



HKU
SWSA



EMOTIONALLY-FOCUSED GROUP THERAPY FOR PARENTS WITH CHILDREN AT PREADOLESCENCE: IMPACT AND CHALLENGES

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PRESENTERS



PARENTAL DIFFICULTIES CAUSE HIGH PRESSURE



The number of children and adolescents being treated for mental illness in public hospitals has **increased by more than 90%** from 18,900 in 2011-12 to **36,400** in 2018-19.



About **22 %** of parents showed moderate to severe symptoms in at least one of the depression, anxiety and PTSD.

Resource: 精神健康政策及服務 (2020). 立法會秘書處,立法會 CB(2)468/19-20(04)號文件 (Chinese Only) <https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr19-20/chinese/panels/hs/papers/hs20200110cb2-468-4-c.pdf>

Findings of Mental Health Survey conducted during the COVID-19 Pandemic for primary school parents and school personnels

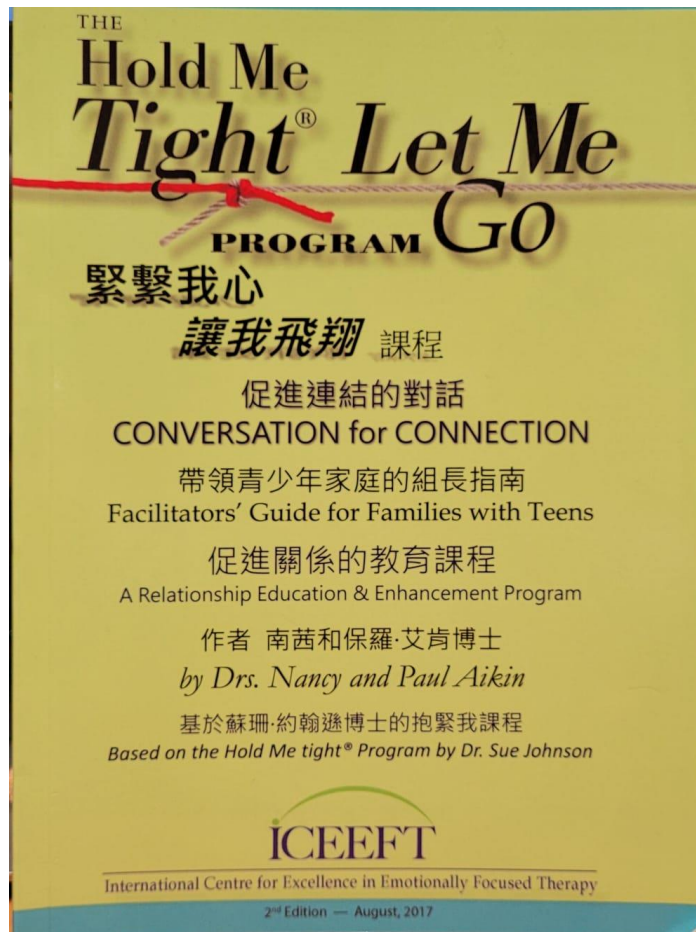


BACKGROUND

- Needs and problems in parent-child relationship at this particular family life cycle
- Focus group finding
 - Knowledge: Youth mental health, Neuroscience
 - Skills: Communication
 - Attitude: Self-compassion
 - Suggestions: Role play, Early interventions, Sharing



PARTNERSHIP & ADVISOR



- Re- Connect
- Dr. Wong Tat Ying
- Mr. Fred Li
- Mr. Charles Wong



TARGETS



Parents with P5 to P6 school students

Parents feeling high pressure in caring their child

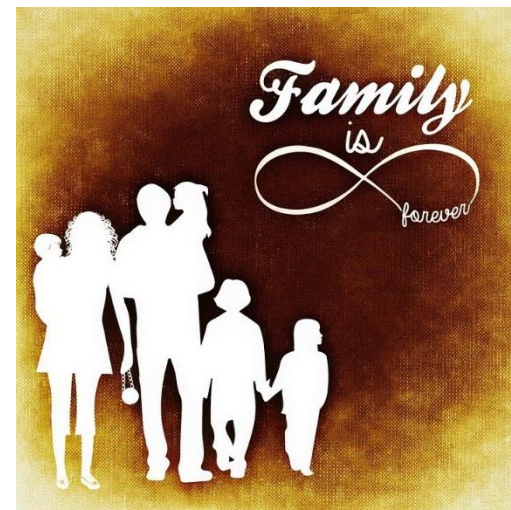


Recommended by school social workers and teachers



GOALS OF THE GROUP

- Better understand secure family connections (Teens and parents)
- Better understand their own and their family members emotional responses and needs
- Be able to describe and control negative interactions that create pain and distance
- Be able to shape the positive moments of reaching and responding that create a secure bond



