads and kids pilot program was a seven-week program organised in the format that appears below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week one</th>
<th>Assessment Undertaken (same procedure as for mothers’ group)</th>
<th>Including:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45-60 minutes each</td>
<td>• Contracts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Program Overview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week two</td>
<td>Dads Group</td>
<td>Including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Approx 1½ hours</td>
<td>• Share History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Violent incidents child has been exposed to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weeks three – six</td>
<td>Dads and Kids Group</td>
<td>Including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2 hours – experiential</td>
<td>• Music Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Incorporation of individual feedback throughout sessions</td>
<td>• Art Therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Farewell Session</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week seven</td>
<td>Group feedback and debriefing for Dads.</td>
<td>Including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1½ - 2 hours</td>
<td>• Questionnaires</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Where to from here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Structure and content
The program involved seven evening sessions held on the same weeknight as that of the men’s treatment and support groups, but in a different part of the building.

Week one – assessment

On the first night we assessed each of the four fathers with their child or children present for the interview. We used the same assessment format as that used for the mothers assessment session. One of the fathers interviewed did not proceed into the group. The remaining three fathers and four children were offered, and accepted, places within the program. As the focus was on connection between the children and their fathers, we felt comfortable including two siblings into the program.
Week two – fathers group

The fathers met as a group for this session without their children. The purpose of this was to gather a shared history from the fathers about the extent and length of time these men had subjected their children to violence. It was also perhaps, at a subconscious level, a second chance for us as leaders to assess the appropriateness of our selection of these men, and to see how they interacted as a group, before joining with the children. All three men revealed that their children had been exposed to their violent behaviour prior to and/or from the day of their birth, up until 18 months ago when they began attending the FVPP.

Using a whiteboard, we mapped out the range of violent incidents and violent relationships to which their children had been subjected and exposed. We compared this to their own experiences of being parented and explored what sort of fathers they saw themselves as now, and in the future. We then explored the impact of violence on children's emotional, physical and neurological development. The importance of committing to the whole program was emphasized, and we concluded the session with the men filling out questionnaires relating to their parenting styles and their child/ren’s behaviour.

Week three – fathers and kids group session i

This was the first of our three joint group sessions for fathers and children. We employed a music therapist who had previously assisted us in running our parkas reunions. This provided the group with a wonderful joining activity, involving a range of musical instruments, which impressed both the children and fathers. The session began with introductions, a name game and revisiting, as a group, the purpose of the program. We then launched into an instrumental foray that by the end of the session actually sounded like music. This was recorded for further use in our final joint session when the music therapist made a second appearance. All group members were given the task to bring in a CD or tape of their favourite song for the next music session in week six.

The joint group provided the leadership team with an opportunity to see first hand how these fathers interacted with their children. The learnings gained during this session prompted us to make individual feedback times with the fathers the following week to discuss our observations. Initially we had planned to provide feedback to the fathers at the completion of the whole program, rather than during or after each session. However, the musical activities highlighted just how difficult these men found it to work alongside their children without taking over. It also demonstrated to the leadership team just how quickly these men could lose sight of their children’s needs as they became consumed by their own, demonstrated by the speed with which they became engrossed in playing on the drums or electric guitar themselves.

Week four – fathers and kids group session ii

This was the first of two sessions utilising art as the main therapeutic medium. We were fortunate to have two art teachers to assist in actively focusing on the father and child/children creating something together. We also had a variety of art materials to select from which assisted in creating activities that were appropriate to the spread of ages in the group.
As we had five members in the leadership team at this point the two clinical staff were able to take each father out of the group for about twenty minutes to provide individual feedback. We discussed their reflections on the previous week and shared our own observations. We were very specific in our feedback and suggested alternative ways of interacting with their child/children. This proved to be immensely powerful for the fathers as it gave the men something concrete to work with immediately upon their return to the group.

**Week five – fathers and kids group session iii**

The second week with the art teachers involved continuing with the activities not completed the week before. We saw a notable shift in the connection building between the children as their comfort with one another increased. By the end of this session the group had almost divided into two groups – children and fathers. The children, tiring of their artwork, left their ceramic pieces for their dad to finish, and began madly tearing around the room playing chasey. This was a fascinating experience for us as leaders as we watched the fathers become quite intent on their own play, something we suspect they had had little experience in doing.

It became apparent at the time, and even more so upon reflection within supervision, that the men were very much in a comfortable space, feeling quite ‘held’ by the leadership team. At the same time they were looking to the leadership team for guidance in relation to how they should respond to their children. As one of the men noted in our very last feedback session, “I was initially very worried that I should be telling him off for mucking around when he should have been finishing his plate. But you guys seemed pretty relaxed about the kids mucking around so I just relaxed too.”

**Session six – fathers and kids group session iv**

With the music therapist making a second appearance, the kids and fathers brought along their favourite song on CD or tape, as requested in week three. The session began with an appreciation of everyone’s individual tastes, and ended with us joining together to produce our very own group song. Each person was given the opportunity to play their favourite song and to talk about why they had chosen it. This activity created a more personal atmosphere between group members, and gave the group leaders an invaluable insight into individual group members. Perhaps more telling than the reasons participants provided as to why they selected a certain song, were what the words of the song told us as group leaders about each individual and their value systems.

The music therapist, not having seen group members for three weeks, noted a significant positive shift in two of the fathers’ interactions with their children. The third father, whilst a little more relaxed, still struggled with listening to, and allowing his child to contribute to creating the pace set in their relationship. The session culminated with cutting a demo tape of the groups music for the participants to take home. We then celebrated our final joint session with a special supper and let the kids know that we would be contacting them in the next two months to arrange a group reunion.

**Week seven – group feedback and debriefing for dads**

The final session involved only the men. We discussed their experience of the group, what they had learnt about themselves and what they had learnt about their children. We gave
them feedback about our observations and asked for feedback about the program - what they would keep the same and what they would change. The men were very enthusiastic about their involvement in this pilot program and keen to participate in any further groups if possible. The men then filled out a post-group questionnaire and were asked to pass on questionnaires to the children’s teachers requesting information about any noticeable changes in the children’s behaviour since attending parkas.

