

Bounce Back & Thrive!

Resiliency Skills Training for Parents

Background of the pilot project

The primary purpose of the “Resilient Parents – Resilient Kids” pilot project was to adapt the evidence-based resiliency skills training program developed for professionals by Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)* to meet the needs of parents experiencing significant challenges. In addition, several other parent resources to build resilience were created and piloted including a website, parent-child activity modules, tip sheets and a public awareness session.

Bounce Back & Thrive! (BBT) – a 10-session resiliency skills training program – was developed and offered to parents of children under eight years by RIRO trainers from non-profit organizations in 16 diverse Canadian communities.

Method

Participants

Families were recruited if they were experiencing one or more of the following challenges: poverty; unemployment; living in a high violence, remote or First Nations community; sole parent household; teen/young parents; newcomers; or families with children with special needs or at-risk for maltreatment. In all, 161 parents enrolled in 18 BBT pilot groups and 119 participated in both the pre- and post-training evaluation.



Evaluation

Parents completed two measures that examined the impact of the BBT resiliency skills training groups on themselves and their children (see below for details). As part of the process evaluation, they also completed evaluation forms rating the usefulness of the content and effectiveness of the delivery for each session (*mean rating = 6.5 and 6.4 respectively on 7-point scale for all sessions combined*). They were also asked about content they found most important, their success in using the content in daily life and suggestions for improvement of the sessions. At the end of the program, they rated the overall usefulness of several components of the program including the videos, discussion, small group activities, crafts, power points, etc. Trainers completed structured process notes for each session. In this brief summary, only the results of the impact evaluation will be presented.

Results

Attitudes associated with resilience & attributions regarding children and parenting

To measure parental attitude change the Bounce Back Survey (BBS) was administered. The BBS is a 14-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. It consists of four factors: 1) optimism-pessimism; 2) attitudes about their children and parenting; 3) attitudes about self-efficacy and self-regulation; and 4) attitudes about set-backs and challenges. It was administered before and after the parent training with the following results:

“Parents’ attitudes became more ‘resilient’ and positive toward their kids and parenting. Those with the least ‘resilient’ attitudes to start gained the most by the end of the program. And greater change in parents’ attitudes was related to more knowledge and modeling of the skills with their kids.”

- **Parents showed a significant positive change in attitudes** (global score) associated with greater resilience as well as more positive attributions about their children and parenting ($t = 4.76, p < .001$).
- **Parents with the least ‘resilient’ attitudes** to start (lowest global score) **showed the greatest positive change** in attitudes (global change score) by the end of the skills training program ($r = -.45, p < .01$; *trend test* $z = 3.99, p < .001$).
- **The more sessions parents attended, the greater the positive change in their attitudes** (*trend test* $z = 1.72, p < .05$).

Use and impact of the skills training

A 69-item parent self-report survey was designed to measure knowledge gain, use of the resiliency skills and impact of the program on the behaviour of parents and children. It also looked at parents’ overall satisfaction with the training. It was administered at the end of the skills training. Some of the highlights 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 (*mean difference = 1.8 & 1.9 points respectively on a 5-point scale, t = 19.2 & 18.5, p < .0001 for self and children*).
- The **more sessions parents attended, the greater their reported knowledge** about building their children's resilience (*trend test z = 1.72, p < .02*).
- The **greater their change in knowledge** of building resilience in their children, the **greater the positive change in their attitudes** on the Bounce Back Survey (*trend test z = 1.87, p < .05*).
- **The greater the positive change in their attitudes** on the Bounce Back Survey, the **greater the parents' use of the skills with their children** (*t = 1.98, p < .05*).
- **99% parents said they use the content** they learned in the program with their children.
- **97% parents reported using the content** they learned **at least once a week (61% use it every day)** with their children. Here are some of the ways they are using the training:
 - 95% model the resiliency skills with their children
 - 92% help their children practice calming strategies
 - 93% help their children look for positive things
- **Top rated ways the program helped parents personally** (*all 4.4 on a 5-point scale*):
 - Reducing their stress level
 - Finding positive things to appreciate in their lives
 - Feeling more optimistic about the future
 - Believing more in themselves and their abilities
- **Top rated ways the program helped them with their children** (*4.6 to 4.7 on 5-point scale*):
 - Looking more for the strengths and positive things to appreciate in their children
 - Having more patience with their children
 - Improving their relationship with their children
 - Feeling more confident about their parenting abilities
- **82% of parents reported positive changes in their children** (attributed to skills parents demonstrated to children):
 - calm down better
 - persevere and try new things
 - more confident
 - handle frustrations better
 - feel better about making mistakes
 - more patient and ask for help
- **49% of parents reported observing their children already using resiliency skills** (modeled for them by parents) with other children; and 52% reported their children using the skills with adults.
- **Parents rated the overall helpfulness of the parent group and their satisfaction with it very highly** (*4.6 and 4.7 respectively on a 5-point scale*).
- **100% of the parents said they would recommend the skills training to other parents.**

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

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

“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.” *Parent*

“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.”

*The “Resilient Parents – Resilient Kids” project was conducted by **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** and its sponsors – the 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. For details about the project, go to www.reachinginreachingout.com. Opinions expressed in this summary are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.