EFT KEY CONCEPTS



Attachment

- Accessibility
- Responsiveness
- Emotional engagement



Emotion

- Primary emotion
- Secondary emotion
- Instrumental emotion



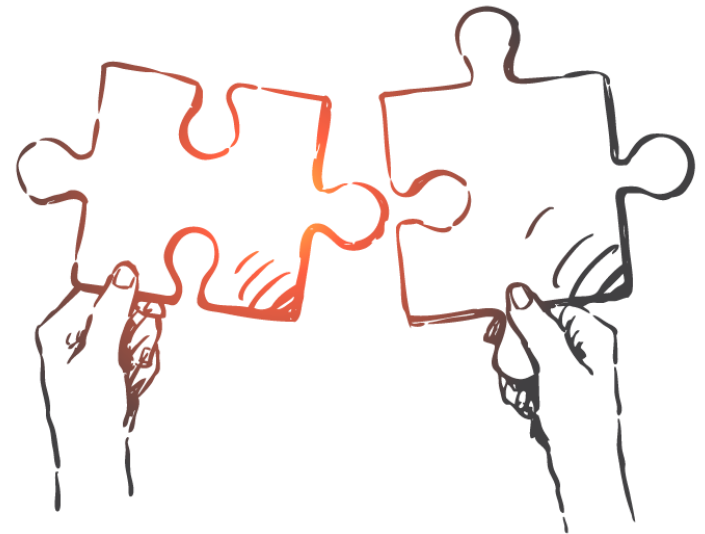
Systemic

- Context & interaction
- Circular causality
- Communicative aspect of behavior



CONTENT

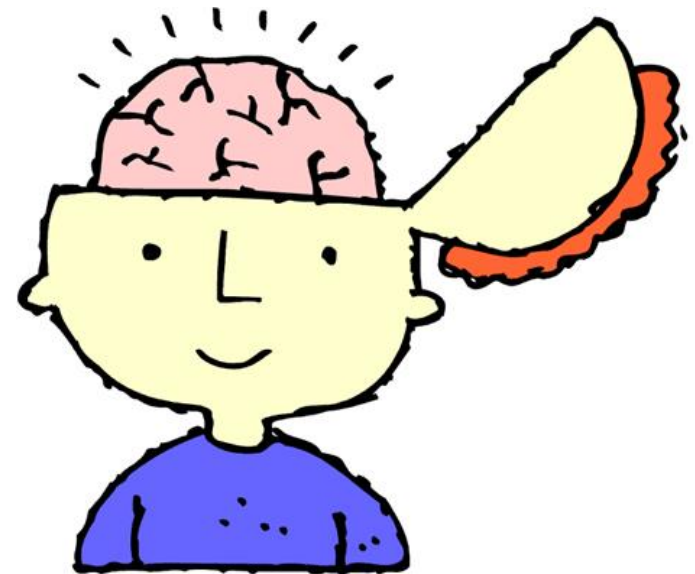
- Adolescent change and attachment needs
- Primary emotions VS secondary emotions
- Demon Dialogues / The negative cycle
- A.R.E.
- RISSC
- Guided imaginary
- Homework Assignment
- Role play and case study



ADOLESCENT CHANGE AND ATTACHMENT NEEDS

- The balance of autonomy and attachment
- The Teenage Brain (Neuroscience)
- Storm to be expected
- Unicef: 聆聽一分鐘

