

Seasons for Growth

Children & Young People's Program



Seasons for Growth provides social and emotional learning that supports children and young people to adapt to experiences of change, loss and grief in their lives.

Who is it for?

Children and young people impacted by change, loss, and grief, such as:

- the death of someone they love
- parent separation or divorce
- out-of-home care
- forced migration
- family illness
- other significant change or loss.

Seasons for Growth creates a safe space to learn knowledge and skills to cope with such experiences. The focus is on the impacts of change and loss, rather than the details of specific events.

How does it work?

Seasons for Growth is an evidence-based, social and emotional learning program, facilitated in small groups by a trained adult Companion. Drawing on the rich metaphor of the seasons, and using safe, creative learning activities, young people learn and practise new ways of thinking and responding to experiences of change and loss. This learning enhances protective factors (building personal resilience and social skills) while minimising risk factors (such as isolation) that impact their mental health and wellbeing.

Program outcomes

Seasons for Growth supports children and young people to:

- **learn** that life changes like the seasons
- **understand** it is normal to experience a range of feelings and other reactions
- **explore** different strategies for managing these reactions
- **strengthen** communication, decision making and problem solving skills
- **participate** in a supportive network of peers and adults
- **apply** their new learning within and beyond the group.

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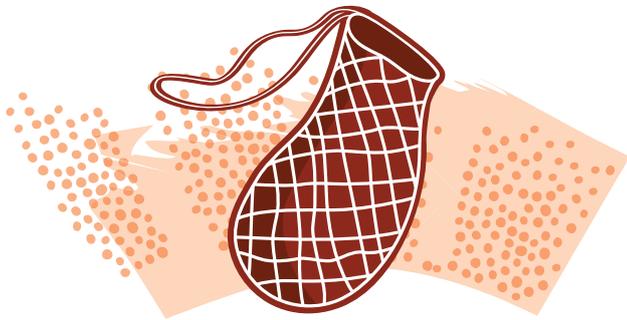
I am able to get on with my work faster because worries are no longer inside me and I'm happier.

Child,
Seasons for Growth



How is it delivered?

- The program is run over 8 sessions with groups of 4-7 participants and is facilitated by trained adults called "Companions."
- Teachers, counsellors, psychologists, social workers, chaplains and health professionals are endorsed by their school or organisation to undertake a two-day training workshop to implement the program and to qualify to become a Companion.
- There is also a range of optional continuing professional learning modules for trained Companions to deepen knowledge and practice (such as, in implementing groups, trauma-informed practice, reflective practice and understanding neurodiversity).



Keeping Spirit Strong through Seasons for Growth

A beautifully illustrated Keeping Spirit Strong Resource Guide and associated training will soon be available for Companions. The Keeping Spirit Strong Resource Guide provides a stimulus for Companions and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge holders to discuss locally-relevant cultural adaptations to the Seasons for Growth program. Such cultural adaptations enrich the learning of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participants and strengthen cultural safety, as well as potentially contributing to healing and reconciliation efforts.



Evidence and evaluation

Over the past 25 years numerous reviews and evaluations have attested that Seasons for Growth offers an overwhelmingly positive experience and beneficial outcomes across a wide range of settings. Reflecting the objectives of the program, the most recent evaluations concluded that Seasons for Growth:

- **builds** understanding and skills in managing change, loss and grief
- **improves** participants' emotional wellbeing
- **enables** participants to express their views, thoughts and feelings
- **strengthens** participants' social and support networks.

Furthermore, Research Impact NSW (2019) has recognised that the programs "promote resilience and self-esteem, normalise grief, build peer support and foster positive coping strategies."

The Seasons for Growth Children and Young People's Program is endorsed by state education evidence-based mental health program menus and is listed in the [Australian Institute of Family Studies, Communities for Children Facilitating Partner Evidence-Based Programme Guidebook](#).

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