

Program Evaluation Report

Program: Parenting a Teenager in Canada: Four-session workshop for immigrant and refugee parents

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Date of Program: Fall 2016

Date of Report: June 2017

Background

- Family-based approaches to mental health are essential for helping adolescents from immigrant and refugee families. Family-based approaches are congruent with the values of many immigrant communities.
- Conflict and emotional disconnection from parents is a risk factor for poor mental health among adolescents.
- Immigration introduces many threats to strong parent-child relationships (e.g., role reversals between parents and children when children are more comfortable and capable of interacting in English Canadian society).
- The objective of this study was to evaluate a strengths-oriented, skill-building brief group intervention for immigrant and refugee parents.

Participants and Measures

A total of 17 parents attended the *Parenting a Teenager in Canada* workshops.

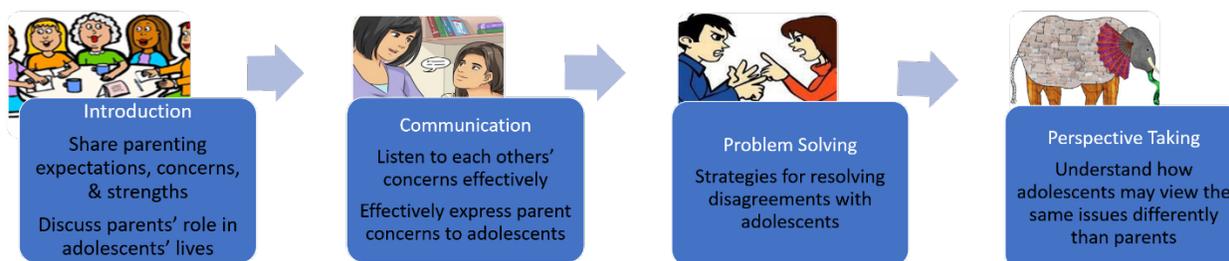
- 10 parents attended all 4 sessions; 7 of these 10 parents completed pre- and post-group surveys: 5 refugee Syrian and 2 immigrant Chinese mothers or grandmothers
- Several others parents completed pre-group measures, but only after several sessions of the workshop; therefore we could not use their data.

Survey measures assessed:

- Parent-child relationship congruence (Ying et al., 2004)
- Parent-child relationship conflict (Chung, 2001)
- Parenting efficacy (Dumka et al., 1996)
- Parenting empathy (Wong et al., 2011)
- Individual items related to workshop goals
- Satisfaction with the workshops with both qualitative and quantitative questions

Workshop Content

The objective of the workshops were to promote parents' ability to be an emotional resource for their adolescents by building communication, problem-solving, and perspective taking skills.