**Reunion**

While the reunion took place during the same timeslot, a weekday evening, the venue was an old converted tram at the local McDonalds, which we had booked out for two hours. On top of the kids and fathers excitement of DjHS shouting everyone a meal, we enjoyed a number of pass the parcel games which included prizes and a fun sentence to complete with the removal of each layer of newspaper. This finished with a presentation of parkas certificates to each member of the group and the opportunity to make a farewell speech.

The reunion occurred approximately two months after the last program session. This gave the leaders an opportunity to see what, if any, sustainable improvements had occurred in the relationship between the children and their fathers. Marked differences were evident in the relationship between two of the fathers and their children; they enjoyed more relaxed and intimate relationships. However, in the case of the third father, it appeared little change had occurred.

**Evaluation of pilot program for dads and kids**

As group facilitators, we noted substantial positive shifts in two of the men through the course of the pilot program. This was substantiated through the feedback sessions with the children’s mothers, organised as part of their continued involvement in the FVPP men’s program. Two of the partners contacted reported improved relationships between the men and the child/ren. These two men were also invited to join the community leadership team with DjHS some eight months after they had completed parkas.

The third father did not respond so positively, and subsequent to the cessation of parkas eventually dropped out of the FVPP altogether. However, prior to his departure staff had an opportunity within individual sessions to challenge some of the concerns noted during the parkas fathers group.

Overall, our evaluation questionnaires demonstrated positive attitudinal shifts in the children’s behaviour and the fathers parenting styles. As with the mothers parkas group program evaluation, we utilised the ‘Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire’ for the fathers, but this time we also employed a modified questionnaire exploring parenting styles. An unexpected hitch was the reluctance of the children’s teachers to fill in questionnaires. As none of the children at the time were residing with their fathers, the schools were not comfortable in releasing any information to these men. In the future we would need to do more preparatory work with the schools and perhaps enlist the assistance of the children’s mothers with this process, and/or the leaders themselves making contact with the schools.

The interactive nature of this pilot program proved to be particularly enlightening for the leadership team, prompting us to explore its application to the mothers and children’s program. Equally, opportunities to more fully integrate parkas into the men’s and women’s
modules of the overall FVPP is seen as the next step in the evolution of parkas. Whilst this project in still very much in its infancy, it has been useful to dip our toes in the water. Despite the cessation of violence, many of these children continue to experience fragmented relationships with their parents.
section five

djerriwarrh health services - family violence prevention program
DJERRIWARRH HEALTH SERVICES
FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM (FVPP)

Philosophy guiding our work

In order to fully gain an understanding of the development of the parkas program it is useful to understand the context within which the children's component of the Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) sits. The DjHS Family Violence Prevention Program (FVPP) model has been largely informed by structural/feminist thinking and is guided by principles that recognise that fundamental inequalities exist within all strata of society with respect to class, gender, race/ethnicity. Identifications around sexual preference, spiritual and/or cultural practices and disabilities further delineate these three areas of social classification. These inequalities invariably contribute to the nature and incidence of family violence.

In conjunction with the over-arching feminist/structural philosophies of the program and a baseline commitment to the cessation of family violence in all its forms, the FVPP incorporates a commitment to embracing community development principles. This occurs through the representation and participation of service users and residents at every level of program development. Adult learning models are utilised, self-directed treatment goals are promoted, and linkages are made with and through agencies in the target communities as a way of promoting an integrated model of working with all family members affected by family violence.

In addition to this underlying philosophy, has been the development of our own emerging practice wisdom, resulting from over ten years of working with adults, and more recently children, affected by the trauma of family violence. This developing theory, grounded within our practice, involves an understanding that each individual family member living with violence can exist in an inter-dependent dynamic where all members can move between three roles: that of perpetrator, victim and rescuer, see diagram below. It is this dynamic that gives rise to inter-generational cycles of violence. We understand that as part of this dynamic, each one of us is capable of engaging in abusive behaviour and this reality must be confronted and dealt with in order to break the cycle.
The challenge for workers, when working with families and individuals where this dynamic is apparent, is to provide a therapeutic, safe space through which individuals and/or families can develop an ‘alternative’ cycle of inter-relationships. This therapeutic space requires setting appropriate boundaries, creating clear rules around safety, challenging abusive patterns and behaviours, and promoting positive change, as depicted in Diagram 1. Workers themselves are at times vulnerable to playing out these dynamics of rescuer, perpetrator and victim. It is therefore imperative that workers create accountable work practices with their colleagues and access regular supervision where they can review and reflect on their own work practice issues.

**How the FVPP works**

The DjHS FVPP comprises three main groupwork components: the men’s, women’s and children’s (parkas) programs, as well as a peer education/peer support component, known as our community leadership program.

Each component has created unique community linkages with other organisations that best complement the work undertaken in that area. These linkages fill in the gaps, offer mutually beneficial partnerships, and provide a range of differing services to the FVPP, including such things as childcare, transport, group materials, co-facilitators for groups, and venues. One such partnership, for example, involved the Shire of Melton which provided all of the above for one part of the women’s group component.

parkas is an example of a comprehensive collaboration between two primary organisations, from inception through to its planning and implementation. This process included a literature search, visits to agencies currently operating children’s groups, the development of the parkas model, its implementation, evaluation and refinement.
Men’s and women’s group components

Men are most commonly ‘referred’ to DjHS by other agencies, such as the Department of Human Services - Child Protection Unit, Correctional Enterprise (CORE), or by individuals, most notably their partners. From the outset we make clear the understanding to those men referred into the men’s program, that they are coming to the agency because they have an issue with their abusive behaviour. As an acknowledgment of this understanding we insist that the man referred must make contact themselves with the agency before an assessment appointment is made.

