Over Twenty Years of Evidence: *Active Parenting* Works!

Abstracts of Research Projects


Abstract

A family-based substance abuse prevention program was evaluated which emphasizes family cohesion, school and peer attachment, self-esteem, and attitudes about adolescent use of alcohol and tobacco. The program was implemented in rural communities and targeted families with students entering middle or junior high school. Baseline surveys were conducted with students and parents in four schools and were re-administered one year later. Because the program was voluntary, a quasi-experimental design was used to compare participants (29 students and 28 parents) and non participants (268 students and 134 parents). At the one-year follow-up, analyses of covariance indicated that student participants, as compared to non-participants, had higher family cohesion, less family fighting, greater school attachment, higher self-esteem, and believed that alcohol should be consumed at an older age. There were fewer significant results for parent participants at the one-year follow-up. Strategies for involving parents in prevention programs are discussed.


Abstract

A family-based alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention program was evaluated. The program targeted families with students entering middle or junior high school. The goals of the program were to increase resiliency and protective factors including family cohesion, communication skills, school attachment, peer attachment, and appropriate attitudes about alcohol and tobacco use by adolescents. The *Families In Action* program is a structured program which includes six 2-hour sessions, offered once a week for six consecutive weeks to parents and youth. The program was offered to all
eligible families in eight rural school districts. Families who chose to participate began
the program with lower scores on several protective factors as compared to
nonparticipating families. Analyses of covariance controlling for initial differences
found several positive effects of program participation at the one year follow-up. The
results were strongest for boys. These finding suggest that providing parent and youth
with similar communication skills can be an effective approach to substance abuse
prevention.

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Abstract

Pediatric obesity is growing at an alarming rate in the United States. Despite this
problem, few intervention efforts have focused on prevention of obesity. A review of the
pediatric obesity treatment literature indicates that one of the best predictors of short- and
long-term weight regulation for children from 8 to 12 years of age is parental
involvement. While the development of parenting skills to facilitate healthy attitudes and
interactions surrounding eating and activity may help to increase success, it is not known
whether early intervention with the parents of young children can prevent obesity.

Vermont researchers performed a study with the purpose of conducting a pilot test of the
feasibility and effectiveness of an innovative obesity prevention intervention with the
parents of preschool Native-American children. Native Americans experience high rates
of obesity, with evidence that excessive weight gain starts in children younger than 2
years of age. Forty-three mother-child pairs who met the following criteria served as
subjects for the study: 1) the family had a child between the ages of 9 months and 3
years; 2) the child was walking; 3) the mother had a BMI over 25 kg/[m.sup.2]; and 4) the
mother agreed to keep all treatment appointments. The subjects were randomly
assigned to one of the two treatment groups: parenting support (PS) or obesity prevention
plus parenting support (OPPS). Both conditions consisted of a sixteen-week program
conducted by an indigenous peer educator in the home of each participant. Assessments
were conducted at baseline and at the end of the treatment.

The parenting support condition included all mothers participating in a core parenting
program that was based on the *Active Parenting* curriculum. The program emphasized
the child’s psychological and behavioral goal, logical and natural consequences, mutual
respect, and encouragement techniques. The structure of the OPPS was identical to the
PS; however, the focus of the sessions was on how improved parenting skills could
facilitate the development of appropriate eating and exercise behaviors in children.
Height and weight were measured in both the mothers and children. Parents were asked
to complete separate three-day food records to document their own and their child’s food
intake. Physical activity was measured using TriTrack accelerometers worn over the
same three-day period as the subjects that recorded food intake. Mothers were asked to report their level of agreement with 10 outcome expectations regarding participation in physical activity and dietary modification. Child feeding beliefs and practices were measured with the Child Feeding Questionnaire (CFQ).