YOU ARE NOT
ALONE



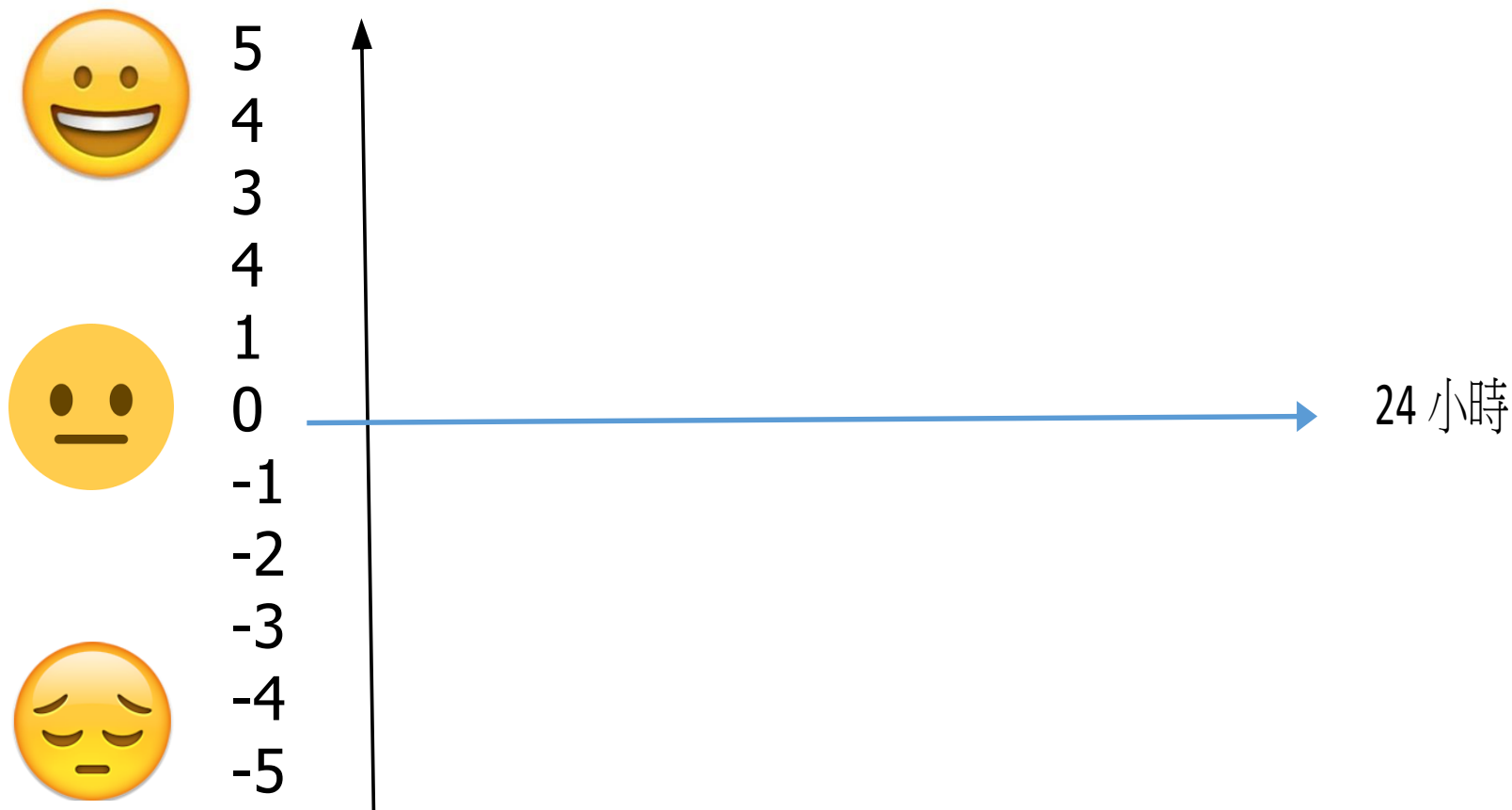
EMOTIONS



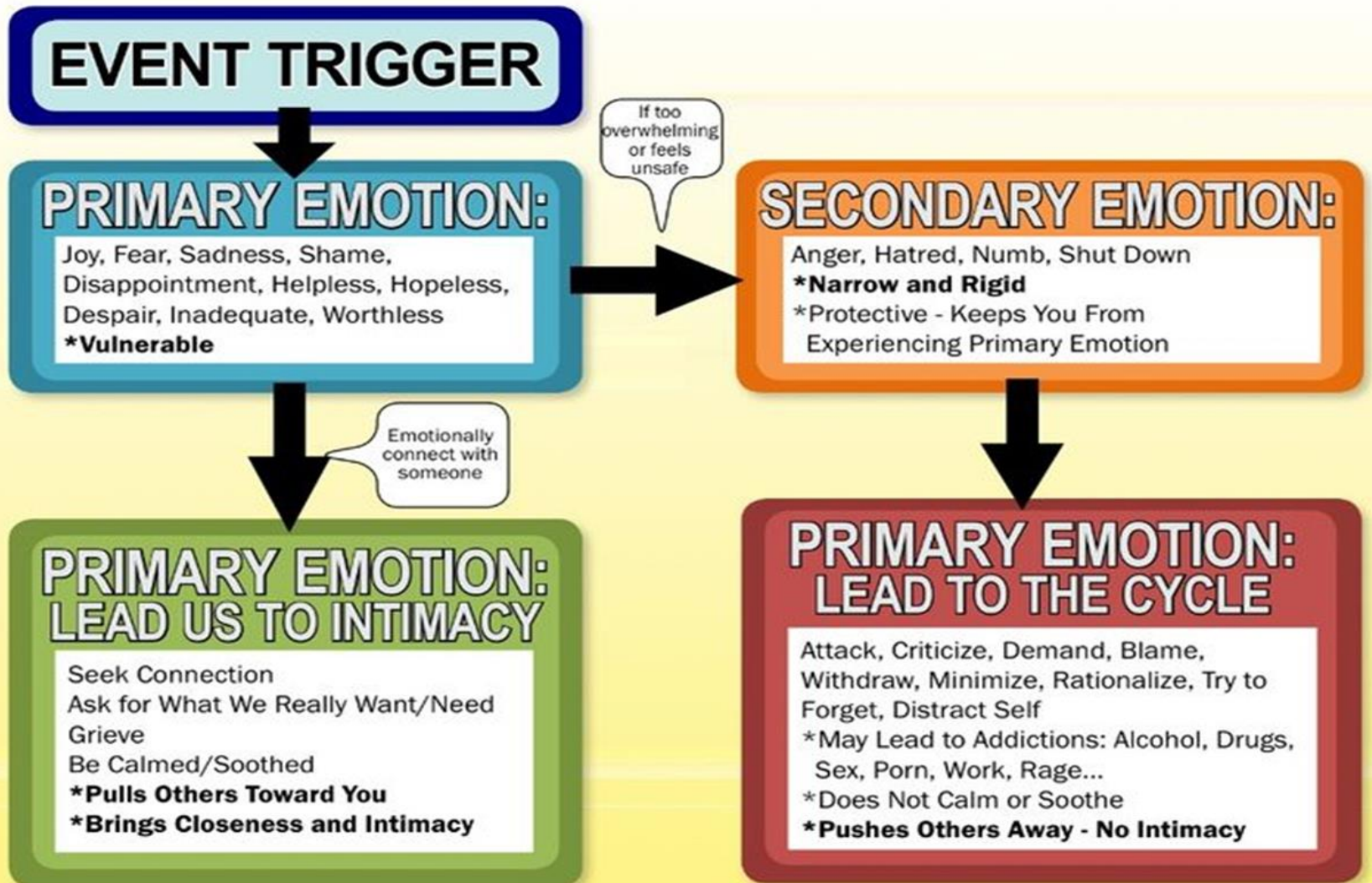
情緒詞語列表

狂喜	興奮	快樂	愉快	喜悅	驚喜	痛快
解脫	放鬆	舒服	安心	安全	得意	
滿足	幸福	希望	期待	羨慕	沾沾	自喜
感激	感動	驕傲	自信	不耐煩		鄙視
抓狂	憤怒	生氣	忌妒		緊張	害怕
委屈	疲憊	懷疑	震驚	煩悶	恐懼	焦慮
歉疚	絕望	無奈	沮喪	丟臉	痛苦	空虛
無力	孤單	受傷	悲傷	難過	失望	矛盾
勇敢	貼心	自負	愚蠢	自卑		

THE UPS AND DOWNS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN

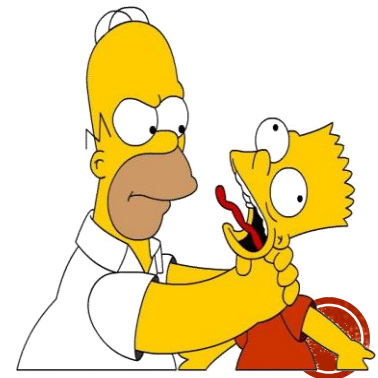


PRIMARY EMOTIONS VS SECONDARY EMOTIONS



DEMON DIALOGUES / THE NEGATIVE CYCLE

- How can we get stuck in disconnection
 - Find the bad guy 揪出壞蛋：互相指責、問責
 - The Protest Polka 抗議之舞：一個追，一個走
 - Freeze and Flee 凍結與逃走：互不瞅睬
- The most common negative pattern
 - Critical intrusive parents → withdrawn, sullen or defiant teen
 - Withdrawer/ Pursuer



VIDEO

- What kind of demon dialogues it is?
 - A. Find the bad guy 揪出壞蛋：互相指責、問責
 - B. The Protest Polka 抗議之舞：一個追，一個走
 - C. Freeze and Flee 凍結與逃走：互不瞅睬
- What are the parents' primary & secondary emotions?
- What are the children's primary & secondary emotions?