Women are generally self-referred or referred by other agencies, most notably general practitioners, the Department of Human Services - Child Protection Unit, and Domestic Violence Outreach Services. DjHS will initiate contact with a woman if there are difficulties with either having Family Court Contact Orders honoured or ex-partners failing to abide by Orders, or safety issues that may prevent her from making contact. Whilst some women identify family violence as the reason for contacting the agency, it is not uncommon in a general intake assessment interview at DjHS for some women to describe relationship difficulties which some workers would define as abusive in nature, while the client themselves may not. If it is apparent to the assessment worker that issues of family violence are present, these will be clearly named by the counsellor, who then presents to the client a range of options for discussion. The counsellor works with the client to decide how she may wish to proceed at this point.

Of paramount concern in contact with FVPP clients is the issue of safety for both clients and workers. From the outset it is made very clear to the client that the agency can offer only limited confidentiality during the program. This means that if at any stage of their involvement in the program it is the assessment of workers that clients are engaged in behaviours that pose a risk to themselves or others workers may notify a mandated or emergency response service. These services include child protection, the police, or a mental health crisis response team. Behaviours of risk include but are not limited to, drink-driving with children in the car, leaving children unattended, stalking or harassing a partner and delusional presentation.

Men and women are informed about the condition of limited confidentiality prior to an assessment commencing. Once assessed and accepted into the program, men and women participate in regular reviews of their progress. They can choose to exit at any time. Re-entry into the program is always through the individual assessment procedure.

The group components in both parts of the program involve a variety of group structures and content, including time limited group modules and on-going group modules. Some are primarily focussed on information and education, others are more psycho-therapeutic in their focus.
Flowchart 2: DjHS – FVPP Participation Pathway

SELF REFERRAL
Also may be referred by other agencies
e.g. G.P. Housing, Correctional Enterprise, Protective Services,
DV Outreach, Local Govt., Women’s Services

BUT
Man must contact himself

SELF REFERRAL

INDIVIDUAL ASSESSMENT

EXIT

NOT ACCEPTED
into program

May be referred
to D & A

Engages in D & A
counselling

ACCEPTED
into program

Re-assessment
may be recommended

Presented at MEN’S LEADERSHIP

Partner contact
made by DjHS Staff

Periodic partner
contact review

COMMENCES GROUP WORK PROGRAM

PERIODIC INDIVIDUAL REVIEW

WOMAN / MAN IS INVITED
AND/OR REQUESTS ENTRY INTO

Dad/Kids Group Assessment

ATTEND PARKAS GROUP

Mum/Kids Group Assessment

Presented at WOMEN’S LEADERSHIP

Re-assessment
may be recommended

Woman will be contacted by DjHS
where there are access or safety issues
precluding her contacting DjHS herself
**Community leadership**

Community Leaders in the FVPP are men and women who have been participants in the men's and women's group programs. These are men and women who participated in FVPP and have demonstrated their commitment to addressing the issue of family violence and have also been assessed by counselling staff as having effectively addressed and attended to the affect of family violence in their lives. Peer education and peer support is pivotal to the success of the FVPP. Men who become community leaders *must* have completed at least twelve months of the men's program and have demonstrated they have lived free of perpetrating behaviour for at least twelve months (one way of substantiating this is through partner contact). Women who become community leaders must have completed the time-limited components of the program and lived free of the abusive relationship for at least twelve months.

In order to become a community leader the men and women must meet with DjHS counselling services staff once per week as part of the men's/women's leadership group. This leadership group provides the forum for planning, development and implementation of the whole program. The progress of each individual participant is reviewed, as is the overall delivery of the program.

Community leaders participate in co-facilitating groups with each other as well as with the DjHS counselling services staff. Their presence is invaluable in modelling first hand the change process and is one of the most powerful dynamics at work in assisting men and women to move from an abusive lifestyle to one that is free of abuse. Comprehensive training, supervision and de-briefing is undertaken by all men and women wishing to become community leaders, and is an ongoing requirement of their involvement in the leadership component. Men and women leaders have also played a critical role in various combinations of the children's, mothers and fathers groups in the parkas program. For example, one mother participated as a community leader in the mothers group, and a father participated in two children's groups.
section six

references, reading and appendices
REFERENCES


RECOMMENDED READING LIST


Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence-from domestic abuse to political terror. By Judith Herman, Basic Books, USA, 1997.


Homeostasis, Stress, Trauma, and Adaptation: A Neurodevelopmental View of Childhood Trauma. By B.D. Perry and R. Pollard in Stress in Children, 7,1: 33-51

Browse the website of the Child Trauma Academy: www.childtrauma.org or email: childtrauma@bcm.tmc.edu

Strength Cards are available from St Lukes, PO Box 315, Bendigo, Vic. 3550. Telephone: (03) 5440 1100 Facsimile: (03) 5442 2316
What: A ten week, two-tiered program for children aged between 8-12 years and their mothers or carers who have experienced family violence.

Who: Kids Group
     Mums/Carers Group

When: 

Where: 

Facilitators: 

Referrals: Please contact

**AIMS**

- To create a psychologically safe space for children to begin to acknowledge and process the feelings of grief, loss and pain experienced as a result of the traumatic impact of family violence.
- To build a healthy bridge of communication between mothers/carers and their child as a means of safely re-connecting around what has often been a shared experience of family violence.
- Recognise and process the strong level of attachment the child may still have with the perpetrator of the violence.

**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**

- To provide an emotionally contained environment in which children can articulate their own personal experiences of family violence, and for this to be validated in the presence of a group of peers with similar experiences.
- To facilitate a positive shared therapeutic experience between children and their mother or carer.
- To provide these children with an enjoyable, safe and positive experience of working within a therapeutic environment.
- To acknowledge the significance of the father or step-parent in the lives of these children, despite the level of violence they may have perpetrated.
- To raise the awareness of parents about the impact of violence on themselves and their children.
To support children in developing more appropriate and safe ways to manage their anger.
To support children and parents in challenging rigidly held gender prescriptions and maladaptive patterns of relating.