Changes in weight for height z scores showed a trend toward significance with weight for height z scores decreasing in the PS condition and increasing among the OPPS group (-0.27 [+ or -] 1.1 vs. 0.31 [+ or -] 1.1, p = 0.06). Children in the OPPS condition also significantly decreased caloric intake (-316 [+ or -] 835 kcal/day vs. 197 [+ or -] 608 kcal/d, p <0.05). Scores on the restriction subscale of the CFQ decreased significantly in the OPPS condition (-0.22 [+ or -] 0.42 vs. 0.08 [+ or -] 0.63, p <0.05), indicating that mothers in the OPPS group were engaging in less restrictive child feeding practices over time.

It appears that a home visiting program, targeted at at-risk families, may help to reduce the occurrence of obesity in the pediatric population. Evaluation on other ethnic groups would be helpful to determine if these benefits span the population.


Abstract

This investigation examined the effects of the Active Parenting program and assessed the merit of the specific content areas and specific delivery systems. The study posed three major questions and one minor question. The three major questions were: 1) Does Active Parenting training have an effect on parent attitudes? 2) Does Active Parenting training result in changes in child behavior as perceived by parents? 3) Does Active Parenting training result in changes in family environment as perceived by parents? The minor question was: 1) What were the reactions of the participants in the Active Parenting program with respect to program content and delivery? The study utilized a two-group, randomized pre-/post-test design. One experimental group received Active Parenting training. The control group received no training. Instruments used in data collection were the Parent Attitude Survey Scale, the Child Behavior Checklist, and the Family Environment Scales. The data was compared for differences between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups, differences between the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups, and differences between the post-pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups. T-tests were used to assess the significance of the differences between the two independent samples for each variable. With respect to the minor question, the experimental group completed the Active Parenting Evaluation Survey, which was assessed by a descriptive evaluation. Results of the first major question, measured by The Parent Attitude Survey Scale, showed a significant treatment
effect was apparent for the variables of causation, understanding, acceptance and trust. The second major question, measured by the Child Behavior Checklist, showed no significant treatment effects for this variable. The third major question, measured by the Family Environment Scales, showed no significant treatment effect for any of the variables measured. The minor question results showed that generally the content and delivery dimensions of the program were described as valuable to the participants as measured by the Active Parenting Evaluation Survey.


Abstract

This study documented the implementation of Active Parenting into the Baltimore County Public School System (Towson, MD). Two options were explored for reaching parents with the program: Chapter I pilot schools (schools which qualify for federal funds based on economic and achievement criteria, e.g. those which serve a high number of free or reduced-price lunches and also have a large number of children under-achieving on group tests), and adult education programs. A group of eight school counselors were oriented as Active Parenting leaders. Three pilot schools were selected to participate in the study. Data was collected and summarized over two years of the pilot project from a total of twelve Active Parenting groups, reflecting a high percentage of participating parents completing the course. Overall, the results were positive showing that Active Parenting has the holding power to maintain interest throughout six weeks of intensive instruction using a multi-sensory, multimedia approach.


Abstract

The Padres Activos de Hoy Leader’s Guide clearly defines skills to be taught and a rationale for their importance. The integration of video, the parents’ guide and the leader’s guide into a system of at least seven steps reinforces the topics for a variety of learning styles. Clear procedures for implementing the intervention are provided in these seven steps, which start with the leader presenting the information, the demonstration of right and wrong techniques in the videotapes, group processing, activities to complete at home, group feedback, reflective thinking, practice and more practice. The step-by-step development in the leader’s guide includes “icons,” or symbols to help the leader quickly identify sections and enhance the facilitating material.
The terms used to describe the approach are technically accurate and derived from recognized experts in child development techniques, such as psychologist Alfred Adler, Rudolf Dreikurs, Carl Rogers, Robert Carkhuff, Thomas Gordon and Haim Ginott. Terms are written or explained at a level accessible to a wide audience of Spanish-speaking families or child caregivers.

The material provides alternatives to physical punishment. Rationales are provided for all strategies described in the material, as well as examples of how and when alternative strategies might be selected (negative and positive alternatives are demonstrated in the videos’ role-play). The material offers several alternative strategies for responding to problem behavior, beginning with the least intrusive (prevention).

