



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

April 2023

Volume 6

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Message for Parents
- Feedback on Questionnaire
- Updates from the Month
- Monthly Focus: Picture Exchange Communication System(PECS)



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MESSAGE FOR PARENTS

Dear Parents,

I hope this letter finds you and your family in good health and high spirits. I am writing to inform you that I will be taking a leave of absence from my duties at Centre for Growing Minds from 29th May 2023 for a period of one month. During this month, I will be traveling and therefore unavailable for physical communication with parents and caregivers.

During my absence, Ahlam Premjee, our BCBA will be taking over my supervisory duties and management of the centre. Please feel free to contact reception to schedule meetings with her when required. She can also be contacted via email at ahlam.premjee@growingminds.com.pk

I have made all necessary arrangements prior to leaving in terms of next step goals and behaviour management plans for all our kids. Thank you to all parents who took the time to book in slots and attending meetings held on 19-20th May 2023. Should any problems arise, please feel free to email me directly at areesa.chinoy@growingminds.com.pk or send a message to reception and Ashbeel & Khurram will pass on all messages to me accordingly. During this time, please allow three working days for a response.



I would like to reassure all parents that Centre for Growing Minds will continue to provide the same high-quality care and support to your children during my absence. Our dedicated team of professionals will continue to work hard to ensure that all children receive the best possible care and support.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Sincerely,
Areesa Chinoy
Founder of Centre for Growing Minds

Note: Progress reports due in June will be completed as scheduled and either submitted to parent in advance (first few days of June) with skills mastered till end of May or at the start of July with skills mastered till end of June. If you are due to receive a report during this time and have a preference, please contact reception & Areesa will do her best to ensure all reports are submitted accordingly.

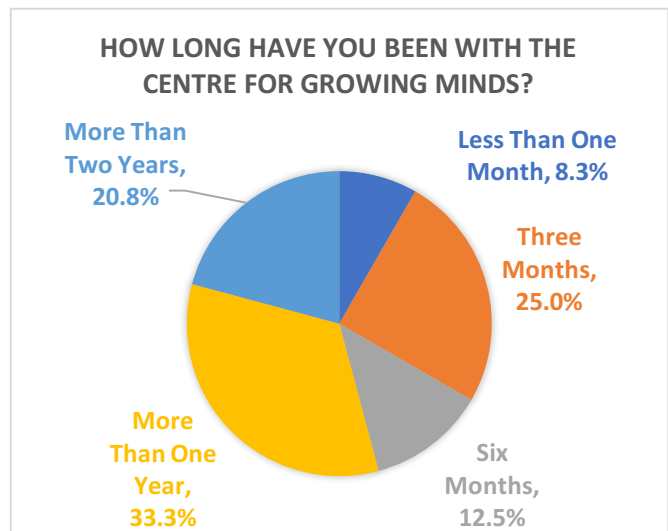
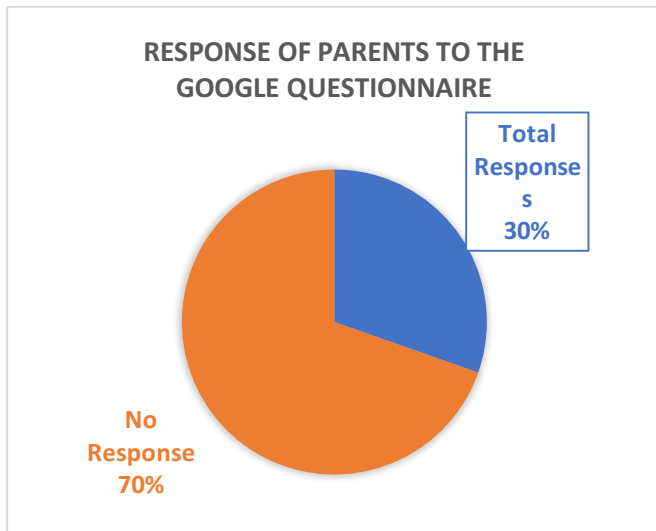
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FEEDBACK ON OUR PARENTS QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Big thank you to parents who took the time to fill in the parent questionnaire to help us improve our quality of service.

We also noted that 54% of parents participating in the questionnaire have been with us for more than one year.



Based on the feedback received - we would like to offer parents a choice in type of feedback received per session.

Our weekly summaries are shared in writing at the end of a fixed number of sessions to keep parents informed of progress whilst maintaining the confidentiality of the child (whereby we do not talk about our kids in front of them and we avoid giving feedback in the waiting room in the presence of other parents. If parents would prefer to change the type of feedback received and opt for a face-to-face meeting at any time, please send a message to reception and we will ensure a session at the end of the week is ended 5-10 minutes early for our therapists to talk to you directly inside the therapy room. For those attending group therapies only, you are welcome to book in a meeting with the therapists for in person feedback. Meetings under 30 minutes are conducted free of cost.

Many parents have requested a training on the topic of puberty and autism. We will also be preparing a talk on this subject in the month of August. Details to follow.

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SOCIAL SKILLS GROUP SESSIONS

We are now offering social skills classes to children aged 4-5 years, 5-7 years, 7-9 years and also 11-12 years. For the summer holidays, we have increased group sessions as many of our kids are off from school. If you are interested in a group session – please contact reception to let us know so we can keep this in mind when formulating our session plans.