Mapping The Couple Interactional Cycle

More Withdrawing Partner

Action Tendency: i.e. avoid / protect
(withdraw, shut down, get paralyzed, hide, fix, reason)

Perceptions: view of self / other, +/-
Attributions: i.e. damage control

Secondary Emotion: i.e. defensive numbing

Primary Emotion: i.e. helpless, scared, hopeless

Attachment Fears: i.e. rejection, not respected/safe

Unmet Attachment Needs: i.e. acceptance, appreciation

Adapted from Scott Woolley, PhD
by Tat-Ying Wong, MD

More Pursuing Partner

Action Tendency: i.e. approach / protest
(push, pull, attack, criticize, complain, yell, provoke)

Perceptions: view of self / other, -/+
Attributions: i.e. fight for connection

Secondary Emotion: i.e. reactive anger

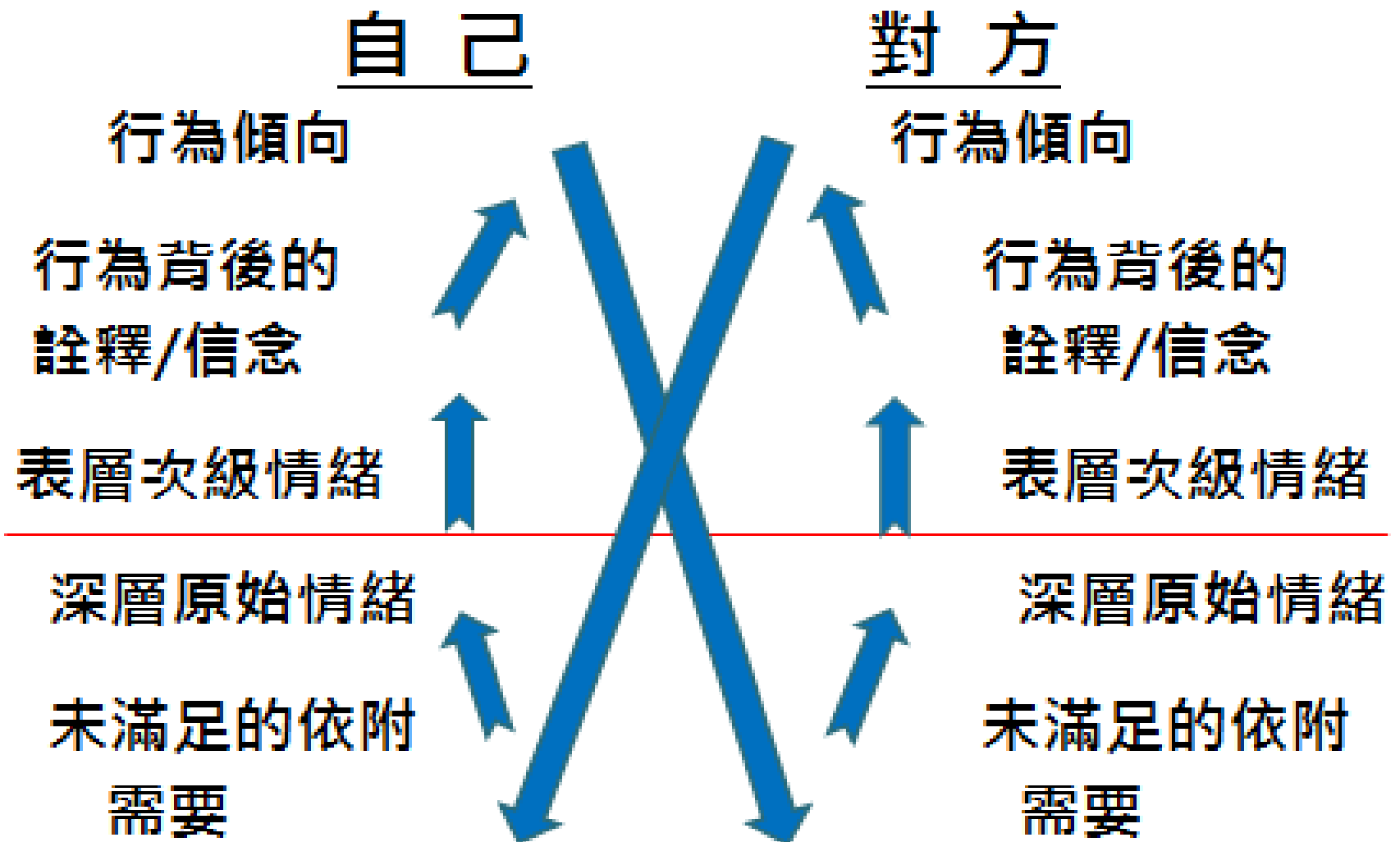
Primary Emotion: i.e. lonely, sad, hurt

Attachment Fears: i.e. abandonment, not loved/valued/wanted

Unmet Attachment Needs: i.e. connection, significance

Emotionally Accessible, Responsive, Engaged

互動循環



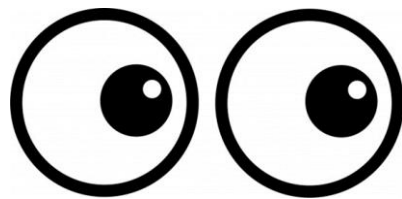
THE BIG PICTURE OF A.R.E.

- Accessible (可接近的)
- Responsive (回應的)
- Emotionally engaged (情緒上連接的)
- A secure base → teens' exploration
- “ I am here for you, my arms are wide open but you may not need them” (Dr. Jim Furrow, EFT trainer, 2013)



RISSSC

- **R**epeat
- Use **I**mages
- **S**imple Words
- **S**low pace
- **S**oft voice
- **C**lient/**C**hildren's words