The material provides a variety of culturally and linguistically sensitive options for gathering feedback, such as group discussions, personal one-to-one contacts, family enrichment activities, adult reflective thinking and home activities. The language in the material acknowledges the diversity of Hispanic individuals’ backgrounds by including in the video Latino actors from different countries with different Spanish accents. The videos and the parents’ guide include Latino actors and pictures that represent contemporary dress or a non-stereotypical view of the variety and richness of the Hispanic peoples.


Abstract

The Business Training Institute, Inc., in collaboration with the Utica City Schools Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, conducted Active Parenting workshops. These workshops began in February 2003 and met six times to cover the six sessions in the curriculum. More than 25 parents were regular attendees of the workshops, which were conducted by trained facilitators who had previously facilitated many Active Parenting workshop series with the Business Training Institute, Inc.

The evaluation plan provided by the evaluator, Ciurczak & Company, Inc., for the workshop series included conducting a post-test assessment on several items specific to each workshop. The post-test featured three sets of questions: one set that was content related and indicated changes in parental knowledge; one set that reflected changes in behavior at the parents’ home during the week; and one set that reflected upon the perceived value of the workshop materials, quality of the trainers, and sense of parental participation during the workshop. Parents were asked if they would recommend this activity to other parents, and, in the final question, were provided the opportunity to add any additional comments. The evaluator reviewed the questions with the facilitators prior to the beginning of each workshop to ensure that the topics covered by the facilitators.
were included in the evaluation. The evaluator also made a site visit to observe a workshop firsthand.

The workshop results can be considered a success by several different measures. In the area of parental knowledge of parenting skills, parents demonstrated growth in all content areas, based on their responses to post-test questions. The parents evaluated the workshop materials, handouts, and usable information gained in each workshop very highly, and also recommended the workshop to other parents at a very high level.

The results for all workshops are summarized below. Individual workshop evaluations, and the final program evaluation are included in the following appendices as indicated:

- Appendix Workshop 2
- Appendix Workshop 3
- Appendix Workshop 4 (data analysis pending)
- Appendix Workshop 5
- Appendix Workshop 6
- Appendix 7: Final Active Parenting Program Evaluation

Result Highlights

Parenting Skill Growth
- 96% of the parents replied that the workshops met their needs in all areas.
- 74% - 100% of parents responded to short-answer content-based questions appropriately each week.
- Consistently high scores on the different workshops demonstrated excellent materials, trainer facilitation, and parental involvement.

Workshop Materials, Organization, and Trainers
- 100% of parents evaluated materials, workshop organization, ability to interact with other parents, and usability of practical information a 4 or a 5 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).
- 100% of parents evaluated the workshops overall as “Excellent” (91%) or “Very Good” (9%).
- 100% of parents indicated that the workshop activities were very helpful in achieving the objectives of the workshop.
- 100% of parents evaluated the quality of the trainers a 4 or a 5 on a scale of 1 (low) to 5 (high).
- 100% of parents indicated that the objectives for the workshops were “very clearly” stated.

Parenting Behavior
- Overall, 100% of the parents indicated that the workshops were of value to their growth as a parent.
• Overall, 100% of the parents indicated that they would recommend this workshop to other parents.
• 76% of the parents indicated that they held at least one Family Meeting.


Abstract

This overview of a six-part television series aired from Jan. 5 to Feb. 9, 1991, focusing on techniques of effective parenting. Discusses the promotional efforts of the ECTP to reach a maximum number of viewers. Gives a description of the Active Parenting program. Discusses resource materials which accompanied the series. Viewer feedback indicated that Active Parenting has been well-received in the State of Washington.


Abstract

This dissertation evaluated three video format parent training programs. Each program represents a unique approach to parenting. Winning! is based upon behavioral parenting theory; Active Parenting is based upon Adlerian parenting theory; The Nurturing Program for Parents and Children 4 to 12 Years is an eclectic program including behavioral, Adlerian, developmental and reparenting theories.

