

COVID-19 UPDATE FROM TUNING IN TO KIDS

Greetings from the Tuning in to Kids team,

What a year 2020 has been - a year of so many emotions and unexpected challenges. Communities across Australia have been devastated by bushfires and floods throughout the summer and now, all of us around the world are faced with the unprecedented circumstances presented by the corona virus (COVID-19).

We recognise that many families are suffering high levels of distress and disruption right now. This immense pressure may make parenting difficult and put parent-child relationships under a lot of strain - even within families who normally manage the challenges of parenting well. As helping professionals, you too may also find yourselves juggling similar stressful situations. It is challenging to support others when we ourselves are also experiencing uncertainty, together with the constant rollercoaster of emotions that accompany a pandemic. As well as stocking up on our practical necessities, we must also stock up on our self-care strategies too.

While we have suspended our face-to-face professional workshops until June 30 (please continue to check our website for updates), we understand that many of you will be continuing your therapeutic work with families, delivering the Tuning In suite of parenting programs as part of your supportive work to parents and carers.

We have already received many requests for support on how best to move face-to-face group work online. Please see the below document, created to help you consider if and how you might temporarily transition to online delivery of the Tuning In parenting programs while the COVID-19 restrictions remain in place.

Should you decide that online delivery is appropriate for your client group, we can also provide you with supervision and support if needed. We will release some supervision dates in our next newsletter.

We include a brief online questionnaire that you may wish to use to help collect feedback for further developing your online delivery of the Tuning In programs.

In other news, we are thrilled to announce that we will release a self-paced, online version of the Tuning in to Kids parenting program in the coming weeks. Please stay tuned for our launch date!

Finally, like many of you, our team are working remotely at present. It may take us some time to respond to your questions and requests and we thank you for your patience during this time.

Wishing you all the best in the time ahead.

The Tuning in to Kids team.



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Can Tuning in to Kids suite of programs be delivered online?

Online delivery of Tuning in to Kids suite of parentings programs might be an important part of your work during the COVID-19 restrictions and beyond.

People everywhere are feeling scared; vulnerable; uncertain and unsafe. Many people may have lost their jobs, may be unwell, or terrified of losing those close to them (or worse – have lost someone) through illness. In combination with little or no access to normal social contact, many families may be feeling completely overwhelmed. Research has demonstrated that when parents experience high levels of stress it places them at risk of engaging in harsh disciplinary measures within the family setting, as well as being unable to manage their own emotions (Havighurst & Kehoe, 2018). This highlights the need for the availability of support, help, advice and parenting skills alongside crisis intervention.

One of the key benefits of group work is that parents feel they are not alone. Being afforded the opportunity to share our fears, grief and sadness - and other emotions that have arisen due to COVID-19 – with our friends, family, colleagues and other health professionals is incredibly important. Yet, there are many things to consider before simply moving a group program into an online forum. Thinking through implications of online delivery models can be hard to do when we are experiencing stress and are overwhelmed ourselves. We may also be working while looking after our own children, feeling pressure to provide some form of online help fast.

We have received many enquiries from existing facilitators seeking advice, guidelines and resources on how to safely and effectively deliver the Tuning In suite of parenting programs online. We have also received some valuable feedback from some facilitators about their experience in online program delivery in a group or one-to-one setting, feedback which has informed some of our tips below. Thank you.

We are not a prescriptive program; Tuning in to Kids was originally designed as a prevention program. While many of you have used our program successfully with families with which there are clinical-level difficulties (and our research has shown this is effective), we have always asked our facilitators to make any necessary adaptation to content and delivery based on their judgement, expertise and knowledge of the needs of their client group.

The following material is designed to help those facilitators who have decided to explore online delivery. The first section outlines some general points, which are followed by points specific for group delivery. We also provide guidance on how to use our materials in one-to-one delivery. Lastly, there are copyright limitations with the program (see below) that mean the materials cannot be published or shared on the internet.

PLEASE NOTE: It has become apparent that there are significant privacy concerns surrounding video conferencing software, including Zoom. Please ensure that any online sessions you conduct are password-protected, or make use of the 'Waiting Room' feature available in many programs.



General points when delivering Tuning in to Kids parenting programs online.

