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The Whole Parent: An Evaluation of Parental Interventions

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The Whole Parent: An Evaluation of Parental Interventions

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A Capstone Project submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the Master of Science Degree in

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

CAPSTONE PROJECT

The Whole Parent: An Evaluation of Parental Interventions

This is to certify that the Capstone Project of

Elizabeth Hellenbrand

Has been approved by the faculty advisor and the CE 695 – Capstone Project

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Abstract

With an increase in disruptive child behaviors, parents are utilizing supports such as mentors, counselling and parent training programs increasingly. This study investigates different parental training programs regarding their effectiveness of changed behavior, recommended population served, main goals of the program and skills taught within the stated program. Mindfulness incorporation programs, Strengthening Families program, ACT program, Incredible years and the Circles of Security program are focused on within this research.

Keywords: Parent interventions, Skill building, effectiveness and application

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The Whole Parent: An Evaluation of Parental Interventions

Between mentors, camps, workshops and trainings, many parents have been working towards improving their child's behavior. With new programs emerging often, offering new progressive interventions, or empirical data supporting the effectiveness of the programs, it can be a challenge to know what programs are truly best for family. Considering the child's age, duration of the program, program goals and scientific evidence, I will go over five parental intervention programs and their effectiveness. Identifying the intention behind each program and the ability to meet that goal will determine effectiveness in this essay.

With each program having a different intention, the rationale behind such differences supports such a wide range of needs and applications. Welsh et al. (2013), identified parental intervention training programs to be a large contributor to reducing the likelihood of initial criminal acts and reoccurring criminal acts. With early childhood intervention, risk factors used to predict future delinquency, were counter balanced with the information and training completed by the families. With the well-researched benefits of intervention programs in providing additional parental supports for positive parenting, the focus is shifted to the effectiveness of programs on their specified population.

Literature Review

Within this literature review, different parental intervention programs used to support children and adolescent's positive behavior and developmental programs such as the Mindful Parent program, Strengthening Families Program, Circle of Security and the Incredible Years Program will be reviewed. I will discuss the directed population, structure and effectiveness of each program in achieving their stated intention(s). By defining each program and using

empirical evidence of the effectiveness of each program, limitations and improvements can be made.

Mindful Parenting Programs

Parental sided training along with child training supports the dynamic development of healthy communications and interactions with each other. Childs' outburst events are often a trigger for a parent's automatic responses. These can be expressed as over reacting or harsh discipline strategies. At the same time, adolescence whom already have a challenging time regulating emotions and managing vulnerable emotions may also react strongly and escalate the situation in a continuous cycle of negative reactions (Duncan, Coatsworth, & Greenberg, 2009). It is with this toxic cycle that mindful Parent interventions can support the halt of the cycle by intervening with both the parent and child through building mindfulness skills and perspectives

Parental Mindfulness Training

Changes of an interpersonal communication level of well-being, parental stress, anger management, negative mood states, and self-compassion are all noted by Coatsworth, et al. (2015). Within the parental mindfulness training approach, Coatsworth et al. (2015) found that incorporating mindfulness training alone sought to enhance parenting skills and view their child behaviors differently. This allowed for more effective and improved parent-youth interactions. With the mindfulness training, parents were able to alter paternal experiences with their children.

Aligning with the benefits of parental mindfulness training this study identified that incorporation of mindfulness training to other parental intervention/training programs aided in successful outcomes for the families that participate. Coatsworth et al. (2015) incorporated parental mindfulness training to the Strengthening Families Intervention (cite) within their study.

This combination of programs enhances other training programs due to the additional emphasis on parental emotional communication skills utilized.

With a co-occurring benefits, child and parents, utilizing mindfulness into parent intervention training can support the whole family dynamic (Sawyer Cohen & Semple, 2010). Endorsing the parent and child's mindfulness skill set means the tapping into of meditative concepts allowing for an enhanced present moment perspective. Encouraging a present consciousness stream, feelings and body sensations relation to current stressors and situations build the families resilience to distress.

Purpose and goals

Endorsing the parent and child's mindfulness skill set means the tapping into of meditative concepts allowing for an enhanced present moment perspective. Encouraging a present consciousness stream, feelings and body sensations relation to current stressors and situations build the families resilience to distress (Sawyer Cohen & Semple, 2010).