**CONTENT AND FORMAT**

- Weekly group sessions approximately 1½ hours duration for children, and 2 hours for mothers or carers.
- The groupwork uses a combination of artwork, games, music, exercises and discussion.
- The groups are structured so that the mothers and carers group mirrors the content of the children’s, allowing for points of connection to be shared outside the group.
- Themes covered within both groups, largely have been generated by the children themselves, including healthy ways of expressing anger, creating trust, what keeps you safe, and definitions of violence.
- The group is psychodynamic in nature, and builds on the existing strengths and competencies of the children and mothers/carers whilst privileging the processes and dynamics operating in the group.

**CLIENT GROUP**

- Children aged 8-12 years, who have been victims of and/or exposed to family violence.
- **Mothers and carers who have undertaken either individual and/or group work** in relation to their own exposure and experience of domestic or family violence. Mothers and carers need to be available to the emotional issues that may be generated for the child through their involvement in the children’s group. It is also highly recommended that mothers or carers have access to their own individual supports should the group trigger any issues they may need to revisit in relation to their own past.
**Domestic violence affects every member of the household.**

Do you understand the impact violence has had on you?

Do you sometimes wonder how it has affected your kids?

The parkas group program focuses on the impact of violence on all members of the family. The program involves two groups – one for mums/carers and one for their child. These two groups meet at different times but cover the same issues. At the end of the ten week program the two groups meet together for a final combined celebration.

The next parkas groups start:  
- **Group for Kids** - [date]  
- **Group for Mums** - [date]

If you are interested in finding out more about this group, speak to [name] at [address] or telephone [number].

If you would like to attend but transport is a problem, please talk to [name].
REFERRAL FORM

Name of parent/s: ____________________________________________
Address: ___________________________________________________
Telephone: _________________________________________________
Name of child/ren: __________________________________________

FAMILY INFORMATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age/D.O.B.</th>
<th>Relationship</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
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GENOGRAM

REASONS FOR REFERRAL ____________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Level and types of violence the child has experienced or been exposed to:
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
Parent’s previous therapeutic involvement: __________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Therapist’s assessment of parent’s progress and demonstrated insight into parenting capacity: __________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________

Referrer: ____________________ Telephone: ____________________
Agency: ___________________ Date of Referral: ____________________

SIGNATURE:
**ASSESSMENT - PARENTS AND KIDS**

Mother's Name: ________________________ DOB: ________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ________________ Occupation: ______________________

Father's Name: ________________________ DOB: ________________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________

Telephone: ________________ Occupation: ______________________

**Child/ren referred to the program**

Name: _____________________________ DOB & Age: ______________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________

Name: _____________________________ DOB & Age: ______________________

Address: ______________________________________________________________________

**GENOGRAM**
QUESTIONS FOR THE CHILD/REN

What has mum or dad told you about this group?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Do you want to be in this group?  YES  NO  NOT SURE

Have you spoken to a worker before about violent things that have
happened at home?  YES  NO

What sort of really angry/violent things have you seen or heard happen
at home?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Do you know that mum or dad has been going to a group or seeing a
worker?  YES  NO  NOT SURE

Have you noticed any changes in them?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Why do you think mum or dad want you to come to the group?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

LEGAL ISSUES/DHS INVOLVEMENT

What is the history of violence that the family has experienced?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

parents accepting responsibility kids are safe
p a r k a s © 1998 DjHS/MHSKY

Appendix A vii
What, if applicable, are the contact (access) arrangements?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

FAMILY BACKGROUND
Mother’s family history (include experience of abuse)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Father’s family history (include experience of abuse)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Current relationship (quality, issues, etc)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Child’s developmental history (any significant events)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Parental concerns about the child/ren

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

FOR THE CHILD
Describe your family to us.

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

What is it like living in your family?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

What is it like when someone gets angry in your family?

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

EDUCATION
School attended: _____________________________________________________
Year level: _________________________________________________________
Teacher’s name: ____________________________________________________
Relationship between family and the school

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

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Appendix A ix
What is the school like?

_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

FOR THE CHILD
Tell us something about your friends.
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

FOR PARENTS
What are your goals for the group?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

What supports are currently in place?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Any other relevant information?
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Worker's impression of the child (relatedness, affect, and so on)
_____________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Assessor to discuss with the parents and children to ensure they understand the following:

Contract – understanding safety measures

Ongoing consultation with group leaders, counsellors and other relevant people

Commitment to the group

Confidentiality and respect
Social contacts within the group

Follow-up and evaluation

Transport and child care (parents)

Outcome of assessment

_____________________________________________________________________

_____________________________________________________________________

SIGNED: ___________________________   DATE: _________________
CONTRACT FOR KIDS

I ___________________________ understand and agree to stick to the following guidelines about the parkas program:

1. The reason for coming to parkas has been explained to me.

2. I will let group leaders know if anything that is happening at home is worrying me.

3. I will keep private the things that other kids talk about in the group.

4. I will not talk about what is said in the group to other kids who aren’t in the group.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: __________

Witness: ________________________________ Date: __________
CONTRACT FOR PARENTS

I __________________________________ understand and agree to abide by the following guidelines for participating in the parkas program:

1. I will immediately inform group leaders of any physical or emotional harm that occurs or I believe is at risk of occurring.

2. I will accept responsibility for ensuring the safety and well-being of my child/ren at all times.

3. I agree to respect and ensure the confidentiality and rights of all group members involved in the parkas program.

4. I agree to group leaders having access to relevant information provided by other workers involved with my family.

I also understand that group leaders of the parkas program are bound by the following guidelines:

- Group leaders are mandated professionals bound by the Children’s and Young Persons Act (1989) to report to the Department of Human Services any information that may place a child at risk.

