



MEGAbility: Supporting Children Through Occupational Therapy-Based Gymnastics

About MEGAbility

Megability is an Occupational Therapy-based gymnastics program designed and led by an Occupational Therapist, to support children who would benefit from a supportive and inclusive environment. Megability is underpinned by two main principles:

1. **Utilising Occupational Therapy-based supports to make gymnastics accessible:** The program integrates Occupational Therapy based strategies, supports and methods to enable participants to complete gymnastics-based skills. This enables participants to participate and be included within an environment that is catered to their needs.
2. **Utilising gymnastics participation as a therapeutic medium to support the development of functional skills:** Gymnastics offers movement-based activity and structure that provides a foundation to work towards developing functional skills. By engaging in carefully structured gymnastics activities, MEGAbility uses a unique and engaging approach that aims to support participants to develop their skills while working toward functional goals. Through the process of learning new gymnastics skills, or playing movement-based games, children learn about the **process** of learning new motor, cognitive, social and regulation skills which aims to transfer to different life skills.

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This program is not just about gymnastics—it's about empowering individuals to reach their full potential through movement, engagement, and therapy-driven support.



Therapeutic Aims of Occupational Therapy-Based Gymnastics

The Megability program aims to:

- **Develop Gross Motor Skills:** Activities such as balancing, jumping, climbing, and grasping develop strength, coordination, and body awareness, needed for everyday tasks.
- **Support Sensory Processing and Regulation:** Gymnastics incorporates varied movement experiences and supports participants to move through the different zones of arousal/regulation. The program is designed with aim to support participants to experience and learn how to increase and decrease arousal and respond to sensory input, promoting the development of self-regulation and increasing understanding of body cues and feelings.
- **Improve Core Strength and Postural Control:** Gymnastics exercises focus on strengthening core muscles, aiming to develop posture, balance, and endurance. These are foundational skills required for many daily living skills, for example sitting at a table to work, play or eat.
- **Develop Social Skills:** Structured group activities are specifically selected to encourage turn-taking, cooperation, and communication, supporting social inclusion and interaction.
- **Enhance Emotional Regulation and Confidence:** Through achievable challenges and guided support, the program aims to support participants to build resilience, self-esteem, and the ability to manage frustration in a safe and supportive environment.
- **Support Executive Functioning and Motor Planning:** Activities requiring sequencing, timing, and coordination aim to support skills in planning, organisation, and problem-solving skills, to enable everyday independence.

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A little bit more on Occupational Therapy-based Gymnastics...

Occupational Therapy encompasses a broad range of interventions aimed at improving an individual's ability to participate in activities of everyday life.

- **Direct Occupational Engagement Support:** Occupational Therapy based gymnastics directly supports children to engage within the following occupational domains: play, leisure and social participation.
- **Indirect Occupational Engagement Support:** Gymnastics, when adapted with Occupational Therapy principles, aims to support participants to work towards the “Therapeutic Aims” of the program. Participation in Occupational Therapy-based gymnastics aims to teach foundational skills and movement principles that support occupational engagement across areas.
- **Functional goals:** MEGAbility works with families to develop functional goals that aim to have meaningful impacts on their everyday life. Within MEGAbility sessions, we work towards these goal areas and use gymnastics skills as the vessel to support functional skill attainment. Goal areas are specific to the unique needs of each participant and usually align with one of the ‘Therapeutic Aims’ of the program. Some example goal areas may include: being able to wait for your turn (social/regulation), to develop bilateral coordination skills (motor/coordination), to be able to attend to instructions (executive functioning/regulation), to be able to follow a multistep instruction (executive functioning).
- **Supports to enable accessibility:** Occupational therapists are trained to analyse and modify activities and the environments to meet the specific needs of individuals. The Occupational Therapy-based supports, modifications, methods and learning strategies embedded within Megability classes aim to support children that require an inclusive and accessible environment. For example, modifications to the learning environment, learning methods used, regulation supports and task adaptations.
- **Upskilling participants to support social and recreational participation:** By aiming to develop children's skills within the above-mentioned goal areas, Megability classes aim to provide an environment where children

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can develop their skills, learn strategies, and better understand the supports that they require, with aim for them to be able to participate in mainstream social and recreation activities within the future.

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