

# What can

# PEER SKILLS

# do for your school?

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## The Peer Skills Workshop

The Peer Skills program assists young people to develop skills, knowledge and strategies to help themselves and effectively support peers, friends and family members. Peer Skills also assists young people to connect with adults in supportive roles within their communities.

Peer Skills was developed in response to national and international research that showed young people often talk or turn to a friend when they have a problem before, or instead of, seeking help from adults or services.

### Peer Skills is designed to:

- acknowledge and build on natural listening skills
- develop helping and problem solving skills
- develop relationship skills
- increase confidence in safely assisting a friend or peer.

Peer Skills is also used as a foundation for peer-based programs to assist the development of supportive networks in schools and communities.

Peer Skills is for young people between 11 and 18 years old. It has been tailored for upper primary school aged children and other groups with specific needs.

### Benefits of peer work

Leading social researchers Urbis Keys Young in a national evaluation of the Peer Skills program in 2005 found that schools regard the Peer Skills Workshop as an excellent foundation activity for peer



programs which enhance the wellbeing of young people and provide leadership opportunities.

### What is in a Peer Skills Workshop?

There are six sessions in a two day Peer Skills Workshop.

**Introducing Peer Skills** - establishes a safe environment and introduces participants to the concept of peer helping.

**Exploring Values** - participants consider their own values, beliefs and attitudes in the context of peer support.

**Really Listening and Responding** - includes fun and practical activities that build on participants natural listening and communication skills.

**Problem Solving** - introduces participants to the (POOCH) problem solving framework for use in their own lives and when assisting others.

**Looking After Yourself** - includes awareness of strengths, needs and limitations when peer helping. Taking care of yourself especially when helping others.

**Getting Help** - explores obstacles to help-seeking, identifying when adult help is needed and how to access that help.

### Benefits for young people:

- Friendships and relationships with others are enhanced
- Improved communication and social skills
- Young people actively assist others and are recognised in a leadership role
- Young people solve problems independently and also know when and who to ask for help.

### Peer Skills will:

- contribute towards a climate of acceptance, care and respect in school environments
- build positive relationships across the school and community
- increase support options for young people - peer helpers assist others, including those identified as “at risk” or marginalised
- provide opportunities for young people to contribute towards a helping culture
- reduce bullying and other problems
- improve school retention
- prevent problems and problems escalating.

### Benefits of the Peer Skills Program

*“Great for non-academic students – an opportunity to grow” (Teacher from North Queensland)*

*“Skills for life and leadership, for many young people it’s a pathway to becoming a school leader” (Teacher from Lockyer District-Somerset)*

*“Peer Skills is a program that emphasises making the most of a community’s own resources, in this case its young people, and the school being an important hub of community support.*

*With additional financial support schools setup structures that increased support for students and grew stronger relationships with helping adults.” (Support staff member in a community impacted by natural disaster)*

### Peer Skills Facilitator Training

The Peer Skills Facilitator Training is run over two days for people with relevant skills and experiences who are supported by their school or agency to implement the Peer Skills Workshop as a part of their work with young people.

### Facilitator Training includes:

- Content and processes of the Peer Skills Workshop
- Child-centred practice and empowerment
- Effective peer work program implementation
- The roles and responsibilities of the Peer Skills facilitator
- Preparation and presentation of a Peer Skills activity and feedback.

