Media-Based Approaches to Improving Parenting: How Do Parents Respond?

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Overview

- The importance of reach for getting parenting programs out to the people
- The value of media-based parenting programs in improving reach
- An example of a media-based approach to supporting parents
- How American parents are responding to it
- Lessons learned
The need for effective parenting interventions

- The importance of supporting parents in raising healthy and successful children
- Prevalence of children’s behavior disorders: 18%
- Dysfunctional parenting practices & family relationships
- Poor prognosis for long-term trajectory
The need for effective parenting interventions

- Evidence-based parenting programs make a difference
  - More skillful parents
  - Healthier family relationships
  - Decreased behavior problems in children
  - Improved social skills and academic outcomes
The challenge of reaching parents with effective parenting interventions

- Most parents struggle from time to time with difficult child behaviors

- Despite effectiveness, few parents participate in evidence-based parenting programs *(Sanders et al., 2007)*

- Limited availability outside of major metropolitan areas *(Connell et al., 1998)*

- Poor participation – substantial challenges in recruiting and retaining parents *(Spoth & Redmond, 2000)*
Limited reach of evidence-based parenting programs

- Limited availability + poor participation = limited reach
- Thus, most parents who could benefit from parenting assistance never receive it
Formats for reaching parents

- Home visiting
- Face-to-face office visits
- Parenting groups
- Workshops/seminars
- Self-administered workbooks
- Written materials
- Videos
- Online programs
- TV broadcast
The potential of the media

Media-based approaches hold significant promise as part of a population-wide strategy for bringing evidence-based parenting practices to a broad range of parents

- Dramatically increased reach
- Value of video-based modeling
- Decreased stigma and cost
- Popularity of infotainment genre and “coach” shows (e.g. *Supernanny*)
- Good vehicle for reaching the target audience – parents are interested in receiving parenting information via television and the Internet
How parents would prefer to receive information about effective parenting

- The highest preference ratings were for TV programs, online programs, written materials.
- Lowest ratings were for home visits, therapists, and parenting groups – the most common evidence-based approaches.

[Bar chart showing percent indicating "quite" or "very interested" in receiving parenting information in each of nine formats.]
A public health perspective

- In a public health framework, media-based approaches would...
  - be part of a larger system of supports
  - complement more intensive supports
  - extend the reach of parenting programs to those who might not otherwise be reached
  - be consistent with the principles of minimal sufficiency and self-regulation

- Even modest effects of a media-based program on parenting could translate into substantial benefits when multiplied across millions of viewers and would cost far less than parenting groups
Improving the reach of a media message on parenting

- Little is known about how to maximize the reach of media messages about parenting to appeal to a broad audience
  - Income groups
  - Racial/ethnic groups
  - Varying levels of children’s problem behavior
- Improving the reach of the media intervention to diverse populations increases its overall public health impact
Triple P Parenting Media Study

- A collaboration between
  - Oregon Research Institute
    - Carol W. Metzler
    - Julie C. Rusby
  - Parenting and Family Support Centre at the University of Queensland
    - Matthew R. Sanders
    - Karen M.T. Turner
  - Triple P International
    - Des McWilliam
    - Grant Dowling
- NIDA Grant # R01 DA021307
The Triple P Parenting Media Study

- The Triple P Parenting Media Study is testing the efficacy of two versions of a 10-episode media series on parenting.
- Content is derived from the *Triple P Positive Parenting Program*.
- Research sites: Eugene and Portland, Oregon, USA.
- Sample: 300 parents having difficulty handling their 3-6 year old children’s behavior problems and not otherwise receiving parenting support services.
Program topics

- Overview of positive parenting
- Encouraging behavior you like
- Teaching new skills and behaviors
- Managing misbehavior
- Dealing with disobedience
- Handling fighting and aggression
- Planning for and dealing with high-risk situations
- Establishing good bedtime routines
- Shopping successfully with children
- Raising confident and competent children
The *Triple P Parenting Media Series*

- 10 episodes
- Each episode about 12 – 15 minutes
- Infotainment-style, broadcast quality
- Designed to be embedded within infotainment programming
  - Breakfast television
  - News magazine shows
  - Current affairs shows
  - Lifestyle-type channel on cable TV
Improving the reach