胸口碎大石

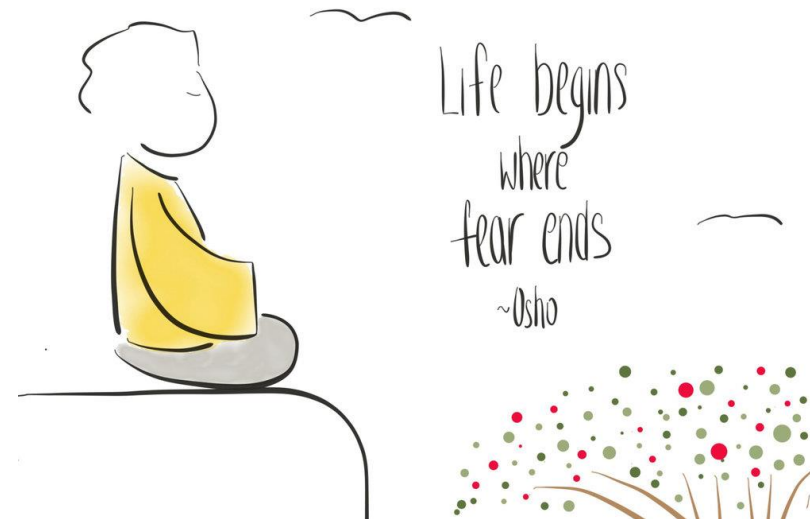


— SLOW DOWN —



GUIDED IMAGINARY

- Picture yourself the same age as their teens
- Similarities and differences
- Find themselves making the same mistakes
- Being more open (empathy)



OVER / UNDER ROLE PLAY

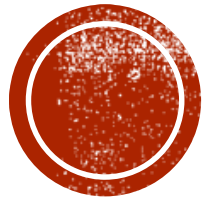
- 媽媽:我今日收到學校電話
- 媽媽:哎呀,我好擔心,非常擔心。他之前發生咗咩事?係咪識咗D唔好既朋友,帶壞佢,我好緊張呀!
- 阿輝:(既不看媽媽,也不說話)
- 阿輝:OH!!我有麻煩了,我唔想媽媽知道我做錯了...
- 媽媽:(聲音越來越大)我們需要傾一傾。老師剛剛話你今天沒有去補課,你去咗邊度?
- 媽媽:我真擔心佢點都唔講。佢如果唔出聲,我應該點做?我覺得有D無能為力。
- 阿輝:我唔想講...
- 阿輝:我擔心媽媽不會聽我的。她認為我係壞。沒必要再講了。我需要離開。我不想聽佢要講既野。
- 媽媽:我地必需要傾一傾,如果你開始逃學,唔去補課,今年你一定會唔及格的,更甚至可能升唔到班。
- 媽媽:我非常擔心我仔將會發生的事,他會唔理學業同唔及格,然後事情會變得更差。我需要引起佢既注意。我需要幫佢。我真係好擔心佢唔會同我傾。
- 阿輝:你憑咩咁講?我在這班的分數一向都唔差!況且老師今日根本不在!
- 阿輝:我感覺很差。佢的確將我睇成一個失敗者。我好失望。媽媽不認為我有我自己既能力,而且我會做正確的選擇,呢種感覺好差呀。



SUMMARY

- Localize group manual
- Use of Video
- Role Play
- Involvement of children through homework
- Use of self
- Teamwork and learning (agency support)





EVALUATION



RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- To examine the impact of the EFT group intervention in parenting pressure and parent-child relationship
- To investigate the subjective experiences of parents that have participated in the EFT intervention group
- To provide suggestions and recommendations for professional development in social work



RESEARCH DESIGN

Quantitative



Qualitative

- Conducted two focus groups after intervention
- Semi-structured interviews



HYPOTHESES

- Compared the pre-test with post-test and 2-month follow up, it is expected:
 - Parents:
 - A decrease in parenting stress
 - An improvement in parent-child relationship
 - Children:
 - An improvement in parent-child communication
 - A decrease in family conflict



MEASUREMENT

Parents

Scale	Reliabilities		
	T0	T1	T2
Parenting Stress Scale (PSS)	0.874	0.823	0.836
Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (FAI) <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪Communication▪Mutuality▪Conflict & harmony▪Parental concern▪Parental control	0.961	0.935	0.939
Post-group questionnaire			



MEASUREMENT

Children

Scale	Reliabilities		
Chinese Family Assessment Instrument (C-FAI)	T0	T1	T2
▪ Communication	0.897	0.930	0.913
▪ Conflict & harmony	0.741	0.890	0.896



PARENT VALID QUESTIONNAIRES

- No. of parents recruited: 77
- No. of participants retained in the analysis: 45
- Criteria for excluding participants in analysis
 - No pre-test questionnaire
 - No post-test and 2-month follow-up questionnaires
- Compared included and excluded parent participants at T0:
 - No difference in gender ($p = .744$); age ($p = .529$); marital status ($p = .108$); and education ($p = .536$)
 - No difference in PSS ($p = .123$); and FAI ($p = .375$)



CHILDREN VALID QUESTIONNAIRES

- No. of children recruited: 77
- No. of children retained in the analysis: 64
- Criteria for excluding participants in analysis
 - No pre-test questionnaire
 - No post-test and 2-month follow-up questionnaires
- Compared included and excluded children participants at T0:
 - No difference in gender ($p = .525$), and age ($p = .956$)
 - No difference in C-FAI Communication ($p = .055$) & Conflict & harmony ($p = .668$)

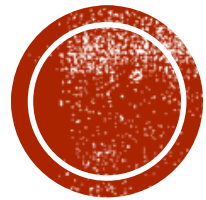


PARENT DEMOGRAPHIC

Variables		Frequency N = 45	Percentage
Gender	Male	7	15.6
	Female	37	82.2
	Missing	1	2.2
Age	40 or below	7	15.6
	41-50	33	73.3
	51-60	2	4.4
	Missing	3	6.7
Marital status	Married	43	95.6
	Separated/Divorced	1	2.2
	Missing	1	2.2
Education	Primary level	1	2.2
	Secondary level	9	20.0
	Tertiary	33	73.3
	Other	1	2.2
	Missing	1	2.2