- If any participant of the parkas program (adult or child/ren) requires additional support, group leaders will provide assistance to arrange this.

Signature: _____________________________ Date: ____________

Witness: _____________________________ Date: ____________
CONSENT FORM FOR RELEASE OF INFORMATION

I ____________________________________________
of __________________________________________

authorise the parkas group leaders to obtain or provide confidential information relating to my own or my child/ren’s involvement in the parkas program

from

_____________________________________________________________________
to

_____________________________________________________________________

Signature: _______________________________ Date: ___________

Witness: ______________________________ Date: ___________
TRANSPORT CONSENT FORM

Parent/Carer name __________________________________________________
of ___________________________________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

Child's name_________________________________________________________
Date of birth _________________________________________________________

I, __________________________________________, being the parent/carer of the
above-named child consent for her/him to be transported by parkas
workers to the parkas groups.

Signature: _______________________________ Date: ____________

Witness: _________________________________ Date: ____________
CONSENT TO USE MATERIALS PRODUCED

We ask for your consent to allow us to use some of the artwork or other materials produced in the group program. The material would be used in forums such as training and conference presentations, professional development or in the publication of our program evaluation. This may also include the use of any video-taped material.

The source of any material will remain confidential.

I ______________________________________________
of ____________________________________________

__________________________

consent/do not consent to the use of group artwork or other materials for the purposes described above.

Signature: ________________________________ Date: ______________

Witness: ________________________________ Date: ______________
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR KIDS

1. Which face shows how you feel when you are at home?

![Facial expressions]

2. Which face shows how you feel when you are at school?

![Facial expressions]

3. How has coming to parkas made you feel about yourself?

Yuk Not so good Good Very good

4. How has coming to parkas made you feel about your family?

Yuk Not so good Good Very good

5. Is there anything about going to sleep at night that scares you?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

6. What was the best thing about coming to parkas?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

7. What was the second best thing?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

8. What was the worst thing about coming to parkas?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM EVALUATION

An important component of the parkas program is ongoing evaluation and we request your consent to be involved in this process.

The evaluation will involve you completing a questionnaire prior to the group commencing and again on the completion of the program. It will also involve contacting your child/ren’s teacher/s to request completion of a behavioural questionnaire regarding your child/ren.

We value your participation to evaluate the effectiveness of the group program as it helps us look at what needs to be changed, so we can improve the way we run groups in the future.

I ____________________________
of ____________________________

______________________________
consent/do not consent to participate in the evaluation of the parkas program.

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ____________

Witness: ____________________________ Date: ____________
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

The following questions are part of our evaluation of the parkas group. Your responses will help us to establish how useful the group is, and what improvements could be made.

Thank you for your time.

1. How would you rate the quality of your family life at the moment?
   Excellent  Good  Reasonable  Poor

2. How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your child at the moment?
   Excellent  Good  Reasonable  Poor

3. How would you rate your child’s behaviour at present using the following scale?
   1  2  3  4  5  
   No problems Out of control

4. How do you feel you understand your child’s behaviour?
   Would like to know more  Quite well  A little

5. Does your child freely and openly discuss their feelings about their experience of witnessing domestic violence with you?

   6. To what extent?

   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
7. Do you feel the violence your child has witnessed currently affects their behaviour?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

8. How do you perceive your relationship with your child’s father?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

9. Does your child exhibit any adult-like behaviours? If yes, please describe:
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

10. Does your child exhibit any child-like behaviour? If yes, please describe:
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

11. Does your child experience any sleeping difficulties (for example bed-wetting, nightmares, sleepwalking, scared of the dark)?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________

12. Are there any further comments you would like to make?
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________
QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

The following questions are the second part to our evaluation of the parkas group. Your responses will help us to establish how useful the group was, and what improvements could be made.

Thank you for your time.

1. How would you rate the quality of your family life at the moment?
   Excellent  Good  Reasonable  Poor

2. How would you rate the quality of your relationship with your child at the moment?
   Excellent  Good  Reasonable  Poor

2a. How much of this do you believe is connected to your participation in parkas?
   All  A lot  Some  None

3. How would you rate your child’s behaviour at present using the following scale?
   1  2  3  4  5
   No problems  Out of control

4. Has your participation in the group enhanced your understanding of your child’s behaviour?
   All  A lot  Some  None
5. Has your child’s ability to express or communicate their feelings altered since participation in parkas?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In what ways:

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

6. Has there been any change in the way your child relates to their brothers or sisters?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

7. Has there been any change in the way your child relates to their father?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A lot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8. Has your child demonstrated any adult-like behaviours since participating in parkas?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

9. Has your child demonstrated any child-like behaviours since participating in parkas?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

10. Has your child experienced any difficulties since participating in parkas? If so, please describe.

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
11. What did you find to be the most helpful part of parkas?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

12. What did you find to be the least helpful part of parkas?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

13. What would you like included in future parkas groups?

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________
PRE-EVALUATION LETTER TO TEACHERS

Insert Date

Dear

Regarding:

You may be aware that during this school term the above named child is going to participate in a program for families who have experienced violence.

As part of this program we would like your assistance in completing a pre-evaluation questionnaire. Your time is appreciated and your contribution is important in helping us to develop a picture of school life for this child. We have attached a consent form for release of information signed by the child’s parent.

For your information here are the details of the program

Dates:

Time:

We are aware that participation in this group may generate feelings and sensitive issues for this child. Should you have any questions about the program, or concerns for the child, please do not hesitate to contact us on [number].

Yours sincerely,
POST-EVALUATION LETTER TO TEACHERS

Insert Date

Dear

Regarding:

You will be aware that during this school term the above named child has been participating in a program for families who have experienced violence.

You will recall that at the start of this program we requested your assistance in completing a pre-evaluation questionnaire. The program has now finished and we would like you to repeat the questionnaire. This helps us to see if any changes for the child have occurred at school. It also assists us to evaluate the effectiveness of the program.