- Goal was to create a media series that has broad reach and broad appeal
  - Engaging, entertaining, watchable
  - Realistic
  - Appealing to a diverse audience
    - Mothers and fathers
    - Income levels
    - Ethnic and racial groups
    - Different levels of challenge with children
  - So that everybody can see themselves in it

Parenting Media Project
The Parenting Media study

- Parents randomly assigned to view DVDs, at home:
  - Standard Information-Only version
  - Enhanced Behavior Activation version
  - Waitlist Control
- Assessed at baseline, 1 mo. post, 6 mos. follow-up
- Outcomes measured
  - Children’s behavior (disobedience, aggression, positive)
  - Parents’ parenting practices (negative and positive)
  - Parents’ knowledge, confidence
  - Parental functioning (depression, stress, anger)
  - Parents’ social support
Analysis of parents’ reactions

- Episodes on DVD mailed twice per week to those randomized to receive intervention
- Weekly phone call to assess exposure and appraisal
- N = 104
- Goal of analysis was to examine:
  - Exposure
  - Appraisals
  - Viewing patterns
  - Parent and family characteristics that predict engagement and viewing patterns. That is, who is more likely to be engaged?
Are parents watching?

- Watched at least 8 of 10 episodes: 77%
- Watched at least 4 (min. dosage): 84%
- Watched less than minimum: 16%
What do parents think of the episodes?

- 98% found the episodes somewhat, quite or very interesting & entertaining
- 95% found them somewhat, quite, or very useful
- 95% said the situations seemed somewhat, quite, or very familiar
- 98% said they somewhat, quite, or very much feel they could put the strategies into action
- 99% said they are somewhat, quite, or very likely to use at least one strategy in the next week
Understanding parent and family characteristics that predict appraisals

- Parent age, Child age
- Minority
- Marital status
- Household income
- Mother educational level
- Mother working
- Level of child problem behaviors
- Dysfunctional parenting practices (overreactivity, laxness)
- Parenting self-efficacy
- Expectations that Media Series will be useful
Who is most engaged?

- The episodes were equally **interesting and entertaining** across groups
- Those who found the episodes more **useful**
  - ...Had a child with more behavior problems
  - ...Were not working
- Minority status, marital status, educational level, and income were not predictive of engagement
Understanding patterns of viewing

- Most (53%) watched all episodes on schedule, but some “crammed” (27%) and some did not complete the series (21%)
- Those with lower education and lower self-efficacy were more likely to watch all episodes on schedule
- Those with higher education were likely to view fewer
- Those with higher self-efficacy more likely to put off viewing and then cram to catch up
- Minority status, marital status, income, and child behavior problems were not predictive of viewing patterns
Summary of parents’ reactions

- High rates of watching the *Triple P Parenting Media Series*
- High satisfaction ratings: interesting, entertaining, useful, familiar situations, relevant to daily life
- Broad appeal across racial/ethnic, income, and educational groups, and other family characteristics
- Non-working moms and those most challenged by children’s behavior problems found it most useful
- Those with lower education and lower self-efficacy were more likely to watch all episodes on schedule
A case example

- 5 year-old boy
- 33 year-old mother
- Dual-parent household, she is not working
- Described problems with child tantrums, irritability, whining and complaining, disobedience, destructiveness, “willfullness”
- Initial score on measure of child behavior problems: 170 (132 is clinical cut off)
- Mom watched all 10 episodes on schedule
Child behavior outcome – “ECBI”
Frequency of child’s negative and positive behaviors

- Pre: Negative behaviors were significantly higher than positive behaviors.
- Post: A notable decrease in negative behaviors was observed, with a slight increase in positive behaviors.
- 6 mo FU: Positive behaviors remained high, while negative behaviors remained low, indicating sustained improvement.

The graph illustrates the comparison between negative and positive behaviors across different time points.
Mother’s parenting self-confidence
Lessons learned

- Media-based approaches to improving parenting have the potential to
  - Reach a large number and broad range of parents
  - Engage them in the message and the material
  - Encourage them to try out new strategies and skills

- The challenge before us is to provide parenting supports in formats with broad reach, broad appeal, AND good efficacy
Thank you