Both professionals and nonprofessionals served as parenting instructors. Subjects who were enrolled in Winning! classes signed up for an eight-week course consisting of about eight hours of training. Subjects who enrolled in The Nurturing Program committed to 15 weeks of classes consisting of about 37 to 45 hours of training. Subjects who enrolled in Active Parenting received about 7 hours of training over 7 weeks.

Subjects were required to complete three assessment instruments. The Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI) measures subjects’ attitudes on four parenting constructs: expectations of children, empathy for children, physical punishment, and family roles. The Index of Parental Attitudes (IPA) measures the severity of parent-child relationship problems. The Family Adaptability and Cohesion Evaluation Scales III (FACES III) provides an analysis of the functioning of a family.
In general, the findings of the study are as follows. *Winning!* is effective at reducing the severity of parent-child problems in abusive families. For parents that are not abusive, both *Winning!* and *Active Parenting* effectively reduce the severity of parent-child problems. Of the parent training programs evaluated, *Active Parenting* has the strongest impact upon improving the functioning of family systems. The *Nurturing Program* is the most effective at increasing the appropriateness of parents’ (1) expectations for their children, (2) empathy for their children, (3) attitudes toward physical punishment, and (4) attitudes toward family roles when those parents’ attitude scores are average or below average on the AAPI. *Winning!* is effective only with parents whose attitudes are below average on the AAPI. *Active Parenting* is comparatively ineffective in altering the parenting attitudes measured by the AAPI.


Abstract

The Adlerian theoretical approach to training parents was evaluated as to the effects upon parenting attitudes, parent-child relationship problems and family system functioning. The study included a treatment group and a comparison group. Specifically, the commercially developed video training program for parents, *Active Parenting Discussion Program*, represented Adlerian parenting theory. Parent groups trained in *Active Parenting* indicated a lesser likelihood of using physical punishment techniques on their children and had an improvement in clinically severe parent-child relationship problems. However, above average parents developed less appropriate attitudes toward child development as a result of Adlerian parent training. *Active Parenting* had a positive, but statistically insignificant, effect on family system functioning.


Abstract

This manuscript overviewed the development and application of *Active Parenting* in Montana as used by the Montana State University Extension Service. The Extension Service staff chose the Building Human Capital Initiative as one of three to pursue in Montana and appointed a seven-member task group to plan and manage programs dealing with this initiative, including the broader concept of human development. The task group accepted the definition of “building human capital” from a USDA publication (1988) which defined it as “developing the skills, abilities, and understanding people need in
order to reach their full potential in their families, organizations, communities and workplaces.” The task group chose four areas of major concern to Montanans: 1) family skills; 2) personal development/people empowerment; 3) preparation for career and transitions; 4) people at risk. A survey was conducted in which respondents rank-ordered items of concern. Results indicated family skills as one area of most interest. The task group adopted the following instructional goal: “The citizens of Montana will enhance their human potential by acquiring skills in the areas of parenting.” The Active Parenting program was chosen to promote building human capital for the 1990-91 program year. Forty-seven MSU Extension Agents were trained and certified as Active Parenting leaders. They represented 35 of 56 Montana counties. Discussion groups, in conjunction with broadcasts of the program on local cable-access television stations, provided the Extension Service the opportunity to reach 42 of 56 counties with parent education. Results from this one-of-a-kind program in the United States were positive and led Extension agents in each county to pursue developing coalitions with other human service program providers.