1. **We do not currently have evidence to show whether TIK, TINT or Dads TIK programs are effective when delivered in a one-to-one or group setting using online methods.** We have moved to delivering our program via Zoom in our current research trial, and have some anecdotal evidence that parents are finding the sessions helpful. However, it is early days and we have not yet finished the research.
2. **As with face-face delivery, issues of privacy are very important to keep in mind for yourself as a facilitator, for your families and for your organisation.** When a person is linking in to your online delivery, you do not know whether they are in the room alone, whether they have children or teens around, or whether others can hear them or other group participants who are speaking. This creates a challenge because a participant's right to their information remaining confidential may be compromised. A number of things are important to discuss prior to session attendance and when setting up group guidelines to help with privacy. You may choose to have a written agreement with your participants.
3. **Key points:**
 - Ask people to join online where they have access to a private space. Suggestions include using headphones; closing doors; sitting in the car on the phone to watch/join in. This ensures that your privacy - and that of other people who may be part of a group - will be maintained. It is important that a conversation about how to maintain privacy takes place with each participant prior to starting the first session.
 - Insist that recording or taking photo/dvd images of any material that includes other people speaking is strictly prohibited.
 - Insist that participants do not consume alcohol/use substances while participating in group or one-on-one delivery online.
 - Do not invite others to watch the one to one/group delivery unless it has been pre-arranged with the facilitator and written/formal consent has been sought from participants.
 - Remind participants about confidentiality at the beginning of each session.
4. **If you become concerned about over-disclosure, or other things that people are saying in the online group, you may need to name this or put in some boundaries.** It may be difficult to discern if participants have consumed alcohol or are using substances while attending an online group, and it may be useful to include a 'substance free rule' as part of your group rules. Your role as facilitator is to ensure that people feel safe in the group, and for you to put in boundaries and measures to maintain this. Alert participants to these rule and agreements at the beginning of each group, at intervals as you progress, and if needed at points throughout delivery.
5. **Some additional helpful group guidelines:**
 - You may wish to discuss a way in which participants can indicate they would like to talk. This might include typing their name or raising their hand.
 - Setting time limits for how long you will engage in an activity at the beginning of the activity can be helpful.
 - As with face-to-face groups, you may announce that you will sometimes be asking for 'others to speak who have not yet spoken'.
 - On rare occasions it may be necessary to use the mute function because you have too many people talking at once or some people are 'overtalking' and dominating the group. Always do this in a respectful way, perhaps with some humour about the challenges with running a group online.
 - You may also wish to discuss how you will support anyone who becomes distressed during group. This discussion is good to have with participants prior to starting group and again when setting up group guidelines.
6. **Checking in with your participants after each session may enable you to ensure people feel safe/their concerns can be expressed.** You could do this via asking them to complete a survey (see attached questionnaire/below) or calling them after group or the next day.
7. **Lack of eye contact may impact how you are perceived by your participants, and sometimes the sound can be delayed and not match your facial expressions.** This may make you come across as less warm and empathic. It might be helpful for facilitators to make comment on this medium of communication and how it is a different and a little odd at first. Acknowledge that it may be difficult to speak without making eye

contact and canvassing individual and group feedback/experience around online delivery may be helpful. You might also practice a little with moving around - sometimes also looking at the camera when talking and balancing this with the need to see participant's faces to gauge feedback. For participants, it often feels much better when their facilitator looks directly at them.

Copyright issues

- *Our materials are copyrighted. This means that facilitators are unable to publish the Tuning in to Kids | Teens | Dads materials online via Facebook, or other online platforms where they might be stored or accessible to the users on an ongoing basis.*
- *We understand that you may need to send people handouts or show DVD material 'live' via an online platform. Please ensure you do not enable people to share this material further than their immediate family – as would usually occur if you make the handout or DVD material available to your families during face-to-face delivery. Please clearly state that materials are not to be distributed but are for individual use only.*
- *If you refer to Tuning in to Kids suite of programs' content, please acknowledge the program you have drawn this from (i.e., Tuning in to Kids, 2010; Tuning in to Teens, 2012 or 2019, Dads Tuning in to Kids, 2015)*
- *A number of the materials we use in Tuning In suite of programs are accessed from different sources (i.e., Bears Stickers, Gottman DVD etc) that have individual copyright restrictions on them. This can make it difficult to know what you are able to use in online delivery. Please read the restrictions on these materials set out by the organisation that publishes them. However, if you use material for 'in the moment' delivery it may be very similar to face-to-face delivery.*