Population and age

The target audience for this program is parents of children under the age of 18. Groups can be split depending on the age ranges and needs. This program does not have a population identified by social economic status, ethnicity, or risk factors. This program can be utilized and adapted to meet the needs of families that can use mindfulness to support positive parenting and interactions with their children.

Evidence of effectiveness

Aligning with the benefits of parental mindfulness training, this study identified that incorporation of mindfulness training to other parental intervention/training programs aided in successful outcomes for the families that participate. Coatsworth et al. (2015) incorporated

parental mindfulness training to the Strengthening Families Intervention (2011) within their study. This combination of programs enhances other training programs due to the ability to reach various populations and demographics.

the additional emphasis on parental emotional communication skills utilized.

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Child Mindfulness Training

The child mindfulness training is utilized to allow children to learn how to focus their attention, awareness and self-control (2012). These skills are obtained by completing mindfulness exercises during the training times and as homework. Motivations for the children to use learned skills was by having a reward system. The system provided points for children that used skills learned in training and supplied rewards at their home (Van Der Oord, Bogels, & Peijnenburg, 2010). The parental side of this training aimed to teach parents to (1) deliberately and fully present in the here and now with their child in a non-judgmental way, (2) take care of themselves, (3) accept difficulties of their child, and (4) answer rather than react to difficult behaviors of tier child (Van Der Oord et al., 2010).

With internal reflection typically associated with mindfulness, parents build an understanding of themselves and apply this to interactions and reactions with their children (Chaplin et al., 2018). In a mother's Mindful Parent training, studies revealed an increase

maternal mindfulness, reduced parenting stress, overall reduction of stress, increased emotional awareness of parenting, and improved parent-adolescent relationship quality. With an overall eight sessions, the study revealed that with the incorporation of the adolescent to the mindfulness practice, the relationship dynamic shifts from a primary parental intervention into a collaborative intervention. As seen in Chaplin et al.'s session outline, seen in appendix B, parents' are practicing a skill, an idea of how it can be allied and homework assignments associated.

Strengthening Families Program 10-14 (SFP)

Purpose and Goals

Although Strengthening Families 10-14 program does include communication skills within their programing. There is the inclusion of differential focus. With an umbrella concept of preventing adolescent substance abuse, strengthening parenting skills and build family strengths while teaching healthy coping skills to facilitate a better future for the youth and families (Collins & Fetsch, 2012). Based off the social ecology model of adolescent substance abuse and the resiliency model, the Strengthening Families Program supports preventative skill building regarding potential substance abuse as a major aspect of the program outline. According to Collins and Fetsch, SFP produced results implying a long-term benefit of the program in the primary prevention of alcohol misuse. With communication skills, interpersonal effectiveness and positive reaction training not being a large proponent of the program, it is unsure how successful the program would be when substance abuse is not the primary concern linked to behaviors. This program utilized a dual approach, where the parents attend group while the children also attend group in a different room. These two separate groups are created to balance and complement each other's development of effective skills such as communication, collaborations, reflection and problem solving.

Population and Age

This program is targeted towards parents and youths aged 10-14 years old. These families would be court referred, low income families, faith-based groups, minority groups such as Latinx, Asian, Native American families with mental health concerns. This program is utilized for the intervention of high-risk youth and families of diverse identities.

Evidence of Effectiveness

This program consists of 14 sessions, 2 hours each occasion, where the first hour is spent learning skills to increased desired behaviors by implementing positive behavior rewards (2011). This portion of the training has a psychoeducational aspect of learning about clear communication, effective discipline techniques, substance use, problem solving and creating boundaries through limit setting. During the initial hour in the children's group, the children are learning core social skills that not only support parental interactions but have alternative applications. The children's group learns about understanding feelings, controlling anger, resist peer pressure, comply with parental rules, solve problems and communicate needs and wants effectively with parents (Collins & Fetsch, 2012). During the second half of the group meetings, the families combine to engage in structured family activities, practice play therapy, have family meetings, enhance communication skills, effective discipline, plan family activities and support positive behavior interventions and rewards.

