



Debbie Rowberry is a Child and Adolescent-Emotion Focused Behavioural Therapist, specialising in assisting vulnerable Children and their Families with Emotional or Behavioural needs. Debbie provides a range of Therapeutic and Emotion Educational Programmes within the community.

In 2011 Debbie developed and facilitated a School Based Emotion Education Pilot Programme for vulnerable Primary School Children. Based on the Pilot Programme, Debbie created the Willow Social and Emotional Learning Programmes.

The Willow SEL Programme was further developed upon researching that 'Nature Deficit' has been determined as a contributing factor to anxiety and depression in Children. The Willow SEL Programmes combine Purpose Designed Outdoor Activities in a Farm environment using Horses and Dogs, in conjunction with Child and Youth Specific - Emotion Regulation Education and Positive Life Choices Coaching. Schools and Whanau are provided with support material to assist participants to use the Emotion Regulation strategies at home and at school.

The Willow SEL Programme is also an alternative option for Family Therapy, providing a Solutions Focused programme for high needs Families.

Willow Therapy Farm

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Willow Therapy Farm



WILLOW SEL PROGRAMME
An Early Intervention and
Emotion Education Programme

For
Schools



Testimonials

Willow Farm Therapy was recommended by the school social worker, he had reviewed a range of programmes & then decided this was the most suitable to meet the emotional needs of our students. This year two groups of four students have attended the five sessions programme. Each group had quite different needs, the first group comprised of four autistic boys, and each needed to learn skills to manage anxiety. The next group had varying needs, they all needed to develop socialization skills to cope in group & class situations. They needed help to relate to others in a positive way. The group also needed coping strategies to manage their personal anxieties in a classroom environment.

Debbie is extremely skilled & competent to assess student's needs and adapt the programmes to meet their individual needs. She delivers the programme in quiet calm manner and makes each student feel safe in the caring environment to take risks & apply new skills. Each session the students revise the skills they have learnt and then extend their knowledge with new strategies. Any new issues identified are addressed promptly. Students understand how and where to apply the skills .

All of the students who have been fortunate to participate in the programme have made notable positive changes, with their emotional resilience increasing. They remember to apply self-understanding skills and use the breathing strategies to calm down when anxious or stressed. When working with peers they respect others personal boundaries and know when to stop and walk away. They are also learning to cope with the negative behavior they encounter occasionally in a positive way.

Willow Farm Therapy involves the use of dogs and horses to help teach the skills, this makes it significantly different from the more traditional therapy groups. The students relate well to the animals and can learn to apply the skills they have learnt with the animals. The animals are trained to respond to the students stress levels. Using the animals in such a positive way is fantastic. The biggest benefit to our students was the Emotional Resilience this then enabled student's self-understanding and

peer engagement to increase. The programme has been very effective for the autistic students. They can now cope in a noisy mainstream classroom by using their magical earmuffs to block the noise. When their anxiety levels are high they are all applying the breathing techniques to calm down. When someone is in their personal space they have learnt to walk away before their stress levels increase.

The confidence levels of these students have increased significantly, with two of the students speaking confidently in front of the class. Previously they would not have answered a question in a full class setting. Another student calms himself with the breathing techniques enabling him to remain on task & complete his work.

These students seldom work in withdrawal spaces now as by applying the skills they learnt at Willow Farm Therapy they can function successfully in the mainstream.

Kedgley Intermediate School

“Debbie has been working in our school for approximately the last 7 weeks. In this short time she has had a major positive impact on several of our current and one of our former pupils.

The staff and students at our school have noticed a positive shift in the behaviour and general social well being of the students that Debbie has been involved with. These at risk students have a range of social and emotional and behavioural needs.

Debbie has developed a range of programmes to cater for their diverse needs. These programmes range from one to one sessions, to friendship groups of up to five students.

*Richard Arthurs
Assistant Principal
Manurewa East School*