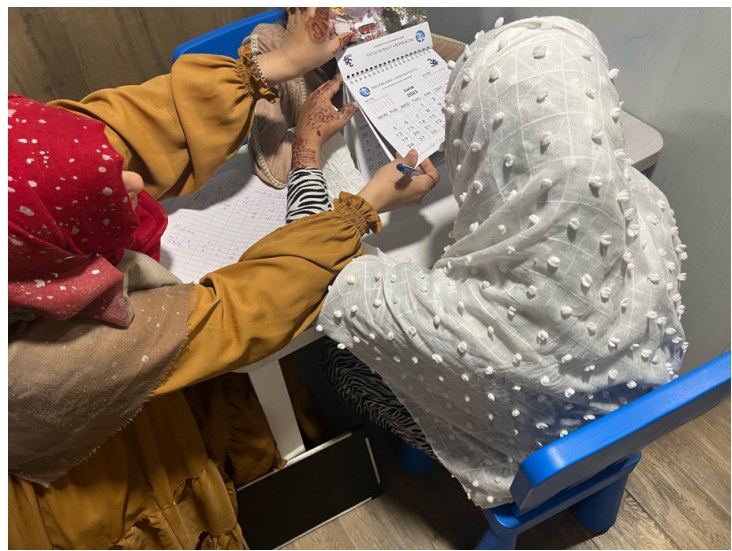
We are also offering yoga for our kids aged 5-7 years old to tackle following instructions as part of a group. Our yoga classes run weekly on Saturdays from 2:30 – 3:15pm and is led by Nehel Lali (Flex.Abilities) and supported by our RBT.

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UPDATES OF THE MONTH

Erum Khatri, our RBT, volunteers to run weekly sessions with two children at Kiran Foundation. She administers ABA therapy under Areesa's supervision. Big shout out to Erum for all the good work she does in her free time.



Group Session



Parent Training Session



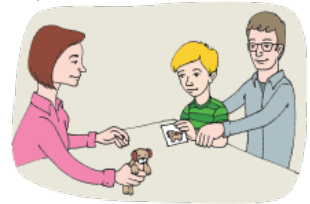
Paired Session

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Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS)

It is common for people to believe that language and communication involves mainly speech. In our daily lives we use many modes of behaviours to communicate. Psychologists and Behaviourists lay emphasis on the idea that any mode of behaviour can be communicative. This means, behaviours such as speaking, gesturing, using symbols, or exchanging pictures are all different types of communication and have meaning. Individuals with developmental differences may have difficulty in communicating vocally using spoken words. There are various systems implemented to help such individuals in communicating in effective ways. One of which is Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS).



PECS is part of Alternative, Augmentative Communication (AAC) and is designed to help individuals communicate their needs with pictures that represents objects, actions, or concepts. Pictures are exchanged and/or placed in a communication book in a social setting. The system is taught in 6 'phases' focusing on exchanging of pictures, discrimination between pictures, learning to be spontaneous and forming sentences. It is introduced to individuals with pictures of items used frequently in their daily life and can be adapted to meet the requirements of the learner through several ways. The table below gives an overview of the advantages of implementing PECS as communication system:



Flexible	The system allows for pictures in the communication book to be customised according to the learner, with the option to increase, replace or remove pictures as the learner progresses. The communication book can be taken anywhere the learner wants. It can be used with people in their different settings.
Low tech	The communication book does not require an electronic device, an electricity source, or other technological things for it to function.
Cost effective	As PECS is a low-tech system, the minimum requirement to obtain materials to develop a communication book and its pictures is low. This is beneficial to those who are unable to obtain expensive devices.
Easy to learn	The system is divided into straightforward sequence of steps that must be learnt first before advancing onto more complex stages.
Easy to understand	The communicative partner will easily understand what is being asked and every response will likely be reinforced.

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Facilitates speech	In PECS, when a learner is being taught how to exchange pictures, a prompter is required to label pictures that are being exchanged. Research has shown that PECS facilitates speech in learners who have some words in their speech repertoire before PECS is introduced.
Promotes socio-communicative skills	Research has shown PECS to promote one on one social communication as individuals are able to initiate, express, comment and request with the help of PECS.

There are certain limitations to the implementations of PECS. They are listed in the table below:

Limited vocabulary	PECS is a visual-based system that primarily relies on pictures to convey meaning. While this is effective for some individuals, it may not be sufficient for more complex communication needs. The individual will only be able to use the ‘provided’ pictures to communicate. What happens when they want to communicate something where there is no picture provided?
Time consuming	PECS requires consistent training and practice for the system to be effective for a long period of time. This may not always be possible, and inconsistency can hinder the learning process. As the vocabulary builds – it will take an individual a longer time to ‘find’ the picture. This can also hinder the use of PECS.
Portability	Individuals will need the pictures to communicate. What happens if they forget the PECS folder at home? What form of communication will they have?
Not effective for all	The system may not be appropriate for individuals who have limited fine motor movements or who show lack of motivation to exchange pictures.
Low tech	Other AAC systems and devices now have speech generation and require limited effort from the learner.

PECS has shown to decrease challenging behaviours, facilitate speech and social communication in individuals who have learnt at least 4 out of 6 phases. However, it should only be implemented if the learner has prerequisite skills that are required to follow through with the exchange of pictures. Individual’s potential benefits and the system’s success in the natural environment should be considered before its implementation.