

OnTrac- A CBT Based Group Program for Teens (14–17) with ADHD

Introduction

Adolescence is a critical developmental stage where teens with ADHD face unique and significant challenges. ADHD, a neurodevelopmental condition affecting up to 6% of adolescents, is characterised by persistent patterns of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. These symptoms often lead to academic struggles, difficulties in emotional regulation, and increased engagement in risky behaviours. Adolescents are also navigating a crucial phase of autonomy, where reliance on parental guidance decreases, and self-management becomes essential.

While medication is an effective treatment for ADHD, it often leaves residual symptoms, highlighting the need for additional psychological interventions. The **OnTrac Program** is an innovative and comprehensive approach that addresses these gaps, offering a multimodal treatment plan combining psychoeducation, adaptive thinking, and practical skill-building. Now available online via video recordings, the program ensures accessibility and flexibility for teens and their families, empowering them to meet the challenges of adolescence with confidence.

Program Objectives

The OnTrac Program aims to:

1. Educate teens and their parents about ADHD and its impact.
2. Equip teens with strategies to foster adaptive thinking and emotional resilience.
3. Teach practical skills to improve executive functioning and support life transitions.

Program Modules

1. Psychoeducation

Aim: To provide foundational knowledge about ADHD, enabling participants to understand how the condition affects their lives and identify strategies for management.

Teens with ADHD often face additional challenges due to co-occurring conditions like anxiety, depression, and learning disorders. This module explores:

- What ADHD is and how it is diagnosed.
- The neurobiological basis of ADHD and its impact on self-management.
- Dispelling myths about ADHD (e.g., it is not a result of laziness or low intelligence).
- Treatment options, including the role of medication and psychological support.

By increasing awareness, this module lays the groundwork for self-acceptance and informed decision-making.

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2. Adaptive Thinking

Aim: To foster emotional resilience and equip participants with the ability to approach challenges in a constructive and realistic way.

Negative thinking often erodes self-esteem and contributes to the emotional difficulties experienced by teens with ADHD. This module addresses:

- The connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours.
- Identifying and overcoming cognitive distortions (e.g., all-or-nothing thinking).
- Exploring personal values and setting meaningful goals.
- Improving family relationships and communication.

Through this module, teens learn to challenge unhelpful thought patterns, develop a growth mindset, and build the confidence to navigate life's challenges effectively.

3. Skills Building

Aim: To develop practical executive functioning skills that empower teens to manage daily responsibilities and transitions with greater independence.

Executive functioning deficits often hinder academic success, time management, and social relationships. This module focuses on:

- Time management and prioritisation.
- Planning and organisation.
- Communication skills for social and professional interactions.
- Managing procrastination and distractibility.
- Adapting to life transitions, such as starting a casual job, moving to tertiary education, or handling new relationships.

Learning these skills during adolescence equips teens with the tools to succeed in various aspects of their lives, building a foundation for long-term achievement and independence.

Parent participation:

The program includes a pre-program information session designed to:

1. Set realistic expectations for the program.
2. Increase parental understanding of ADHD and its impact on their teen.
3. Address family dynamics that may contribute to defiant behaviours.
4. Collaboratively problem-solve behavioural challenges with their teen.
5. Identify and leverage the teen's motivations and strengths.

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Program Delivery

- **Format:** Online delivery via video conferencing, accessible at the participant's convenience.
- **Eligibility:** Teens aged 14–17 with ADHD.
- **Facilitator:** Led by a registered psychologist who is also the program developer and the co-author of *What Lies Beneath Matters*, a series of workbooks for ADHD.
- **Duration:** Six weekly sessions (90min), on Thursdays from 5:00-6:30 during school terms.
- **Rebates:** Offered under Medicare's Better Access Initiative (Group Therapy, item 80123) with a referral from a GP, paediatrician, or psychiatrist.
- **Exclusions:** Teens exhibiting severe aggression or violent behaviour are not suitable for the OnTrac Program and may benefit from intensive interventions (e.g., in-home multisystemic therapy, day hospital programs) before participating.

Feedback is provided to referring professionals, ensuring integrated care.

Contact Information

For more information or to enrol, contact Grace at:

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