Frequently asked questions

Frequently asked questions about the group coaching program

**What is coaching?**

Coaching is an opportunity to set aside some time to be supported and challenged to become the best that you can be. We all get stuck sometimes. We may have a decision that seems impossible to make. We may be feeling overwhelmed as we face a new role or phase in life. We may need to figure out how to recover from a setback or we may want to check in with someone just to make sure we are on the path that we want to be on. Coaching is for people who want to make sure they are moving forward towards their goals and achieving their dreams.

**What is group coaching?**

Group coaching is a powerful format that works well for building connections and normalising experiences. We have found that parents of autistic children tend to share a lot of common challenges and hopes. In groups people often get new ideas and new insights from others. In our program we teach coaching skills which you can then use to have practice coaching conversations with other group members. The content of these coaching conversations will generally be about you as a parent and other relevant topics.

**What does this course offer that other courses do not?**

This program is not an information course about autism, although there are other courses that do this. This unique course focuses on you as a parent rather than on your child. We believe that if you can become the most resourceful, wise, and calm version of yourself you will be more able to parent in a way that works for you and all your family. We will help you do this. Katie and Lynne are professional coaches who know first-hand the benefits of using a coaching approach when it comes to raising neurodiverse families. We will teach you some coaching skills which you can then try using during the course and take home to use in everyday life.

**Will there be any kind of structure to the groups?**

Firstly, in our courses you will be expected to actively participate – you will not be stuck in a 90-minute group discussion listening to one or two people monologuing or moaning! We stay positive and create a safe space for people to find their solutions to make life work well. During the sessions, you can expect to do a variety of different activities including practising coaching skills, focused group discussion (whole group and smaller groups), learning about tools and resources, reflective writing, and lots of exercises to get you thinking about how you can make family life work well.

**Will there be any kind of rules about how the group runs?**

At Gold Mind we are brave, kind, and present and we run our courses with these values at the heart of everything we do. Each session we ensure tha twe make these values meaningful for the group and how we behave. This is really important part of our contracting with you as it helps us create a safe space for all our participants and ensures the best experience for everyone.

**Will there be any homework?**

Lasting positive change is 20% insight and 80% practice. Therefore, whilst there will be opportunities to get both insight and practice in our sessions how you practice between sessions will be essential to getting the results you want. To get the most out of the course, we ask that you engage in reflective practice activities (which we will give you) and try out your coaching skills in between sessions.

**What are your views about autism?**

We are pro-diversity, we recognise that humanity is made up of lots of different types of people and that no one is less than another. We recognise autism as a term that describes a common set of strengths and challenges, although autism shows up differently in everyone. Autism comes with gifts and also particular challenges, as a result of being in a minority group. If you are looking for a way to make your child “normal” we are not the right match for you. If you want to help your child feel good about who they are, appreciative of their strengths whilst developing some tools and confidence to overcome their challenges then we can work together.

**Is this program suitable for only Neurotypical parents, only autistic parents or both?**

Lynne identifies as neurotypical and Katie identifies as autistic which creates a powerful dynamic for working with diversity. This program is for any parent. The pilot course included parents who identified as neurodiverse and also parents who identified as neurotypical and we used feedback from all of them to create the current course content.

**Do I have to join with my camera and mic on?**

Yes, please. This is a small group setting of no more than 10 parents. You will be working with the other members of your group and it helps if we can see and hear each other. We do some activities when we encourage you to mute and turn off your camera. We use the chat (text) facility as well as asking for verbal comments, so you can use text rather than verbal responses in main group discussions if this is your preference. However, in pair work, we would need you to use speech rather than text. We contract that if you need to take a break you can turn off your camera and mute your mic until you are ready to re-join.

**Is this for parents of any age of child?**

This course is for parents of school-aged children aged from 5 through to 17.

**Is this for parents of any autistic child?**

We have aimed this course for parents of autistic children who are in mainstream education or who are being home educated and working at or near to age expected levels. If your child has complex needs, is nonverbal, or has severe learning difficulties this course may not be completely relevant to your situation, but we would be happy to discuss this further with you.

**Does my child need to have had an official diagnosis of autism in order for me to attend this course?**

No, we accept parents on to the course if their child has an autism diagnosis or if they suspect their child is autistic. Your child may be under assessment or you may have decided not to pursue an official diagnosis at the moment.

**Is this course only for parents new to autism?**

No, we welcome parents from different stages of the journey. This course is not an autism training course and we recommend that people new to autism do their own research to develop a wider understanding of the topic in addition to attending the program.

**Is there a break? I’m worried I can’t manage 90 minutes on zoom**

Although we don’t have an official break in the session we do include lots of paired and small group work as well as some time for individual reflection. During these times we encourage people to take short breaks if they need to.

**What happens if I miss a session?**

If you miss a session we will send you copies of the written materials that other participants received in the missed session. We cannot refund missed sessions.

**What happens if my child is off school when a session is happening and I am their sole carer?**

We all understand that at the moment we do not know when schools will be open and that it’s likely you will have children at home with you when attending this course. It is not appropriate to have children in the same room as you and if this unpreventable we advise that you use headphones and mute yourself so that you can listen. If you are unexpectedly interrupted, please mute yourself and prioritize your child. If you are in a coaching practice session with another parent, participants can message us and one of us will replace you.

**Do you run sessions at different times? I want to come to this program but am not free when the sessions are running.**

If you want to attend but cannot make the dates, get in touch and let us know. We can add you to our waiting list. We plan to vary when we run courses.

**My partner and I both want to attend this session, do we need to pay for two places? Can we attend the same program?**

It’s great that you both want to invest in becoming the best parents you can be. We do need each individual who wants to attend to book a separate place. The activities we do work when we have one person per screen. We run two cohorts in parallel on different days and we recommend that you book onto different programs. If this is not possible then get in touch.

**I’d love to attend this program, but I can’t afford it**

What can you afford? Let us know. This is a high-value course that has the potential to significantly improve your life. What would that be worth to you? You should offer to pay an amount that you really notice leaving your bank account but not an amount that leaves you struggling to pay for your everyday needs. If this amount is significantly less than what we charge get in touch.

**What are your qualifications?**

Katie and Lynne are both professionally trained and accredited coaches with the International Coaching Federation. Lynne’s background is in Speech and Language Therapy and Katie’s background is in senior school leadership and teaching. Both Lynne and Katie belong to neurodiverse families and we know this means life’s not always plain sailing!