



Tuning in to teens: Improving parental responses to anger and reducing youth externalizing behavior problems



Sophie S. Havighurst^{*}, Christiane E. Kehoe, Ann E. Harley

Mindful: Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health, University of Melbourne, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Available online 25 May 2015

Keywords:

Externalizing behavior problems
Emotion socialization
Adolescence
Parenting intervention
Prevention

ABSTRACT

Parent emotion socialization plays an important role in shaping emotional and behavioral development during adolescence. The *Tuning in to Teens (TINT)* program aims to improve parents' responses to young people's emotions with a focus on teaching emotion coaching. This study examined the efficacy of the *TINT* program in improving emotion socialization practices in parents and whether this reduced family conflict and youth externalizing difficulties. Schools were randomized into intervention and control conditions and 225 primary caregiving parents and 224 youth took part in the study. Self-report data was collected from parents and youth during the young person's final year of elementary school and again in their first year of secondary school. Multilevel analyses showed significant improvements in parent's impulse control difficulties and emotion socialization, as well as significant reductions in family conflict and youth externalizing difficulties. This study provides support for the *TINT* program in reducing youth externalizing behavior problems.

© 2015 The Foundation for Professionals in Services for Adolescents. Published by Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

The transition to secondary school is a time of developmental change in the young person and a shift in the parent–adolescent relationship (e.g., Steinberg, 2000). Although the majority of families go through this period relatively unscathed, adolescence can be difficult for many. Up to 13% of young people develop oppositional and antisocial behaviors (Roisman, Monahan, Campbell, Steinberg, & Cauffman, 2010), with onset typically occurring around age 11 or 12 years (Nock, Kazdin, Hiripi, & Kessler, 2006). These problems, often referred to as externalizing behavior problems, have a substantial cost to the individual and society on both a social and economic level (Belfer, 2008). They can be related to a range of psychological difficulties, including risk taking, peer and school problems, substance abuse and juvenile crime (Thompson et al., 2011).

Causal factors for adolescent-onset externalizing problems are multi-determined and include difficulties for the young person in emotion regulation (Eisenberg, Spinrad, & Eggum, 2010; Silk, Steinberg, & Sheffield Morris, 2003; Thompson et al., 2011). In addition, family-related risk factors include higher levels of emotionally dismissive and critical parenting, parental anger and family conflict (Katz & Hunter, 2007; Steinberg, 2000). Preventative interventions that target these risk factors, especially during the transition to secondary school when difficulties often begin, are essential (Sandler, Schoenfelder, Wolchik, & MacKinnon, 2011; Steinberg, 2000). Currently, there are a limited number of evidence-based programs available for parents of adolescents and many of these are plagued by low retention rates, depend on parent report data which is

^{*} Corresponding author. Mindful: Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health, University of Melbourne, Building C, 50 Flemington Street, Flemington, Melbourne 3031, Australia. Tel.: +61 3 9371 0200; fax: +61 3 9371 0250.

E-mail address: sophie.h@unimelb.edu.au (S.S. Havighurst).

subject to expectancy bias, and often have poor outcomes (Sandler et al., 2011). Programs that specifically target the emotion socialization practices of parents (namely the way parents model emotion expression, their reactions to the young person's emotions, and their ability to coach their adolescent about emotions) may be effective in targeting a number of risk factors related to the development of adolescent externalizing behaviors. Research with parents of younger children suggests that programs targeting family emotional communication (i.e., active listening and teaching parents to help the child identify and express emotions) are successful in improving child emotional and behavioral functioning (e.g., Havighurst et al., 2013; Havighurst, Wilson, Harley, Prior, & Kehoe, 2010). The current study examined whether a prevention program targeting the emotion socialization practices of parents of early adolescents would reduce externalizing behavior problems in the young person during the transition to secondary school.