Helpful hints for group delivery

Establishing trust and maintaining connection

We believe that group-delivery of the Tuning In suite of parenting programs works in part by providing an open and supportive space where participants can share their experiences and feel that they are not alone in their struggles. In times of crisis and chaos, when people are already more emotional, sharing personal stories from the past and current life can induce an even more vulnerable space for many people. Encouraging and promoting a sense of safety in the group is important in any setting. In an online group this may be much more difficult to establish, and you can assist by naming this challenge for participants at the outset. Trusting people you can't see can be hard. On the other hand, sometimes it can help people to feel braver. You may wish to keep checking in (such as a questionnaire, a call, or an email afterwards) with your participants about this – without flooding them with contact, try to find a sensitive balance as you would in your face-face work.

On a practical level, technical issues around internet connection and hardware may impede group bonding and sharing. Please keep this in mind and encourage your group to test their equipment (hardware, internet connect, speakers, cameras etc) before commencing sessions and/or offer to test their connection ahead of time.

Tuning in to the virtual group – adapting sessions for online delivery

We encourage you to follow the manual as much as possible when you are delivering your groups online, however, delivery online takes longer than face to face. You may need to adjust the length and number of your sessions. Conducting the session is likely to be more strenuous - requiring your undivided attention for the full two hours - and a shorter session may be advisable. You may also wish to have a smaller number of participants in the group to manage the online delivery. When in doubt as to how to proceed, please check in with us too!

Some useful tips - some of these will mirror your face-to face work.

- *Welcoming participants to each session: Open with welcoming, introductions, setting out the plan for the session. Remind participants of the group guidelines.*

- *Warm up exercises: these can be done using 'break-out rooms' in different online programs. For example, the introductions warm-up, bears stickers (after you demonstrate first with an example from yourself). You may need to use the White board function or send participants the set of questions to use during the activity. You could have such extra instructions included in the manual already. Meditations will ideally be read out, but you can also pre-record them.*
- *Group guidelines: Establishing the group rules in session one is critical for all groups but especially in online delivery. Writing up the rules as you go on your 'chat' or blackboard allows people to see these and keeps a record so you can send these out to people later. Take a copy of these and provide them to the group. Come back to group rules each week - albeit briefly, especially about confidentiality.*
- *Reflection on the week and fishbowl role play:*
 1. *Introduce the idea of reflection on the week.*
 2. *Let them know you will use some of these shared examples to do a 'fishbowl' role play.*
 3. *Ask people to write their name on the chat/whiteboard or raise their hand **IF** they would like to share an experience during the week where they tried emotion coaching (or couldn't but want some help) or tried some of the other home activities.*
 4. *Give three to four people the opportunity to speak. Specify that they keep their story brief.*
 5. *Emotion coach them! Remember, as facilitator part of your role is to model emotion coaching – so empathy and naming emotions (without sounding like a robot) can be useful.*
 6. *You may ask a few questions to clarify things.*
 7. *There may be key teaching points to add.*
 8. *Fishbowl role play:*
 - *The first time the facilitator should be the child/adolescent.*
 - *Remember that your participants first be emotionally dismissive with you – all offering different responses. (this can be tricky with time delays etc)*
 - *Then stop – and ask what that was like (for the person being the child and the group).*
 - *Then ask them to role play again with them all offering emotion coaching responses. Follow the roleplay through as long as needed – especially to see if the 'child's' emotion reduces and this may (or may not) involve finishing with step 5.*
 - *Debrief and discuss*
 - *In fishbowl role plays after Session Three when you do the Emotion Detective, it can sometimes be helpful to prepare participants with possible empathy statements before they try emotion coaching.*
 - *Demonstrating non-verbal empathy can be harder online. You may use gestures or words or describe what actions they might take such as, "A hug would be good right now" or "Sitting next to the child would be good now".*
 - *As always, try to remind people to slow down and not jump to problem solving/limit setting. It will be a bit choppy with people all joining from different locations.*
 - *In later sessions you could have a parent role play the child/adolescent. Ask them if they would like to do this. Remind them to stay in role and not switch out even though it might be a little stilted.*
- *Meta-emotion discussion – this is a very confidential/private conversation to encourage over the online space. You can't see people's faces. You may need to check in with people after the session.*
- *Share teaching content via handouts up on your screen while you address the group. In Zoom/Skype or similar platforms, you can usually 'screen share' where you can still see a small picture of the presenter and participants – but in the main screen you can see the text of the handout.*
- *Break-out rooms can be used for exercises in pairs: use these for role play scripts and other exercises in pairs. Have role play practices here too. Break-out rooms often allow you as the facilitator to pop in to each room to check how people are going.*
- *Group rounds – where you ask each person something like what they are doing for self-care or what they are doing to 'build in a pause'. You may need to guide this by calling out the name of the next person to speak, allowing people to say 'pass' if they so wish.*
- *Schedule in breaks. Maintaining your energy, concentration and focus - as a facilitator, individual participant and as a whole group - for an entire session can be demanding. Advise the group you will take a ten minute break in the middle of each session. In that time, keep the screen open but take a break yourself. Ask everyone to put their sound on mute!*
- *Sharing online resources/books etc – how can you do this? Circulating a list might be helpful for your groups.*
- *Finishing up and checking in. Provide a way people can contact you if they have concerns or have things they'd like to share with you.*