Mean age of parents: 44.21



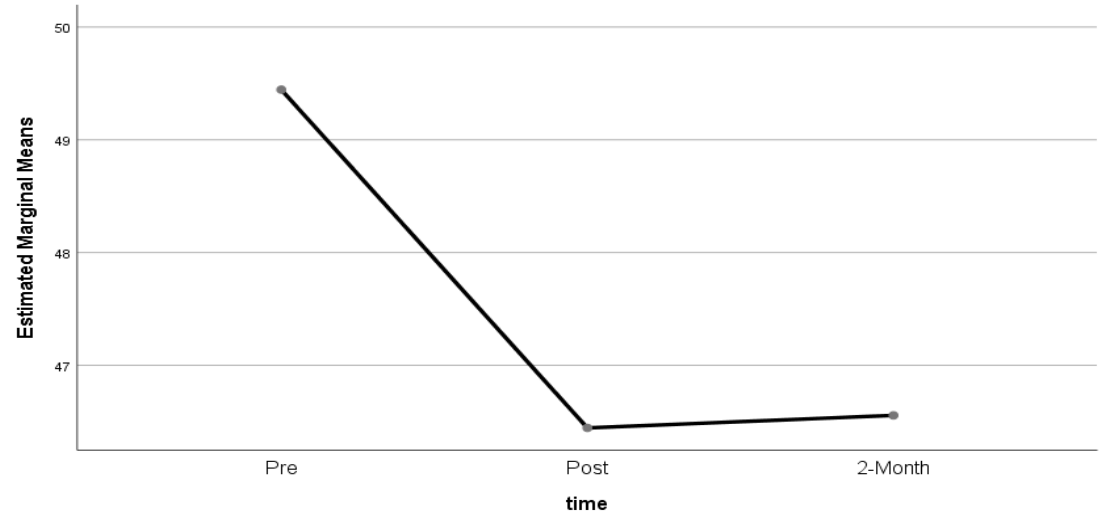


RESULTS - PARENTS

RESULT PARENTING STRESS (PSS)

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
49.44 (9.09)	46.44 (8.52)	46.56 (8.86)

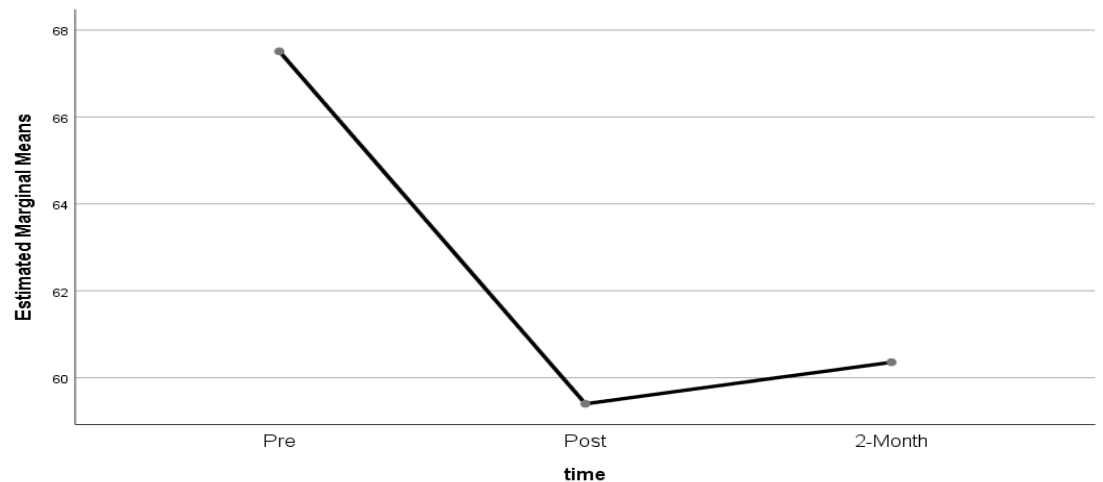
Significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test / 2-month follow up
No difference between Post-test & 2-month follow up
($F(2, 88) = 6.53, p = .005, \eta^2 = .19$)



RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI)

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
67.51 (19.69)	59.40 (15.12)	60.36 (14.94)

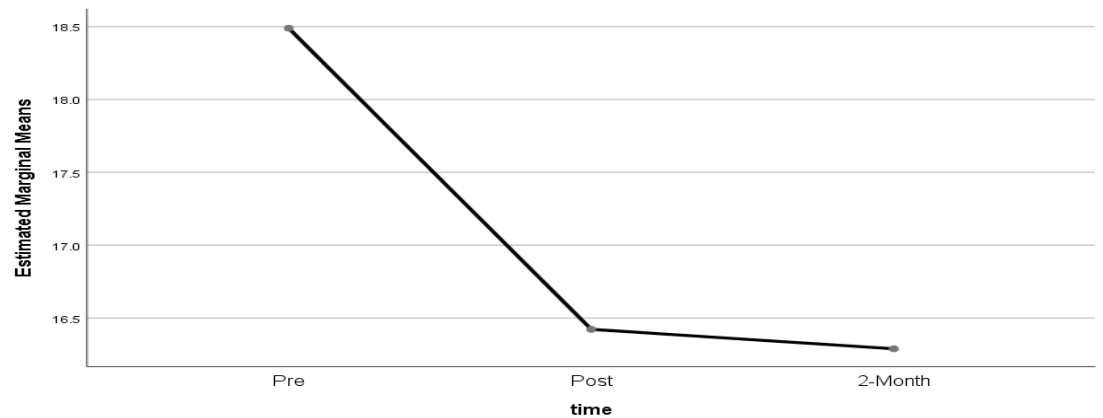
Significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test / 2-month follow up
No difference : Post-test & 2-month follow up
($F(1.682, 74.006) = 10.53, p = .000, \eta_p^2 = .19$)



RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): COMMUNICATION

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
18.49 (6.70)	16.42 (5.18)	16.29 (4.97)