Once again your time and assistance with this task is greatly appreciated. We have attached the consent form for release of information signed by the child’s parent.

If you have any other feedback or comments please contact us to discuss these further on [number].

Yours sincerely,
Congratulations!

CERTIFICATE OF ACHIEVEMENT

Who has attended the parkas group for mums/carers and kids

Leaders ___________ ___________ ___________
WHEN:  
WHERE: MEET AT  
WHAT: A HEAVY ROCK “MUSIC MAKING FEST”  
WHO: KIDS ONLY!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!  
WHY: BECAUSE THEY CAN COPE WITH LOUD MUSIC  
WITH:  

RSVP (let us know if you are coming):  
Contact:
section six

appendix b
SUMMARY OF GAMES

The games listed below will often be known under other names and have a variety of different rules. The kids will quickly let you know what rules or variations are most familiar to them.

Whilst some are competitive by nature, we endeavour to minimise the competitive elements and maximise the fun by handing out prizes, such as minties, to everyone.

**Treasure Chest**

Break the big group into equal numbers of smaller groups ie. five to a group. Each group then elects a runner.

The group leader makes up a list of about twenty (time permitting) items of things in the room or that children have on them. They call out a list of items, for example - sock, pair of glasses, shoelace, book. It’s best not to use to use anything breakable with the children.

The group then supplies the item to the runner who must take it to the game scorer (the same or another group leader) as quickly as they can. The first runner to reach the scorer wins a point. The leader continues through the list and the team with the most points wins.

**Poison Ball**

Choose two people to throw the (large but soft rubber) ball from either side of the room. Ask all other participants to stand in the middle.

The two people on the outside throw the ball to each other, trying to hit those in the middle.

When a participant gets ‘hit’ by the ball they are *out* and must stand aside for the rest of the game. They can re-enter the game if another participant offers them a ‘spare life’ – which is earned if they catch the ball before it reaches the ‘thrower’ on the other side.

The two people on the outside can also attempt to throw the ball over the top of participants to each other. If the ball is caught by the person on the other side without it touching the ground, they can call out ‘freeze’.

‘Freeze’ requires those in the middle to ‘freeze’ like statues, and to give the ball throwers an opportunity to ‘hit’ (gently!) one of the participants, as they are unable to move away from the ball.
Should the participants in the middle move to avoid the ball during 'freeze' they automatically become 'out' regardless of whether or not the ball hits them. This is because you are not allowed to move during 'freeze'.

However, if one of the participants in the middle should catch the ball during 'freeze', they earn a 'spare life'. They can choose to keep this 'life' to use at a later time, if they go 'out', or they can offer this 'life' to someone who has already gone out.

If this person chooses to give away their 'life' to another (a very noble sentiment), the other person is able to rejoin the game. A 'life' can only be used once, thus the person loses their spare 'life' and if they are 'hit by another ball they must go out.

**Octopus (Scarecrow Tiggy)**

Octopus is similar to Scarecrow Tiggy. One person volunteers to go 'it' and their job is to 'tag' as many people as possible.

Once 'tagged' a person must stand like a 'scarecrow' - a statue with arms out and legs open wide enough to allow someone else to crawl through their legs.

**NOTE:** If participants are not physically comfortable with this idea, facilitators may need to vary the way the game is played.

The people who are 'scarecrow' are not allowed to move, however, they can earn a new 'life' if they can get someone else to crawl through their legs.

**What's the time Mr/Mrs Wolf?**

Someone volunteers to be 'Mr or Mrs Wolf'. 'The Wolf' stands by themselves at the far end of the room with their back to the others. A ball is placed behind them.

The aim of the game is for the others to creep up and try to take the ball and run back to the other end of the room without getting caught by the 'Wolf'.

The kids sneak up behind the wolf, calling "What's the time Mr/Mrs Wolf?" The 'Wolf' responds by saying the time, for example, one o'clock, four o'clock, and so on, and looks over his/her shoulder (every few seconds).

When the 'Wolf' looks over his/her shoulder the kids have to freeze. If someone looks likely to get the ball the 'Wolf' yells "Dinner Time!" and tries to catch the others.
**Partners Ball Game**
The kids get into a circle and are paired up with the person standing opposite them in the circle. Each pair has a ball to throw to each other.

The idea is to throw the ball between partners as many times as possible without dropping it, or hitting the other balls being thrown across the circle by the other pairs.

A point is scored if the ball is dropped, but it is the pair with the least amount of points that wins.

**Name Game**
The kids stand in a circle facing each other. They must say the name of a person and throw the Koosh (soft-flour filled ball) ball to them.

A person goes ‘out’ and stands outside the circle if they fail to say the name of the person they throw the ball to, or if they throw the ball in a manner too difficult for the other person to catch.

If a person fails to catch the ball, when it is thrown reasonably, then they go out and must stand aside.

**Duck, Duck, Goose (For Kids)**
The kids sit in a circle on the floor.
One person volunteers to go first and be the ‘caller’.
The ‘caller’ walks around the back of the circle and lightly taps each person on the head saying either ‘Duck’ or ‘Goose’.

When a person is called ‘Goose’ they must get up and chase the ‘caller’ around the circle and try to sit back in their own spot first.

Whoever misses out on the spot becomes the ‘caller’ and continues with the game. This game can be spiced up by having two or more people (depending on the size of the circle) moving around the back of the circle, and changing the direction of which way you run around the circle.

**Duck, Duck, Goose (For Parent/Carers)**
Same as above except that parent/carers sit on a chair in a circle instead of on the floor.

**Sharks & Islands**
Place a few large pieces of butcher’s paper on the floor to act as an island. These need to be large enough to fit almost all the kids.
The kids need to walk around and whilst this is happening yell out different types of swimming strokes for the kids to act out. (ie, freestyle, backstroke etc)

At any point the facilitators can call out “SHARKS”. At this time all the kids must try and fit on the butcher’s paper. Those kids that are unable to fit on the paper are ‘out’ (ie, eaten by the sharks). After each call the paper should be folded into smaller pieces so that it is harder for all the kids to stay on, till eventually only one child is left and they are the winner.

