

Neurodiversity Affirming Social Groups

At The Happy Space, we run neurodiversity affirming social groups which support children and teens to be social in whichever way they prefer in interest based activities of the kids' choice.

What don't we do?	What do we do?
<p>We do not teach “social skills”, we support children and teens to be social in their own way. Evidence tells us that <u>different people (neurodivergent and neurotypical) prefer to socialise in different ways</u>, and that is okay.</p> <p>There is no need for us to prioritise neurotypical behaviours and pathologise normal neurodivergent traits.</p> <p>Being taught neurotypical “social skills” (making eye-contact, using small talk) is not functional and <u>can be harmful for mental health and self-esteem in the long run</u>.</p>	<p>We support kids and teens to socialise in the way that works for them, practicing the skills they want to learn in a safe space while doing activities of their choice.</p> <p>We support executive functioning and problem-solving skills in a social setting, e.g. planning and designing a comic book, wind powered car.</p> <p>We discuss and reflect on areas including...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication styles (e.g. some people prefer to skip the small talk and get straight to the deeper topics, that's okay) • Strategies for maintaining attention in different situations (e.g. fidgets) • Self-advocacy (e.g. explaining to a teacher that it is easier for us to listen to them if we are not looking at them while they talk).
<p>We do not provide 1:1 social supports (this usually ends up being teaching social "skills").</p>	<p>We always aim for our supports to be functional (and fun). For this reason, <u>we support social interaction in the social environment</u>, with peers instead of therapists. We also participate in school and multi-disciplinary meetings where required (depending on therapist availability).</p>

You can find out more about why we use this approach and a summary of the research [here](#).