Results

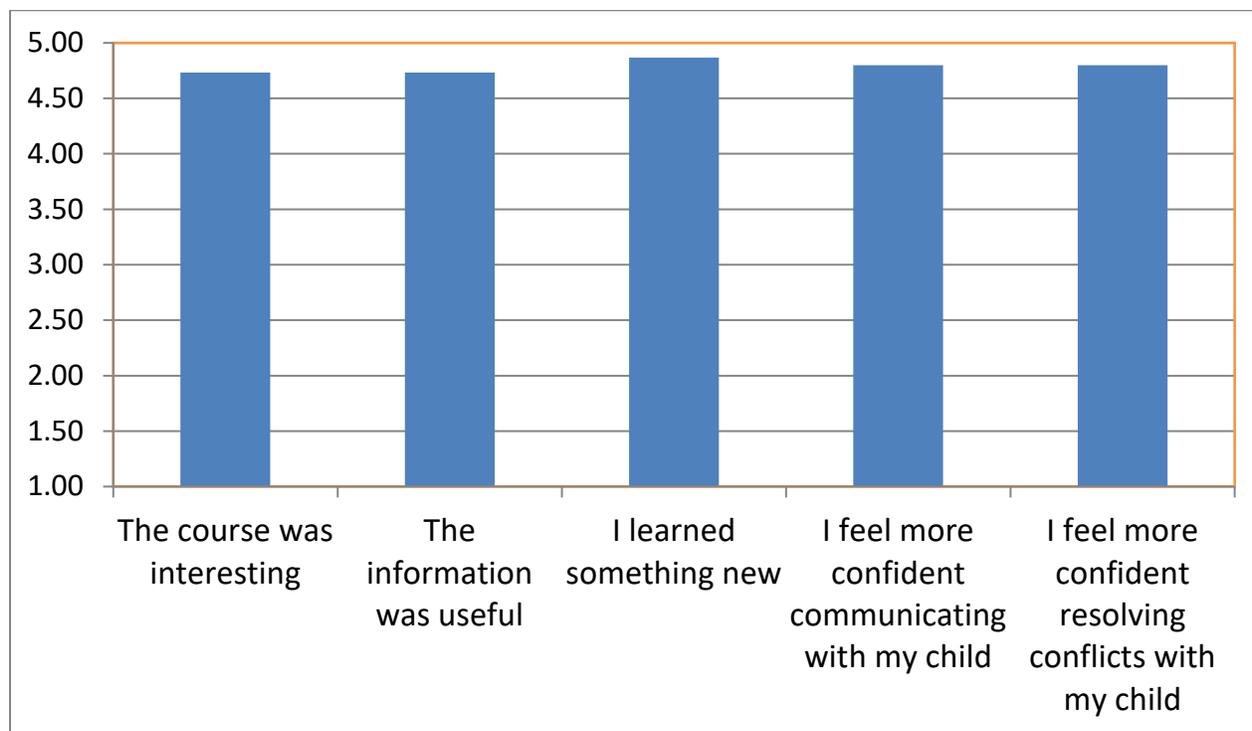
Changes from pre-test to post-test for the 7 parents with complete data at pre-group and post group.

Overall, we found significant

- **increases in relationship congruence**, $t(6) = -2.74, p < .034$,
- significant **decreases in conflict**, $t(6) = 2.91, p < .027$
- significant **increases in parenting efficacy**, $t(5) = -3.65, p < .015$ and
- no overall change in parental empathy, $t(5) = -0.72, p < .502$

Parent post-group feedback

Parents were asked to answer five questions about their satisfaction with the workshops on a scale from 1 to 5. Fifteen parents completed these questions. Parents' responses indicated a high level of satisfaction.



Parents were also asked what they found most helpful, and what they would change in the future.

Most Helpful:

- *Problem Solving*: Parents consistently identified learning to solve problems with their adolescents as one of the aspects they liked most.

- *Enhancing Communication*: Learning how to talk with their adolescents in a peaceful and productive way was also a common theme.
- *Role Plays* were nominated by some as beneficial for practicing skills.
- *Empathic Skills*: A few parents mentioned learning how to take their child's perspective, and show affection and tenderness to their child.

Want More of/ Would Change:

- Many parents asked for more/longer sessions, additional examples, and more opportunities to practice.
- Several parents also mentioned a desire to see content specifically aimed at sons, and at fathers, and to expand the focus to include all ages (not just adolescents).

Discussion

- Overall, our experience with this group suggests that it possible to help immigrant and refugee parents to enhance their ability to listen to their adolescents' concerns, share their own expectations, and find solutions to parent-child disagreements. Maintaining strong parent-adolescents relationships is expected to protect adolescents against a host of mental health concerns.
- This group is consistent with other health promotion strategies aimed at enhancing family relationships. It includes a cultural adaptation of evidence-based relationship enhancement strategies to account for the unique stressors associated with cultural change.

Next Steps

- Conduct parallel groups for adolescents in order to increase adolescents' skills as well
- Multiple family groups to assist families to reframe conflict and increase perspective taking
- Assess adolescents' perspectives on relationships and their mental health functioning

Recommendations

- Restrict groups to single-language groups; although it was valuable for parents to see commonality in parenting challenges across different cultural groups, simultaneous translation was cumbersome and left less time for skill practice.
- Limit group size to 8 in order to allow for individualized attention during skills practice