

Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:
Civilian

Parent Training to Reduce Problem Behaviors Over the Transition to High School: Tests of Indirect Effects Through Improved Emotion Regulation Skills

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SUMMARY: Parent education programs are in general beneficial in reducing young people's problem behaviors. The Common Sense Parenting (CSP) and Common Sense Parenting Plus (CSP Plus) programs were offered to families with 8th graders, and the effects of the programs were compared to a control group. Results revealed that the CSP program increased adolescents' emotion regulation skills, which in turn, led to fewer problem behaviors.

KEY FINDINGS:

- CSP, but not CSP Plus, had significant indirect effect on reduced substance use, conduct problems, and school suspension at 1-year or 2-year follow-ups through improved adolescents' emotion regulation skills.
- Neither the CSP nor CSP Plus intervention had significant direct effects on the three adolescent outcomes.
- Adolescents' improved emotion regulation skills after both interventions were associated with their reduced problem behaviors.

IMPLICATIONS FOR MILITARY PROFESSIONALS:

Military professionals could:

- Educate military parents about the importance of emotion regulation for their adolescents
- Provide military parents with information and resources that may help them to cope with their adolescents' problem behaviors

IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Design evidence-based parent education curricula, and make them accessible to military families
- Offer support groups for military adolescents who are experiencing transitions to high school

IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Continue to support parent education programs in order to increase military parents' parenting skills, and reduce military adolescents' problem behaviors
- Recommend training for professionals who work with military families regarding ways to prevent problem behaviors in military adolescents

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METHODS

- The sample was recruited by presenting study information to 8th graders during core classes.
- Families were randomly assigned to the CSP group (N = 118), the CSP Plus group (N = 95), or the minimal-contact control group (N = 108); the mean percentages of possible intervention sessions attended were 70% for CSP, and 72% for CSP Plus.
- Parents and students completed pretest, posttest, 1-year follow-up, and 2-year follow-up assessments with a retention rate of 94%; the measures included adolescent substance use, conduct problems, school suspensions, and emotion regulation skills.

PARTICIPANTS

- The sample included 321 low income families of 8th graders; in each family, a target parent and a target 8th grader participated in the study.
- The average age of the parents was 40.21 years (SD = 7.49, 83% female), and the average of the 8th graders was 13.41 years (SD = 0.52, 52% female).
- Most of the parents were White (48%), followed by Black (26%), Asian-American (8%), Native American (2%), and Multiracial or Other (16%); 14% of the parents reported to be Latino.

LIMITATIONS

- Most of the participating families were low-income families, therefore the results may not be applicable to families with higher income.
- The behavioral outcomes were reported by the adolescents themselves, therefore the results were subjective, and may not represent parents' perspective.
- Certain aspects of CSP implementation in the study did not match CSP in real-life practice (e.g., participants in the study were offered money whereas no such incentives were offered in practice), therefore a discrepancy may exist between outcomes in research and outcomes in practice.

AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit families with a broader range of socioeconomic status so that the results can be better generalized
- Measure youth problem behaviors both subjectively and objectively to get a thorough understanding
- Expand the outcome measures to include psychological symptoms such as depression and anxiety

ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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