Abstract

This report examined the statistical significance of the State of South Dakota’s Active Parenting of Teens pilot program. Over a three-month period, trained instructors provided the Active Parenting of Teens program to parents in Wanblee, St. Francis, Sioux Falls, and Watertown. A total of 39 parents completed the post-test measures, along with 34 controls. Pre-test information was provided by 48 participants and 41 controls. Results reflected statistical significance between control and participant groups on pre- and post-tests on a number of variables. Analyses of covariance were used to examine the increase/decrease in scores between pre-and post-test measures. The pre-test values were used as the covariates. In addition to showing differences in pre-and post-test measures, the study also examined the profiles of parents and controls in workshops, their diligence in completing family enrichment activities and other assignments, their opinions of the course/training, their recommendations for the program, and overall tendencies and trends with regard to various aspects of the program.

This study assessed the effects of two Adlerian parent education programs, *Active Parenting Today* and *Active Parenting of Teens*, on children’s and teens’ behavior as perceived by their parents. A T-test for correlated samples indicated that both programs resulted in a significant change in parental perceptions of behavior, according to the questionnaire administered. The results suggested that parents viewed their children’s or teens’ behavior as being more responsible or helpful after the program. There were no interaction effects for parents’ education level or for type of family structure.

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**Abstract**

Results were reported from 35 field-test groups conducted using the original *Active Parenting Discussion Program* between January and March of 1984. Subjects were 274 parents of both sexes having children between the ages of 2 and 17. Subjects completed two check lists, “About Yourself,” which self-rated their own parenting behavior, and “About Your Child” which rated their child’s behavior. The pre-test was administered at the beginning of the course and the post-test at the end of the final session. Results indicated that parents improved their parenting skills an average of 28% after completion of the *Active Parenting Discussion Program* course. 84% of the parents also reported an improvement in their children's behavior with an average improvement of 20%.

In addition to the child behavior checklists, 97% of parents who took the course indicated they would recommend the course to friends, and 100% of the 35 leaders said they would recommend leading the program to colleagues. The author discusses the practical application of the new video-based technology to the field of parent education and predicts the expansion of its use.

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Pindar, C. (1994). Effects of the *Active Parenting* program on children’s interpersonal behavior as observed in a playroom setting. Unpublished manuscript.

**Abstract**

Subjects were 110 children between the ages of 1 and 7 of mixed gender and race whose parents were either currently attending an ongoing *Active Parenting Today* class or were in an ongoing parent support group for parents who had already completed an *Active Parenting Today* class. Children remained in a nursery setting while their parents attended either the class or the post-class support group. The children were observed during these 2-hour sessions and rated as positive or negative in fourteen behavior
categories. Negative behaviors included items such as hitting, biting, shoving, arguing and whining; positive behaviors included such items as using words to express feelings, sharing, cleaning up, taking turns and assertiveness.

Results of a two-way ANOVA indicated a significant difference between the overall frequencies of positive and negative behaviors in the two groups, F (1,111)=271.4, p<.01. Children whose parents had completed the Active Parenting Today class had a lesser occurrence of negative behaviors than the children whose parents had not completed the class. Of the 142 recorded behaviors in the Active Parenting Today “graduates” support group, 8% were rated as negative and 92% as positive. In contrast, the 301 observed behaviors of the children whose parents had not yet completed a class were rated 84% negative and 16% positive. The author discusses the implications for parent education in light of these “quite staggering” effects.


Abstract

This study described and explored perceptions of the context and behaviors of seven 4-year-old children whose parents attended a parenting education program, Active Parenting Today. A group of nine volunteer parents participated in and completed a minimum of four out of six Active Parenting Today parenting education classes.

Qualitative research techniques were utilized to guide the inquiry in both the data collection and analysis. The primary methods of collecting data were in-depth interviews, anecdotal records, and the administration of both a questionnaire and the Child’s Goals of Behavior form to parents and educators respectively at the beginning, the ending, and 10 weeks following the conclusion of the Active Parenting Today classes. The theoretical framework for this study was based on the conceptual theory of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological and environmental model, Cole’s social capital theory and Stower’s theory of optimum social distance.

