

Five Keys to Successful Parenting

Oregon Research Institute is an independent behavioral sciences research center dedicated to understanding human behavior and improving the quality of human life through the prevention and treatment of health, educational, and social problems.

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CATCH YOUR CHILD BEING GOOD

Use praise and rewards to build your children's skills and good habits, and you'll reduce their risk for problem behaviors as well.

MONITOR YOUR CHILD'S ACTIVITIES

Your teens are much less likely to get into trouble if you keep track of where they are, whom they are with, and what they are doing, especially after school.

SET CLEAR RULES & CONSISTENTLY ENFORCE THEM

Set clear rules about schoolwork, after-school activities, friends, and substance use. Consistently enforce these rules with mild consequences.

COMMUNICATE

Share your ideas, values, and concerns with your children, and in return, listen to what they have to say. Be accepting of their point of view.

GET INVOLVED

Being involved in your child's life is one of the most effective ways to encourage your child's success and prevent the development of problem behaviors.

ORI Research Bulletin

Behavioral Research In The Public Interest

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Research shows value of parenting classes

Improved parenting skills can improve family interactions and reduce adolescent behavior problems. Research indicates that parenting classes can be a cost-effective way to improve parenting skills. Most research studies, however, have employed highly skilled



research or mental health professionals as parenting instructors, often in a carefully controlled research setting. Usually left in question is how to apply the research to less controlled real-world settings. Unfortunately, in many small communities, mental health professionals may not be available to provide the needed skills training to parents.

Published in the December 1999 issue of the *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, a study by ORI researchers Blair Irvine, Anthony Biglan, and

colleagues makes an important scientific contribution by providing at least a partial answer to this question. This five-year study provides evidence that behaviorally-based parenting classes may be effectively led by lay-persons who are trained and advised by professionals. The 8 small communities involved in the study were located 15-180 miles from ORI.

Participants

The article was based on analyses of data from 303 families of at-risk middle-school children with behavior problems. Boys comprised 61% of the adolescents in the study. One parent from each family provided data (94% were mothers).

The Parenting Intervention

The parenting intervention tested in the ORI study was the Adolescent Transitions Program (ATP), a behavioral parenting skills program for parents of young adolescents. ATP was developed and validated by Tom Dishion and colleagues at the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene. In ATP, parents attend 12 weekly classes which focus on parental monitoring, positive reinforcement, parent-child communication, limit setting, and problem solving.

Most of the group leaders were local residents from each of the 8 small communities, and most had little or no experience with leading a behaviorally-based parenting program. They were trained to lead the ATP course by the research team, and they consulted regularly with the researchers at group meetings and by phone.

“Adolescents benefited from better parenting, with fewer behavior problems and more positive interactions.”

Measures

To assess the effects of the parenting program, parents filled out questionnaires, responded to short telephone interviews at five assessment points, and provided verbal responses to “what if” situations. The measures assessed:

- ◆ Coercive interactions in problematic parent-child interactions;
- ◆ Parents’ negative reactions to their child’s behavior, and the absence of setting limits;
- ◆ Parental involvement with the adolescent;
- ◆ Parents’ ability to handle common parental situations effectively;

- ◆ Parents’ feelings about the adolescent, and parental depression;
- ◆ Adolescent problem behavior, and adolescent psychological and behavioral functioning;

Results

The authors found that participation in the parenting classes:

- ◆ Improved parent-child problem-solving interactions
- ◆ Reduced parental over-reactivity and laxness toward their adolescents’ behavior.
- ◆ Improved parental feelings toward their children.
- ◆ Reduced adolescent behavior problems.

Discussion

The ATP parenting classes, led by fully trained and supported lay-persons, appeared to be effective in improving parent-adolescent interactions and in reducing adolescent behavior problems. Parents who participated in the classes improved their skill in reinforcing appropriate behavior, setting expectations and defining rules, remaining calm in distressing situations, setting limits, and solving problems.

Adolescents benefited from better parenting, with fewer behavior problems and more positive interactions.

The results of this study are good news for small communities,



which may benefit from parenting classes but lack skilled professionals to teach them.

Further study is recommended to learn more about the mix of group leader experience and outside support that provides the most cost-effective programs for real-world applications.

Reference

Irvine, A. B., Biglan, A., Smolkowski, K., Metzler, C. W., & Ary, D. V. (1999). The effectiveness of a parenting skills program for parents of middle school students in small communities. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 67*(6), 811-825.

RELATED ORI PROJECTS

Success Through the Incredible Years

Anthony Biglan, Ph.D., Ted Taylor, Ph.D., Carol Metzler, Ph.D.

Investigators are experimentally evaluating the effects of a comprehensive intervention, which includes parent training, teacher training, and social skills instruction, in increasing social skills and decreasing behavior problems among children in first grade. Funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA).

Schools and Homes in Partnership

Anthony Biglan, Ph.D., Dennis Ary, Ph.D., Ted Taylor, Ph.D., Manuel Barrera, Ph.D., and Carol Metzler, Ph.D.

Scientists are testing an intervention program designed to prevent the development of behavioral risk factors for substance use among at-risk Mexican-American and non-Hispanic children in grades K-3, through parent training, social skills instruction, and supplemental reading instruction. Funded by NIDA.

Parents and Communities Against Tobacco Use

Anthony Biglan, Ph.D., Herb Severson, Ph.D., Judith S. Gordon, Ph.D., H. Garth McKay, Ph.D..

Researchers are investigating the effects of mobilizing the influences of parents and peers on youth tobacco use by experimentally evaluating the efficacy of two strategies for preventing the onset of tobacco use in early adolescence: family communications about tobacco and youth anti tobacco activities. Funded by the National Cancer Institute (NCI).

Community Action for Successful Youth

Carol Metzler, Ph.D., Anthony Biglan, Ph.D., Dennis Ary, Ph.D.

Researchers are investigating the effects of a comprehensive intervention designed to reduce middle schoolers’ risk of substance use by improving the supervision and positive guidance of middle-school youth by parents, schools, and communities. Funded by NIDA.

A Case Study in Fidelity: Implementing an Evidence-Based Program

Ted Taylor, Ph.D., Carol Metzler, Ph.D., Lisa Sheeber, Ph.D.

In this study, investigators are examining the process of implementing a research-based parent training program in “real world” children’s mental health settings, the extent to which therapists and administrators in these settings implement the program as designed, and the training and support required for high fidelity of implementation. Funded by the Center for Mental Health Services.