

# Bounce Back & Thrive!

Summary – Ongoing Evaluation Results (September 2012 - June 2013)

## Background

**Bounce Back & Thrive! (BBT)** is an evolving evidence-based 10-session resiliency skills training program based on the **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT Resiliency Skills Training** for service providers working with young children. BBT helps parents help their children build the resilience necessary to handle life's inevitable bumps in the road. The program focuses on families with children from birth to 8 years.

**BBT** was piloted in 2010-12 by Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO) in partnership with family-serving organizations with 161 parents (119 completed the evaluation) in 18 groups in 16 diverse communities in Ontario, Canada. Parents attended because they were experiencing significant challenges such as poverty, low literacy, family violence, teen parenting, children with special needs or were living in communities experiencing violence or in First Nations or remote areas.

(Demographics: 93% females, 7% males; mean age = 29.1 years; 48% single parents; 41% less than Grade 12; 349 children)

**Parents in the BBT pilot groups rated the skills training program very highly and experienced a statistically significant positive change in attitudes associated with resilience, as well as reporting:**

- Using the resiliency skills regularly and modeling them with their children
- Experiencing a greater sense of calmness and control in their lives
- Being more positive about their children and hopeful about life
- Seeing their children calmer as well as more patient, confident and perseverant.

## Ongoing evaluation

### Participants

As part of the formal ongoing evaluation of BBT, parents experiencing significant challenges who attended BBT groups in 17 family-serving partner organizations between September 2012 and June 2013 were included in these analyses. BBT was offered as part of the ongoing services of these organizations. The groups were similar in demographics to the original pilot groups. In all, 194 parents (79% female, 21% male; mean age = 31.8 years; 41% single parents; 42% less than Grade 12; 442 children) enrolled in 18 BBT groups and 119 participated in both the pre- and post-training evaluation.

### Measures

Parents completed four measures that examined the impact of the BBT resiliency skills training groups on themselves and their children.



To measure change in parental attitudes, three subscales were administered at the beginning and end of the training. The "Bounce Back Subscale" (BBSS) (included in the original pilot project) is a 15-item Likert-type self-report measure with ratings on a 5-point scale. It was developed to look at parents' beliefs and attitudes affecting their own resilience and parenting. Four factors emerge for the 14 original items: 1) optimism-pessimism; 2) attitudes about their children and parenting; 3) attitudes related to self-efficacy and self-regulation; and 4) attitudes about set-backs and challenges. The 15<sup>th</sup> consists of the item measuring resilience from the *2009 European Social Survey (ESS)*. Also administered were the "Depression Subscale" (DASS-D) and "Stress Subscale" (DASS-S) from the 21-item version of the *Depression, Stress and Anxiety Scale (DASS-21)*. The DASS-21 subscales are self-report measures each containing seven items and rated on a 4-point scale.

At the end of the program, parents were also asked to complete a 69-item parent self-report survey (included in the original pilot). The "Post-Training Survey" was designed to gather information about knowledge gain, use of the resiliency skills, impact on parent and child behaviour as well as overall parent satisfaction.

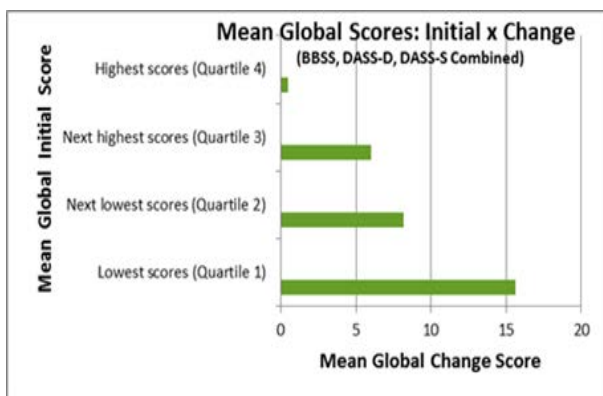
As part of the process evaluation, parents also completed "Parent Feedback Forms" rating the usefulness of the content and effectiveness of the delivery each session. They were also asked about content they found most important, their success in using it in daily life and suggestions for improvement of the program.

Parents' attitudes became more 'resilient' and positive toward their children and parenting. Those with the least 'resilient' attitudes to start gained the most by the end of the program.

## Results

### Attitudes related to resilience and parenting, depression and stress

- **Parents showed a significant positive change in attitudes** associated with greater resilience as well as more positive attitudes about their children and parenting (*mean change BBSS = 4.36, t = 5.88, p < .001*).
- **Parents with the least ‘resilient’ attitudes** to start (lowest BBSS scores) **showed the greatest positive change** in attitudes related to resilience and parenting by the end of the skills training program (*BBSS, r = -.53, p < .001*).
- **Parents showed significant positive change in ratings of their ability to “return to normal after things go wrong”** (i.e., capacity for resilience) (*mean change ESS resilience item = .26, t = 2.35, p < .025*).
- **Parents showed a decrease in depression scores over time** (*Mean change DASS-D = -1.36, t = -3.87, p < .001*).
- **Parents who scored most poorly on the Depression Subscale to start showed the greatest improvement** (*DASS-D, r = -.35, p < .01*).
- **Parents reported a decrease in stress-related symptoms over time** (*Mean change DASS-S = -1.74, t = -5.31, p < .001*).
- **Parents who reported the most stress-related symptoms to start showed the greatest improvement** (*DASS-S, r = -.30, p < .01*).
- **When the mean improvement on each subscale is combined to create a global change score, parents who initially scored most poorly** (1st quartile) **improved the most, and conversely, those who scored the best to start** (4th quartile) **gained the least with those in the remaining quartiles scoring in between** (see chart below).