Circles of Security**Purpose and Goals**

With adjustment occasionally playing a role in the behaviors of children, Circles of Security attempts to approach these needs with a psychoeducation approach (Cassidy et al., 2014). With a parental training focus, client examples to draw and reflect upon caregivers are

supported through situational examples via videos. Identified goals of the program are: increase security of attachment of the child to the parents, increase parent's ability to read child's cues for needs, increase empathy in the parent for the child, decrease negative behaviors of the parent regarding the child's motivations for behaviors, increase parent's capacity to self-reflect, increase parent's capacity to utilize pause, reflect, and chose security-promoting caregiving behaviors, increase parent's capacity to regulate stressful emotional states within themselves and the children, increase parent's ability to recognize tears in the relationship and facilitate repairs, increase parent's ability to provide comfort when their child is in moments of distress.

The Circles of Security Program uses video recordings to visual show the parent/child interactions and identify the strengths and struggles within the relationship, attachments specifically. It is through the identification of where the struggle occurs that the intervention becomes specific to the family. According to Andrews and Coyne (2018), struggles in dyad relationships typically occur at the top, bottom or left of the Circle of Security cycle in attachment seen in appendix C (2018). These three areas, known as the linchpin struggle, is accounted for in two phases. The initial phase is a showing the parent how attachment plays into the cycle of needs, specifically to identify how their child can express their need for attachment and how their needs to be met (Andrews & Coyne, 2018). The second phase of the program shows the parent how they are maintaining the struggle in the linchpin by identifying specific behaviors seen in videos. The final phase is a conclusion video recording reveling positive behaviors and improvements seen (Andrews and Coyne, 2018).

Population and Age

This program is targeted towards high risk families such as families of teen pregnancy, enrolled in head start or parents of irritable babies. The age specifications of the Circle of

Security are standardized for under the age of six years old but adaptations can be made and are case specific (Andrews and Coyne, 2018).

Evidence of Effectiveness

According to Mercer (2014), the population this program serves is those at risk of inadequate attachment relationships and behaviors that may follow. With intention of increasing caregiver sensitivity and reduce the risk of insecure and/or disorganized attachment (Cassidy et al., 2017). Seeking to aid in parental responses to their child's deep emotions is the main outcome of this program. Recommended by service providers for populations that need supports in order to facilitate healthy attachments within the family system. This program was designed to be incorporated into families that appear high risk. With individualization within the program, despite stock video examples, families work through situations of self-reflection, trigger identification and situational assessment to build reflection skills. According to Cassidy et al. (2017) this insight is so critical for caregivers whom themselves have experienced trauma or atypical childhoods, that this skill of self-reflection on attachment experiences supports the breaking of negative intergenerational cycles of attachment.

ACT Raising Safe Kids Program

Purpose and Goals

ACT program what initially developed by the American Psychological Association and the National Association for the Education of Young Children in order to prevent youth violence. This program is available to all people regardless of risk perceived (Knox, Burkhart & Hunter, 2011). Broken up into three components, the ACT program comes with a set template of presentation to structure the program for facilitators in both the English and Spanish language. The three components include child development, anger management and Social Problem

solving and nonviolent discipline. Within this program, parents are taught how to manage anger and use nonviolent conflict resolution skills with an emphasis on utilizing positive adult role models to support development and use of skills.

Populations and Age

Within this program, the targeted population is parents with children between the ages of 3 and 16 years old. The children are broken up into groups based on ages, 3-5, 6-11 and 12-16 years old. Specifications of inclusion is being identified as a high-risk family. There is not identified criteria for high risk, however generalized definitions have been identified as low social economic status, disruptive behaviors and members of a minority group (Knox et al., 2011).

Evidence of Effectiveness

Research conducted by Knox, Burkhart and Howe revealed children of participating caregivers indicated improved behaviors when compared to those who did not participate in the ACT program. With marked improvement in parental knowledge of anger management, social problem solving, nonviolent discipline and media literacy, this program indicates a positive change for parent child interactions. According to a study completed by Knox, Burkhart and Hunter, caregivers whom participated in the 8-week program revealed reduced harsh and hostile parenting behaviors and attitudes, reduced physical violence towards children, and improved parents' perceived importance and use of methods learned in the program.