**Footy Frenzy (Fruit Salad)**

The children sit on the floor in two rows facing one another with their legs together stretched out in front of them. Ensure there is sufficient space between the rows so the children can run over the pairs of legs.

Each pair facing each other is given the name of a footy team in either AFL or Rugby League. When the name of their footy team is called, the pair must get up and run over the legs of the other pairs to the end of the row, back around their own row and into the middle of the row to get back to their original place. The first person back to their place earns a point for their row.

To make this more fun, call out in quick succession a number of names of footy teams, and/or the name ‘AFL’ or ‘Rugby League’ when everyone has to get up and run back to their place at the same time.
NAME GAME

MATERIALS
None

PREPARATION
None

ACTION
Ask the group to sit in a circle. Request a volunteer to state their name and something about themselves they are happy to share with the group. The person on the right repeats what the first person said and adds their own name and a statement about themself. This procedure continues round the circle with the person on the right repeating what the preceding ones have said, adding their own information, until everyone has had a go.

Statements shared about self could be age, grade at school, favourite toys.

VARIATIONS
1. The game can be kept simple by merely having everyone repeat the names in this manner.
2. Players may complete a supplied statement. An example would be: ‘I went to market and bought a shirt’. The second player repeats this and adds an item of their own, with the game continuing around the circle. Other useful beginnings could be:
   (a) I’m going on holidays so I packed ...
   (b) I went shopping for Christmas and bought ...
   (c) I went to a party and took ...

   Many other statements can be invented to suit any type of group.

COMMENT
This is an excellent memory game which children find a lot of fun to play. If players have difficulty remembering, other members of the group can give clues as prompts.

Adapted from: Taught not caught 1983
The children line up one behind the other in the centre of the room, or in a space large enough for the running aspect of this game.

The leader gives commands that the children respond to by following specific actions as outlined below. A person goes ‘out’ if they are the last one to respond or if they do the wrong action for the command. The children given ‘out’ sit quietly. Allow the winner to give commands. The game can be played more than once if time allows:

- **Captain’s aboard** - stand to attention and salute
- **Climb the rigging** - climbing action on the spot
- **Scrub the deck** - squat down and pretend to scrub the deck
- **Captain’s girlfriend coming** - Blow a kiss (optional)
- **Hoist the main sail** - one hand over another like pulling up a sail
- **Port** - run to right of room
- **Starboard** - run to left of room
Dead Fish

This is a good activity to use as a wind down after an active session. Relaxation music can be played to help them along the way.

Each child finds a place on the floor where they have enough space around them to lie in a comfortable position and keep extremely still.

Ask the children to close their eyes and become relaxed & floppy, like a dead fish.

Get the children to settle as a dead fish for a minute (or the designated time) and then bring their attention back to the room. Ask them one by one to come up to you. Provide feedback and reward stickers.
WISHES

If you could have anything you wanted what would it be? Write or draw the things you wish for in the bubbles below.

Name:
What is the best dream you ever had?
Can you draw the worst nightmare you have ever had?
Have you ever felt like making some changes to a member of your family – maybe a brother or sister, or even a mum or dad? Well now you can!

Imagine what these people would need to be like to become ‘perfect’ and write or draw your ideas in the boxes.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sister</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandparents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NAME:
My best time ever was

__________________________________________________________________________________

My worst time ever was

__________________________________________________________________________________

I love it when

__________________________________________________________________________________

I feel scared when

__________________________________________________________________________________

When I was younger I used to

__________________________________________________________________________________

When others are angry I feel

__________________________________________________________________________________

When I am angry I

__________________________________________________________________________________

What hurt me more than anything was

__________________________________________________________________________________

I was really happy when

__________________________________________________________________________________

I get lonely when

__________________________________________________________________________________
My favourite person is
__________________________________________________________________________________

Sometimes when I’m in bed at night
__________________________________________________________________________________

The best time of the week is when
__________________________________________________________________________________

I find it hard to
__________________________________________________________________________________

What confuses me is
__________________________________________________________________________________

What I want to learn about is
__________________________________________________________________________________

I think it was really unfair when
__________________________________________________________________________________

What I want to learn about in this group is
__________________________________________________________________________________
Think about some of the things you are good at and write or draw them in each star.
Imagine you were able to make some choices and change things in yourself, your home, your family and your world. What would be some of the changes you would make? Draw or write them below.
It’s time to make some decisions about the situations below! Tick which one you would prefer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
<th>Option 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Which child in the family would you rather be?</td>
<td>The baby</td>
<td>The only child</td>
<td>The oldest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you not like to have happen to you?</td>
<td>Become lost</td>
<td>Move house</td>
<td>Go to hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If you are worried about something who would you rather tell?</td>
<td>No-one</td>
<td>Your friend</td>
<td>Your Mum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would be your favourite way to spend your time?</td>
<td>Riding your bike</td>
<td>Going to school</td>
<td>Watching t.v.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which would you rather be?</td>
<td>Lion</td>
<td>Mouse</td>
<td>Horse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the best way to use your pocket money?</td>
<td>Spend it</td>
<td>Save it</td>
<td>Give it to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which thing would you most hate?</td>
<td>Have a fight</td>
<td>Change schools</td>
<td>Get into trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What would you prefer in the future?</td>
<td>Go overseas</td>
<td>Have children</td>
<td>Get married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Which place would you most like to visit?</td>
<td>Your grandparents</td>
<td>The movies</td>
<td>Your friends</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If I were an adult I would ________________________________

I feel good when I ________________________________

The best thing about me is ________________________________

If I want to I can ________________________________

A thing that people like about me is ________________________________

Something I decided was ________________________________

I’m getting better at ________________________________

I like being the leader because ________________________________

People respect me when ________________________________

I feel proud about ________________________________

What I like about my family is ________________________________
Sometimes we show different parts of our lives or personality to each other or to ourselves.