### Use and impact of the skills training

Some of the highlights of findings from the “Post-Training Survey” include:

- Parents rated **their knowledge** about supporting resilience in themselves and their children as being **significantly higher** at the end of the program as compared to the beginning (*based on a 5-point scale; parent resilience, mean difference = 1.9, t = 19.8, p < .0001; child resilience, mean difference = 2.1, t = 19.0, p < .0001*).
- **Parents who attended more frequently reported greater knowledge gain** about building their own and their children’s resilience than those with more absences (*based on a 5-point scale; parent resilience, mean difference = .7 points, t = 1.79, p < .05; child resilience, mean difference = .4 points, t = 1.02, ns*).
- The **greater their change in knowledge** of building resilience in their children, the **greater the positive change in their attitudes related to resilience** (*Jonckheere’s Trend test, z = 1.8, p < .05*).
- **98% parents said they use the BBT content** with their children.
- **98% parents reported using the content they learned at least once a week (58% use it every day)** with their children. Here are some of the ways they are using the training:
  - 97% model the resiliency skills with their children
  - 95% help their children practice calming strategies
  - 95% help their children look for positive things
- **The top three strength areas parents developed**, comparing their ratings before and after the program, were (on a 5-point scale):
  - Being in charge of their emotions (*mean change = 1.5 points; t = 16.6, p < .001*)
  - Solving problems, using thinking skills (*mean change = 1.1 points; t = 12.7, p < .001*)
  - Believing in themselves and their abilities (*mean change = 1.3 points; t = 12.5, p < .001*)

- **Top rated ways the program specifically helped parents personally** (mean change = 4.3/4.4 for all on a 5-point scale):
  - Reducing “Me” thinking (automatically blaming themselves)
  - Improving their ability to “respond” instead of “react” to challenges
  - Understanding the link between their thoughts and reactions
  - Finding new ways to solve problems and use more empathy
  - Finding positive things to appreciate in their lives
  - Feeling more hopeful/optimistic about the future
  - Believing more in their ability to bounce back and role model “resilient” thinking and behavior

- **Top rated ways the program helped parents with their children** (mean change for all = 4.5 on 5-point scale):
  - Better understanding their children’s emotional needs
  - Improving their relationship with their children
  - Looking more for the strengths and positive things to appreciate in their children
  - Using more empathy and having more patience with their children
  - Feeling more confident about their parenting abilities

The children changed, too. Parents said they were calmer, more patient and handled frustrations better. And they were less afraid of making mistakes, so they were more confident and kept on trying instead of giving up. They were also observed using the skills with other children and adults.

- **72% of parents reported seeing positive changes in their children** (attributed to skills parents demonstrated to their children). Among these parents, the top reported changes were:
  - Calming down better (81%)
  - Persevering (73%)
  - Showing more patience (69%)
  - Trying new things and being less negative (66%)
  - Being more confident and asking for help (64%)
  - Handling frustrations better (63%)
  - Feeling better about making mistakes (61%)

- **50% of parents reported observing their children already using resiliency skills** (that parents modeled) **with other children and adults.**

**Satisfaction with the program**

- **Parents rated the overall helpfulness of the parent group and their satisfaction with it very highly** (mean rating = 4.6 and 4.7 respectively on a 5-point scale).
- **They also rated the content and delivery of their sessions very positively** (mean rating = 6.3 and 6.5 respectively on 7-point scale for all sessions combined on Parent Feedback Forms).
- **When asked whether they would recommend BBT skills training to other parents, 92% of the parents responded “Yes”** (8% said “Maybe”).

**What parents say...**

*“I learned new things about me that translate directly to my kids. I have finally realized that the more calm and collected I act, slowly they act the same.”*

*“The strategies were very useful, but I think most of all I realized that I have to work on my resilience first. This is the first great step.”*

*“It makes you a better parent – relaxing your body, rethinking before you act, controlling your impulses, knowing your thinking habits....”*

Source: “Post-training Survey”



## Summary

Results from the ongoing evaluation of the BBT program have confirmed key findings from the original BBT pilot project.\* Parents' attitudes became more 'resilient' and positive toward their children and parenting. Those with the least 'resilient' attitudes to start gained the most by the end of the program. Greater change in parents' attitudes was related to increased knowledge about building children's resilience. Parents reported less stress and depression-related symptoms and those with the highest level of symptoms to start experienced the greatest gains.

Parents rated the skills training highly and used the skills regularly in their own lives and modeled them with their children. This resulted in greater calmness and confidence in parents and children. In turn, parents began to recognize more strengths in themselves and their children. Increased empathy and patience led to closer parent-child relationships. Finally, parents reported less depression and stress-related symptoms, and more optimism and hopefulness about the future.

### What parents say...

*"It was a good group and has taught me to be calmer and think more before I react to stresses."*

*"This program helps you realize how unique and special your children are. Helps you think positive when life is not going your way."*

*"I would recommend it because there are very good tips on how to think most positively about yourself, so you can be a better role model for your children."*

Source: "Post-training Survey"



\*The pilot project in which BBT was developed and tested was conducted by **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** and its founding sponsor – the Child & Family Partnership (YMCA of Greater Toronto, Child Development Institute, University of Guelph and George Brown College) – and more than 30 partner organizations across Canada. Three-year project funding (2010-12) was provided by the Social Development Partnerships Program of the Government of Canada. Opinions expressed in this summary are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. For details about BBT and the pilot project, go to <http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/programs-bb&t.htm>.

