



## Long-term Outcomes of an Australian Universal Prevention Trial of Anxiety and Depression Symptoms in Children and Youth

Barrett, P. M., Farrell, L. J., Ollendick, T. H., & Dadds, M. (2006). Long-term outcomes of an Australian universal prevention trial of anxiety and depression symptoms in children and youth: An evaluation of the Friends Program. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 35, 403-411. DOI: 10.1207/s15374424jccp3503\_5.



Civilian-Focused  
Article



669 Australian children who had participated in a previous study evaluating the effectiveness of a teacher-facilitated cognitive behavioral intervention for anxiety and depression completed this follow-up study, designed to evaluate longitudinal effects (at 2 and 3 years post-treatment). Results support the long-term effectiveness of the program, particularly for girls, with children in the intervention group reporting lower anxiety than those in the control group.

### Key Findings:

- At three-year follow up, more children in the control group (i.e., those who did not receive the cognitive behavioral intervention) were considered high-risk (elevated anxiety or depression scores) compared to those in the intervention group.
- At two-year follow-up in the control condition, there was a significant gender difference with more girls than boys considered high-risk; the difference was no longer significant at the 3-year follow-up.
- Grade 6 students appeared to benefit more from the intervention than those in grade 9 in terms of anxiety (but not depression).
- Girls in the intervention condition scored significantly lower than girls in the control group on anxiety measures at the one and two-year follow-ups; however, the difference was not maintained at the 3-year follow-up.

### Implications for Programs:

- Programs could collaborate with community agencies to identify children and adolescents with anxiety and provide referrals when indicated.
- Programs could consider implementing prevention programs for youth designed to minimize later symptoms of depression and anxiety.

### Implications for Policies:

- Policies could allocate funding to implement universal prevention programs to reduce anxiety in children and adolescents.
- Policies could allocate funding to train program staff on anxiety prevention techniques.

### Avenues for Future Research:

- Future research could evaluate the effect of additional treatment components on strengthening the long-term effectiveness of the intervention program.
- Future research could evaluate gender differences in the effectiveness of the program and test the efficacy of additional curricula aimed at maximizing effectiveness among boys as well as girls.





## Background Information

### Methodology:

- Six schools in Brisbane, Australia, that were randomly assigned to an intervention or control condition participated in this longitudinal study evaluating long-term effectiveness of a teacher-facilitated cognitive behavioral intervention for anxiety and depression.
- Participants completed measures of anxiety and depression at two additional time periods, namely 2 and 3 years post-treatment.
- The control condition had significantly more missing data (24-months: 44%; 36-months: 54%) than the intervention condition (24-months: 25%; 36-months: 41%).
- Chi-square and repeated measures analysis of covariance were used to assess anxiety and depression scores across time.

### Participants:

- 669 Australian children who had participated in a prior study examining the effectiveness of an intervention for anxiety and depression when in grades 6 or 9.
- At the 12-month follow-up, there were 334 students in Grade 7 and 335 students in Grade 10. 54% of the youth were female in intervention condition and 48% female in control condition.
- The majority (89% intervention; 84% control) of youth were born in Australia.

### Limitations:

- Symptoms were based on self-report questionnaires (rather than diagnostic data), which involves some limitations.
- Considerable missing data at each time point necessitated data imputation.
- The extent to which the result may generalize to other samples that are more diverse in terms of race/ethnicity or geography is unknown.

## Assessing Research that Works

Research Design and Sample					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The design of the study (e.g., research plan, sample, recruitment) used to address the research question was...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Research Methods					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The research methods (e.g., measurement, analysis) used to answer the research question were...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Limitations					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent Minor Limitations (★★★★)	Appropriate Few Limitations (★★★)	Limited Several Limitations (★★)	Questionable Many/Severe Limitations (★)		
The limitations of this study are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Implications					Quality Rating:	★ ★ ★
	Excellent (★★★★)	Appropriate (★★★)	Limited (★★)	Questionable (★)		
The implications of this research to programs, policies and the field, stated by the authors, are...	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Not applicable because authors do not discuss implications						
Overall Quality Rating						★ ★ ★