Incredible Years

Purpose and Goals

With these skills carrying over to the home, parents are also receiving training within the Incredible Year (IY) program. Parent programs are also divided into separate age groups of their

children: baby (0-1), toddler (1-3), preschool (3-6), and school age (6-12). Each age group has a different duration of training. Baby program is between 8-9 weeks of 2-hour sessions with both parents and baby present in the sessions. Toddler program is completed with 12 weekly 2-hour sessions, without the child (ren). Both Preschool and School age programs are completed in 18-20 weekly sessions of 2 hours each (Herman, 2009). Each of these parent groups has a controlled group size between 8-12 parents to maintain group cohesiveness and increased peer support (Herman, 2009). With a multi-modal approach integrating a parent, teacher and child foundation of intervention. With four different parent programs offered, divided by child age, all have intentions to mitigate child risk factors and promote protective factors (Herman, 2009).

Population and Age

In order to support the children outside of the educational setting, the IY program offers children training as well. With two separate approaches available, children can be involved with the selective prevention classroom version or in the Dinosaur school versions. The BASIC Incredible Years (IY) Parenting programs are broken up into four separate age groups: baby (0-1 year), toddler (1-3 years), preschool (3-6 years), and school age (6-12 years) (2016). With the intention to maintain the inclusion of culturally diverse family references, age appropriate examples, ability to adapt to different child temperaments and additional protective factors such as positive parent-child interactions, social emotional coaching, consistent routines, proactive consequences and constant collaboration with teachers and schools (Herman, 2009).

Within the educational aspect, teachers and schools are included in the Incredible years Program (2016). With the inclusion of the educational staff, a collaborative intervention can utilize. With the intention to end the cycle of negative school interactions and behavioral concerns, the Incredible Years Teacher training program is 6 days of group formatted skill

building. Training targets for the teachers are: effective classroom management strategies, preventing negative reputations and bullying, promoting positive relationships and supporting the development of child social skills, emotional regulation and positive interactions with parents (Herman, 2009). Evidence from a study conducted by Webster-Strattin, Reid & Stoolmiller (2016), observed teachers receiving IY teacher training had higher on-task student behavior, increased prosocial behaviors and decreased aggression presentation in the students (2008).

Evidence of Effectiveness

In a study completed by Josee Letarte, Normandeau and Allard (2010), researchers aimed to determine whether the program improved parenting practices, feelings of self-efficacy perception of child's behavior, implementation in a child protection service, and working with trained facilitators. This investigative study revealed that families that participated in the Incredible Years program showed marked positive changes while the control group did not. Based on the social learning theory of Albert Bandura, an environmental consideration is made due to the theoretical understanding that the environment of the individual contributes to the behaviors and development (Gardner & Leijten, 2017).

The classroom version involves 60 teachers delivered social-emotional lessons and small group activities that take place twice a week. This version includes differentiation of lesson plans for preschool, kindergarten, first and second grade classrooms (Herman, 2009). The Dinosaur school version is comprised of 4-6 children where accredited IY leaders work with the group in a 1-2-hour (s) therapy session. The IY program meets the needs of parents by offering this dinosaur version as a "pull-out" of school twice a week for 1 hour or once a week for 2 hours while the parents are in the parent training class. The dinosaur program is 22 weeks of incorporating DVD programs that support the child(ren)'s development of problem-solving

techniques, social skills, emotional regulation and feelings vocabulary development. With an umbrella of content broken up into seven categories: Introduction of rules, empathy and emotion, problem solving, anger control, friendship skills, communication skills, and school skills (Herman, 2009).

Discussion

With the universal goal of these programs to support families in creating a healthier parent-child relationship, there are limitations with application, cost, duration and availability to families. Although the interventions may have been created, the utilization and follow through is not always guaranteed for the success of positive outcomes.

Limitations

With most parental intervention programs being targeted at high risk youth, low income families, faith-based groups, minority groups and families with mental health problems, there are some concerns for the ability to pay for interventions. While reviewing the table in Appendix A, the cost for participants varies from zero dollars to four hundred dollars. Depending on sponsorship, scholarships, grants or donations some populations are unable to participate in the Incredible Years, Mindful Parent- by Susan Bögels and Kathleen Restifo, ACT and the Strengthening Families programs due to the fact that they have an initial cost that may not be conducive to the budget of the targeted populations. When looking at all five programs reviewed, Mindful Parent, Strengthening Families, Circle of Security and the Incredible Years Programs, each had an initial cost for facilitator training. Although research conducted in this essay is on the participant outcome predictions, it is important to note that some limitations are attributed to the ability for agencies to pay for proper facilitator trainings.