Think about some of the different parts of yourself and write a word that describes you in each of the jigsaw pieces below.

Also think of an example of when you show that part of yourself.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>POST IT NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MISSING OUT ON THINGS BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH MONEY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL ANGRY AT MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHEN I DON'T GET ALONG WITH THEM</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL NERVOUS WHEN I LEAVE MUM TO SPEND TIME WITH DAD</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN MUM AND DAD HAVE ARGUMENTS ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THAT I DON'T GET ALONG WITH MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THAT MUM AND DAD ARE NOT TOGETHER ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL DISAPPOINTED WHEN I MISS OUT ON THINGS BECAUSE THERE IS NOT ENOUGH MONEY</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN MUM AND DAD HAVE ARGUMENTS ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL SCARED WHEN MUM &amp;/OR DAD DRINK TOO MUCH ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN THERE IS VIOLENCE IN MY HOME ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THAT I DON'T GET ALONG WITH MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN MUM SAYS NASTY THINGS ABOUT DAD ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I CAN'T SAY AND SHOW HOW I AM FEELING ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL ANGRY AT MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS WHEN I DON'T GET ALONG WITH THEM ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL ALONE BECAUSE NO ONE KNOWS HOW I AM REALLY FEELING….</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL CONFUSED ABOUT WHY MUM AND DAD CAN'T GET ALONG ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN DAD SAYS MEAN THINGS ABOUT MUM ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN MUM AND DAD HAVE ARGUMENTS ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL FRUSTRATED WHEN I CAN'T SAY OR SHOW HOW I AM FEELING……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I AM CONFUSED ABOUT WHY MUM AND DAD CAN'T GET ALONG ….</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL ANGRY AT MUM AND DAD FOR NOT BEING TOGETHER ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NO-ONE KNOWS WHAT IT IS REALLY LIKE FOR ME ….</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I FEEL SAD THAT MUM AND DAD ARE NOT TOGETHER ……</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>WHEN IT COMES TIME TO LEAVE MUM AND SPEND TIME WITH DAD ……</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID</th>
<th>Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WHAT UPSET ME</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT MADE ME ANGRY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT MADE ME LAUGH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT I WANTED MOST</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT MADE ME HAPPY</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHAT I HATED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY GREATEST WISH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHERE I FELT SAFE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**NAME:**
Do you feel like people around you sometimes spin out of control? How does this make you feel? Colour in three things this makes you feel most ....
Do you ever feel like you are spinning out of control?

Colour in three things you do when this happens.

- Hurt Highway
- Safe St
- Bashburn Ave
- Rock St
- Aggro St
- Farewell St
- Sad St
- Cracked Crescent

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section six

appendix c
UNDIGNIFIED!

Bang!
The door slams. The silence is deafening.
Amongst the tears the pain is overwhelming.
You pick yourself up off the floor
or what other undignified place you might find yourself in.
Your body bruised and battered, aches so badly.
Your mind, an uneasy sea of questions
And the sad thing is, you wonder why?
You head for the bathroom to see the damage made by the person
you have loved.
The same person who tells you over and over again how much they
really do love you.
And how sorry they are – until next time.
They take your mind, body and soul into their contradictory minds
and damaging hands. And they totally destroy you.
They strip you naked of your identity, your dignity, your confidence
and the right to be an individual.
An individual with rights, just like any other human being that
walks upon this big world we all share.
Even though at the time you seem to question yourself, and think,
this and that is why he beat me,
and start to think, well maybe I did push him too far, or maybe I
really shouldn’t have spoken back.
You should never think you deserve a beating.
I have lived through the terror and it took me a long time to be able
to say,
He was the one at fault!

Mum of six.
LIMBO

by Donna Vickers

In my child’s mind, and in my child’s heart,
Loneliness can be the cruelest friend.
Anger, confusion, no communication
When will this hurting ever end?

I can never seem to talk to anyone
About the horrible way I feel inside
People don’t have time, they don’t understand,
So in the darkness, I’m left to cry.

I can’t communicate on an adult’s level
Therefore you’ll never understand, you see
I just can’t quite grasp reality,
My past is forever haunting me.

I really don’t mean to be cheeky and horrid
Or say those nasty things that hurt my mum.
I don’t mean to get into trouble at school,
Being scolded constantly isn’t really fun.

But: I now go to a group called p a r k a s
Which is there to help kids like me
They help us to deal with our demons
And help teach our minds to become free
I’m starting to learn how to talk to mum
About “my secrets” I hold in my life
It’s nice to know I’m not the only one
That has been through all this strife.
I’m slowly learning to become patient,
It’s nice to have a break from stress
I’m slowly feeling like a child again
At last my mind can rest.

I love you all at p a r k a s
For giving me my childhood again
I hope your group helps more kids like me
You’ll forever be my friends.
A RIGHT TO LIVE!

Night falls
The children are tucked in their beds, asleep after the confusion of the night before
The police have been and gone. And so has he … or has he?
Your body and mind still hurt from the physical and mental abuse he dealt you
Your family has had their say on their own behalf
It’s easy to give others advice and say what’s best for you and the children … but where are they now?
At home tucked neatly inside their own untarnished little world
And here am I, sitting up all alone, waiting for the violence you have not seen.
Only I felt it in every way –
From the black eyes and broken ribs to the torment and mental abuse
I sit in the dark
The dark is my only friend, as I can see out but he can’t see in if there is no light to aid him
I sit close to the phone. It’s my only protection.
I jump at every noise in case it’s him coming for me again.
I check the children in their beds. I check their locked windows.
How many times? I have lost count.
My wounds hurt, but at least they will disappear
The mental abuse will always haunt you, forever?
Even when you go to court because he wants access to the children, you will never be free.
The Family Law Court says he is their father and he has rights to see them.
But it turns its back on your rights – your right to be free and live in peace.