Results showed that parents’ unanimously positive perceptions of the Active Parenting meetings were valuable in strengthening the connections between home and school. Results of the data analysis were used to verify the congruency among parents, teachers, and classroom educational aides regarding their perceptions of children’s behaviors. Results were also used to explore parents’ congruency regarding the perceptions of their parenting styles. The findings, conclusions and recommendations generated through this study should be of interest to educators in the field of early childhood programs for at-risk populations as a means to lend credence to the need for parenting education programs as a valid component in these programs.

Abstract

This study investigated the effects of Active Parenting upon the moral reasoning levels and the parenting skills of parents participating in a six-week intervention. The study was conducted through an employees’ assistance program at a local hospital. A one-group pre-/post-test design was used where the DIT (Determining Issues Test) was used to measure moral reasoning and the PSI (Parenting Skills Inventory) was used to measure parenting skills. Correlations between the DIT and PSI were obtained. Qualitative feedback was also received during the post-test. Data analyses revealed that the DIT P-score, the Total PSI score, and PSI subscale G (limit-setting skills) were significantly increased (p<.01) from pre-test to post-test. PSI subscales A (role support) and F (communications skills) showed significant increase at the .05 level. P-score was significantly correlated to only one PSI scale, scale E (rapport). The qualitative data also indicated that Active Parenting was helpful to the parents.


Abstract

Study examined the effects of an Adlerian-based parent education program on parents’ attitudes toward their children’s behavior. Techniques used in child rearing were also examined. Forty-four parents volunteered for this study and were randomly assigned to one of four groups: 1) English-speaking experimental; 2) Spanish-speaking experimental; 3) English-speaking control; and 4) Spanish-speaking control. Parents in the English-speaking groups came from varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Pre- and post-test measures were taken for the four groups on the Parenting Questionnaire and the Adlerian Parental assessment of Child Behavior Scale. Parents were also asked to complete a demographic data form. The treatment consisted of a six-week Active Parenting parent education program for parents in the experimental groups. The statistical procedure used was analysis of covariance and multiple regression. Significance was established at the .05 level. Significant differences were found for parents in the Spanish-speaking groups following treatment on the Attitude Scale and the Technique Scale of the Parenting Questionnaire. No significant differences were found following treatment for parents in the English-speaking groups on the Attitude and Technique Scales of the Parenting
Questionnaire. No significant differences were found following treatment for parents in the Spanish-speaking groups on the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Scale. Significant differences were found for parents in the English-speaking groups following treatment on the Adlerian Parental Assessment of Child Behavior Rating Scale.


Abstract

Even though little agreement exists among experts about specific techniques or interactions that insure the development of a competent adult, parent education programs have become an important method of supporting traditional child-rearing practices and conveying new knowledge. Books and programs have replaced traditional sources of parenting education. The benefit derived from parenting programs is difficult to determine, since little reliable data exist to show that participation in these programs results in positive changes in parents and their children.

This study examined the effectiveness of the most recent contribution to Adlerian parent education, the Active Parenting program. An attempt was made to measure changes in parents’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior and their children's self-concept following participation in the program. The knowledge variable assessed parents' understanding of basic behavioral principles as applied with children. The attitude variables measured parents' self-ratings of parenting skills and parental beliefs about children's independence and freedom. The behavioral variables measured changes in parental perceptions of their children’s behavior and satisfaction with problem solutions generated with their children. In addition, changes in children’s self-concept were measured.

There was no significant interaction effect between pre-testing and treatment nor was the main effect of pre-test sensitization significant. Subjects were not influenced by pre-testing and a practice effect did not influence the subjects' responses on the multiple evaluative measures. However, there was a significant difference between the treatment and nontreatment groups. Analysis determined that the difference between the groups was solely attributed to two parental attitude variables. Parents who participated in the program developed more tolerant attitudes toward their children and viewed themselves as better parents than those who did not participate. There was no indication that parents' knowledge of basic behavioral child-rearing principles increased, nor did parents report significant changes in their children's behavior following participation in the program. There was no significant increase in children's self-concept as a result of their parents' participation in the program.