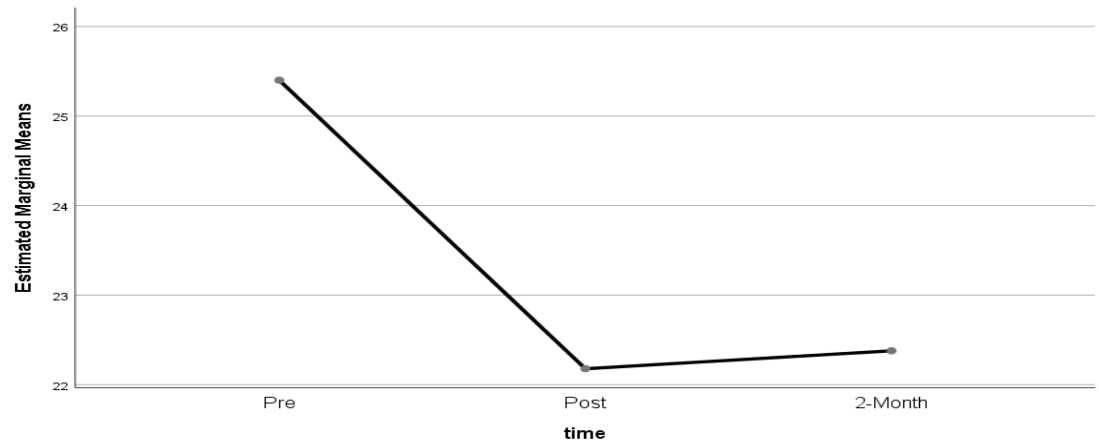
Significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test / 2-month follow up
No difference : Post-test & 2-month follow up
($F(1.504, 66.172) = 6.28, p = .007, \eta_p^2 = .13$)



RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): MUTUALITY

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
25.40 (8.20)	22.18 (6.90)	23.38 (6.97)

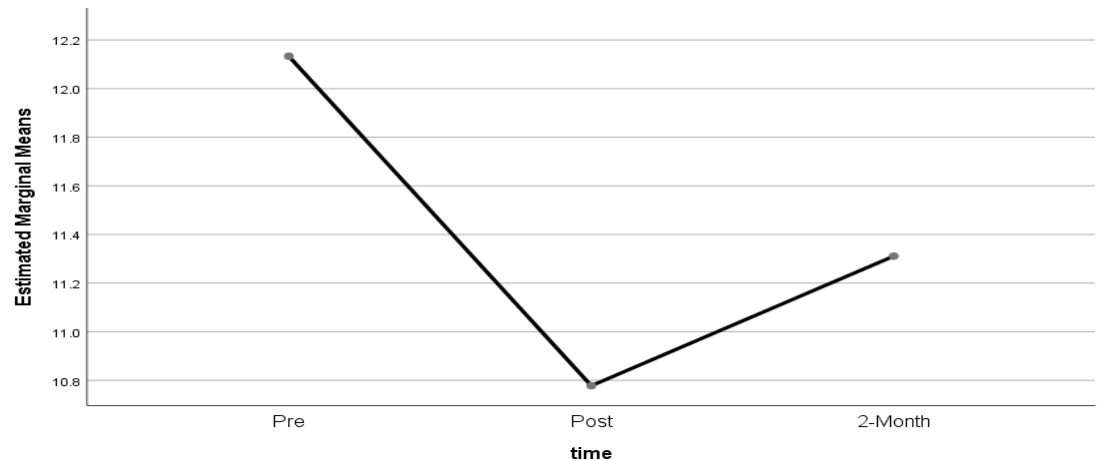
Significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test / 2-month follow up
No difference : Post-test & 2-month follow up
($F(1.715, 75.455) = 7.36, p = .002, \eta p2 = .14$)



RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): CONFLICT & HARMONY

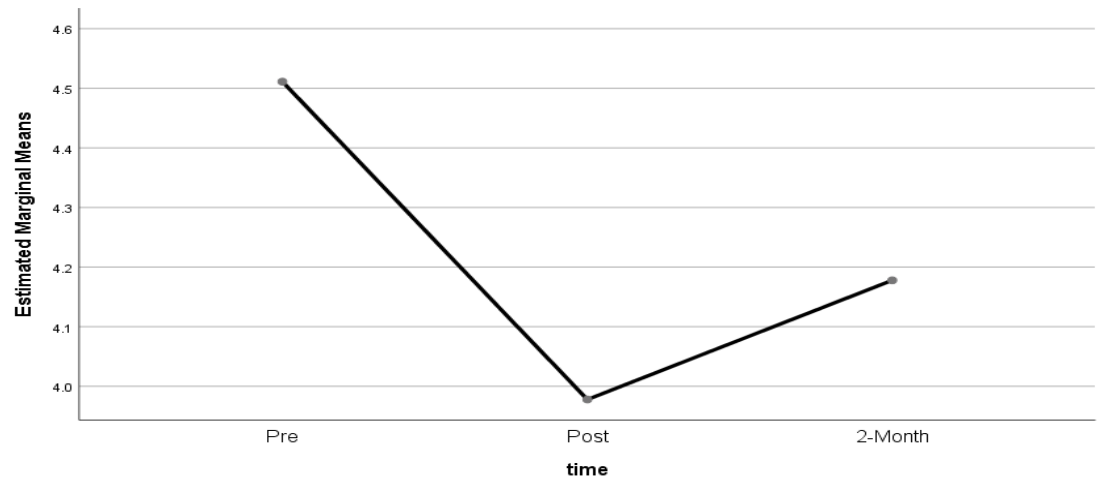
Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
25.40 (8.20)	22.18 (6.90)	23.38 (6.97)

Significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test
No difference: Pre-test / Post-test vs 2-month follow up
($F(1.715, 75.455) = 7.36, p = .002, \eta p2 = .14$).