Conclusions and Future Recommendations

Although the research supports specific positives and limitations to each parental intervention program discussed. It is necessary to identify the population desired to serve before choosing an intervention program. For example, with a middle-class family with no trauma history or maladaptive attachment, there may not be a need for using the Circles of Security program. Once the targeted population is identified, choosing an effective program becomes slightly more achievable. Upon review of the Mindful Parent program, Strengthening Families Program, Circle of Security and the Incredible Years Program, I found that each program had its beneficial outcomes identified. With review of evidential research, I ranked the Strengthening Families and ACT intervention programs as a 5 on the Linkert scale, on the ability to align outcomes to stated goals. Following behind was the Incredible Years and Circle of Security as a 4 with The Mindful Parent following behind as a 3 on the same Linkert scale, seen in Appendix A.

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Appendix A

Program Name	Length	Target Audience	Cost	Empirical Effectiveness
ACT	15 sessions, once a week for 2 hours	Parents and children ages 3-5, 6-11 and 12-16 in higher risk families	\$450 for 6 book master set purchased by agency *often purchases and reused with other groups	5
Incredible Years	12-26 sessions	Young children aged 3-8, Treating and preventing disruptive behavior disorders	\$300-\$400 *depending on level of training	4
Strengthening Families	14, 2-hour sessions	Parents and youth ages 10-14 (court referred, low income families, faith-based groups, minority groups such as Latin(x), Asian, Native America) families with mental health problems.	Approximately \$173 per family	5
Circle of Security	20 Weeks	High risk families (teen pregnancy, enrolled in head start, or parents with irritable babies) with children under 6 years old	Typically, Free \$0	4
Mindful Parenting- by	8-12 sessions, one hour a week <u>OR</u> 4 weeks	Parents of children under	\$375 for couples	3

Susan Bögels and Kathleen Restifo	with 2-hour sessions each week	18. *Groups may designate specific age ranges	\$200 General Public	
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Statistics and figures retrieved from Andrews, E., & Coyne, J. (2018), Webster-Stratton, C. & Herman, K. (2010), Gardner, F., & Leijten, P. (2017) and Knox, M., Burkhart, K., & Howe, T. (2011).

Appendix B

Summary of Content of Parenting Mindfully Intervention Sessions

Week	Formal Mindfulness Practice	Application to Parenting	Homework
1	Raisin exercise, body scan	“Automatic pilot” in parenting and family interactions	Formal meditation (i.e., body scan), mindful daily activity (e.g., eating, brushing teeth)
2	Sitting meditation, three-minute brief meditation	Automatic thoughts and feelings in parenting	Formal meditation (e.g., body scan, sitting meditation), mindful daily activity with adolescent, pleasant events log (in daily life and with child)
3	Sitting meditation, gentle mindful yoga	Full attention listening with adolescents	Formal meditation, practice full attention listening with adolescent, unpleasant event log (in daily life and with child)
4	Sitting meditation, walking meditation	Judgments in parenting (self and adolescent-related)	Formal meditation, parenting “should/judgment” log
5	Gentle mindful yoga, choice less awareness meditation	Parent acceptance of self as parent and of adolescent	Formal meditation, bring mindful attention to routine activity with adolescent, difficult family communications log
6*	Teens and parents: Body scan, gentle mindful yoga	Teens and parents: Mindful parent-adolescent conversations	Formal meditation, practice full attention listening with adolescent
7	Loving kindness meditation	Wise parenting mind (conscious goals for parenting)	Formal meditation, bring mindful attention to routine activity with adolescent
8	Body scan, sitting meditation, gentle	Looking forward discussion of	--

	mindful yoga, three-minute brief meditation	parenting and mindfulness goals	
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*Adolescents and parents both attend Session 6 to practice together.

Supplemental material for Mindful Parent Training provided by Chaplin et. al. (2015).