Theoretical background

The biological, psychological, and social role changes that occur during adolescence are often emotionally challenging for young people and their families (Steinberg, 2000). Many parents experience their adolescent's striving for autonomy as rejection and may become reactive themselves (Grolnick, 2003; Sedlar & Hansen, 2001). In addition, the transition to secondary school can be emotionally stressful (Masten, 2004). An increased focus on peer-related social interactions, coupled with greater mood variability, more intense negative emotionality and a decrease in the experience of positive emotions can make this a time of vulnerability for emotional and behavioral problems (Allen & Sheeber, 2009; Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003).

Adolescent emotional competence and behavior

The capacity to appropriately express and regulate emotions, as well as to understand emotions in oneself and others (components of emotion competence) are important for healthy development (Pons, Harris, & de Rosnay, 2004; Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003). These skills are associated with better frustration tolerance, less anger in response to problems and greater likelihood of accessing social support when emotionally challenged (Mavroveli, Petrides, Rieffe, & Bakker, 2007). Adolescents with behavior problems have been found to have deficits in the ability to perceive, understand or manage emotions (Eisenberg et al., 2005) and often experience greater levels of anger (Rosenblum & Lewis, 2003). Helping adolescents practice and develop a repertoire of adaptive emotion regulation strategies may be particularly important during this developmental period (Lougheed & Hollenstein, 2012).

Parent emotion socialization

The way parents respond to emotions influences the development of adolescent emotion competence (Morris, Silk, Steinberg, Myers, & Robinson, 2007). Parenting that is less neglecting or punishing, and more accepting and supportive of emotions (often called emotion coaching) has been found to be related to better emotion regulation and less externalizing behavior in children and youth (Gottman, Katz, & Hooven, 1997; Klimes-Dougan et al., 2007; O'Neal & Magai, 2005; Stocker, Richmond, Rhoades, & Kiang, 2007). To support adolescents to develop autonomy and independence parents often need to reduce their level of control, offer support, accept feelings, and adjust boundaries as the young person moves towards adulthood.

Some parents, however, engage in less positive emotion socialization, experience increased negative affect, and react more punitively and angrily to their adolescent (Morris et al., 2007; O'Neal & Magai, 2005). This can have long-lasting and detrimental effects on the young person, the parents and the wider family system (Shortt, Stoolmiller, Smith-Shine, Eddy, & Sheeber, 2010). Parents' difficulty regulating their own emotions has been found to increase the likelihood they will engage in punishing or neglecting responses, which, in turn, has been found to negatively impact youth emotion regulation and behavior (Buckholdt, Parra, & Jobe-Shields, 2014). Parenting that is critical, punitive, or emotionally dismissive in response to an adolescent's emotions may exacerbate the young person's distress, communicate that emotions are unacceptable and increase family conflict (Morris et al., 2007; Schwartz et al., 2012).

Family conflict has been found to peak during early adolescence, when young people begin to view their relationship with their parents less positively (Smetana, 2011). Higher levels of family conflict have been found to be related to externalizing difficulties, including conduct disorders, substance abuse, and attention-deficit disorder (Formoso, Gonzales, & Aiken, 2000; Henderson, Dakof, Schwartz, & Liddle, 2006). However, the harmful consequences of conflict have been found to be attenuated if the adolescent feels secure and accepted, and conflict is followed by constructive communication and engagement (Collins & Madsen, 2003).

Parents' difficulties with their own regulation of emotions may prevent them from being able to engage in supportive and constructive communication at times where there is conflict. Impulse control difficulties in parents have been linked to lower acceptance of emotions, limited access to emotion regulation strategies (Bardeen, Stevens, Murdock, & Lovejoy, 2013; Gratz & Roemer, 2004) and a greater likelihood that parents will respond with over-reactive or lax discipline (Lorber & Smith Slep, 2005). Finally, parents' difficulties with emotion regulation have been found to limit receptiveness to parenting programs (Assemany & McIntosh, 2002; McMahon, Wells, & Kotler, 2006). Therefore, programs that teach parents skills in emotion awareness and regulation may help reduce their arousal during stressful interactions with their teen, making it more likely that parents respond supportively (Maliken & Katz, 2013).

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/880641>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/880641>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)