- *Check-ins: Follow up with participants after session to ensure that they are okay. As mentioned above, this can occur via sending around a questionnaire immediately after the session to get people's feedback. This will help you to shape your delivery over time. If you are working with a more vulnerable group it is advisable that they have you or a caseworker contact them to allow them to debrief the session.*

Please feel free to contact us to share any additional tips that have worked well for you.

Helpful hints for one-to-one delivery

- *We are currently conducting a research trial to assess the effectiveness of Tuning in to Kids delivered one-to-one, in comparison to face-to-face group delivery, via an online program and a control condition program. We do not know the results for this yet – but we have found anecdotally that the one-to-one facilitator delivery using the same manual as the group but delivering in one hour sessions seems very effective, engaging and helpful for parents.*
- *It is important that you do all the exercises - especially the role plays, even if they feel a little strange and at times hard to keep parents 'in role'. It is important to emotion coach how people might feel about doing role plays while balancing encouragement and letting them know how important this practice is for learning these skills. Role plays are one of the main ways people learn to emotion coach. It can feel very strange to do role plays when it is just the two of you and online. Some people can feel anxious, awkward and concerned about getting the right words to say. Name these emotions.*
- *Exercises that are group exercises need to be converted to just you and the participant. When doing role plays, you want to swap roles so that the participant gets to role play the parent and the child roles - having an experience of both. Meta-emotion tends to be a good topic to explore one-to-one but allow people to be 'ready to talk'. Conversations about emotion in family of origin can be confronting and activate people's defences.*
- *In setting the one-to-one sessions up, when first starting, it is important to have a brief chat with participants about the fact that eye contact is tricky when talking via online.*
- *As mentioned earlier, you might practice a little with moving around to try looking at the camera when talking and balancing this with needing to see the parents' face for feedback. Determine what works for you and your participant in terms of visual contact.*
- *Ensure you address confidentiality and safety. Check in how sessions are going at the end.*

Facilitator self-care

As professionals, self-care is always important. The emotions we are experiencing right now during the COVID-19 pandemic may be more intense and overwhelming than normal. Being a person in the helping profession - and holding a group of people's emotions - can be very difficult on top of your own feelings and those around you. Self-care is needed. Doing something each day to nurture your own health and emotional well-being will be very important. Make sure you also have time for debriefing with your colleagues, supervisors or mentors.

Supervision

TIK online supervision sessions will be made available in late April/early May with TIK team members. We will send out details of these in April.

Technological issues in online delivery

We have used the corporate version of Zoom to deliver our sessions and have found this a helpful platform to work from. There is a free version of Zoom also available, however, if you have concerns about confidentiality, you may want to look for a more secure platform. Zoom has useful functions of chat and whiteboard to use and being able to share screen and play dvd materials and to use 'rooms' for break out exercises. Other online options include Team viewer, Skype, Webex, and Go Meeting, which have similar functions.

TIK Online delivery questionnaire for participants

Please feel free to use any of the following questions in your evaluation of your online delivery.

To what extent did you find this session helpful?

1 Very unhelpful	2	3	4 Somewhat	5	6	7 Very helpful
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What was useful? _____

What was not useful? _____

To what extent did you feel able to speak or share personal information in the online session?

1 Unable to share	2	3	4 Somewhat	5	6	7 Able to share
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How did you feel after the online session?

1 Very calm	2	3	4	5	6	7 Very stressed
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What else would you have liked to have covered in this session? _____