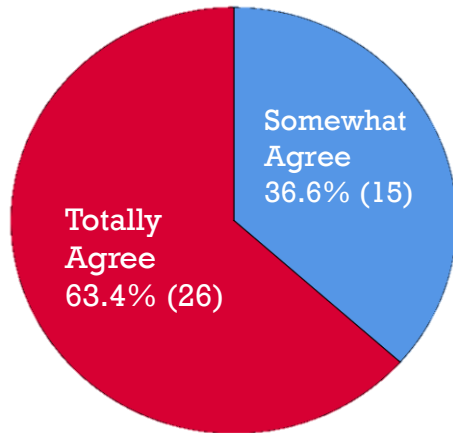
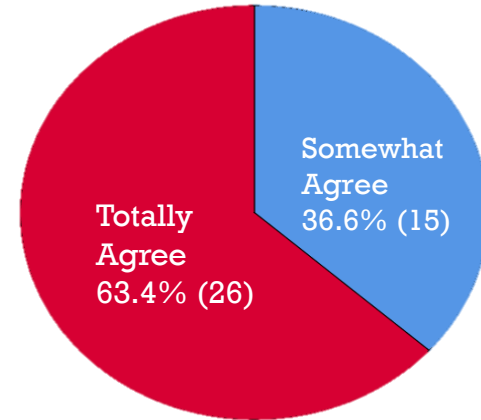
RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): PARENTAL CONCERN

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
4.51 (2.35)	3.98 (1.53)	4.18 (1.95)
No significant differences at 3 time points		



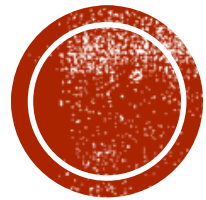
RESULT POST-GROUP QUESTIONNAIRE

Understand the importance of emotion



Understand how to relate with children





RESULTS - CHILDREN

CHILDREN DEMOGRAPHIC

Variables		Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	32	50.0
	Female	17	31.3
	Missing	12	18.8
Age	10 or below	31	48.4
	11 and above	21	32.8
	Missing	12	18.8



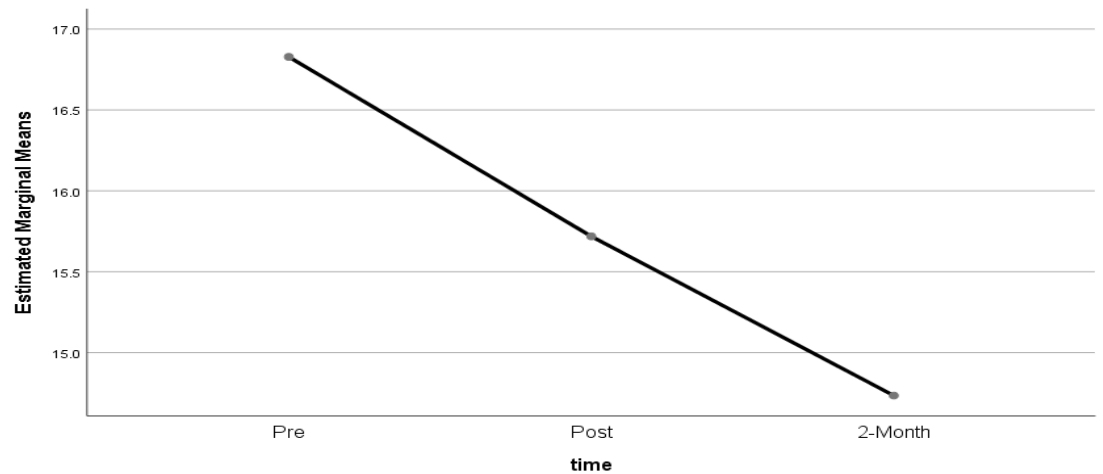
RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): COMMUNICATION

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
16.83 (7.03)	15.72 (6.89)	14.73 (6.05)

Significant difference: Pre-test vs 2-month follow up

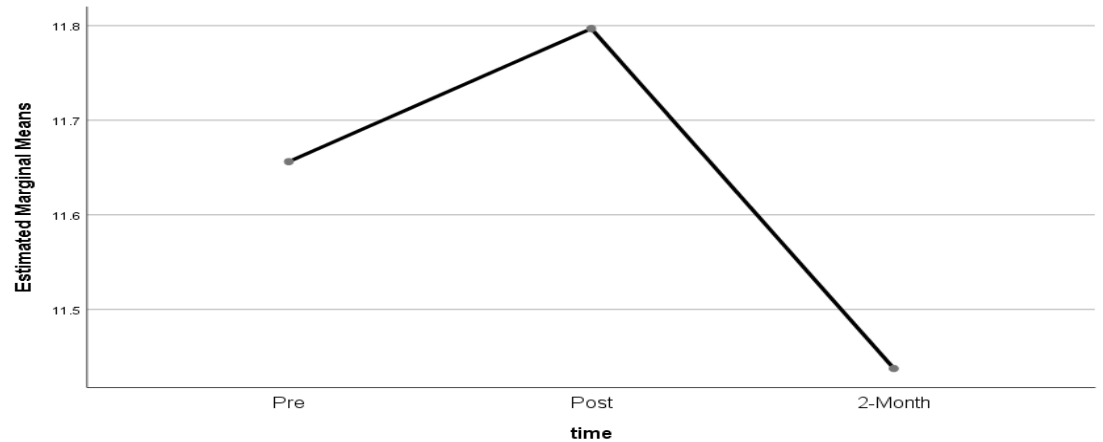
No significant differences: Pre-test vs Post-test; Post-test vs 2-month follow up

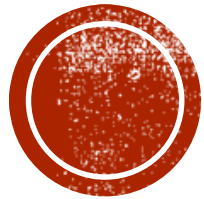
($F(2, 126) = 4.16, p = .018, \eta_p^2 = .06$)



RESULT FAMILY RELATIONSHIP (FAI): CONFLICT & HARMONY

Mean (SD)		
T0	T1	T2
11.66 (4.44)	11.80 (4.79)	11.44 (4.17)
No significant differences at 3 time points		





FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Learning and reflecting**
- Through learning the **“ARE” framework**, the parents were able to differentiate between two different layers of emotions, manifest and underlying, and to better describe the emotions of their children.
- Hence, they were more able to **understand the inner feelings of their children.**
- The framework also led parents to reflect on their relationship with their children and **realize that more trust was needed to consolidate their relationship.**



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Learning and reflecting**
- The “**devil conversation**” of EFT led them to realize that inner emotions need to be addressed and released from time to time. The parents learned that it is **important to self-regulate their own emotions and necessary to release emotions** so that they can help their children deal with their emotions.
- They also learned not to be reactive, as being reactive would only trigger the negative interaction cycle between their children and them.
- **If parents can self-regulate their own emotions, they can have the freedom to choose to connect or not connect** with their children at different times.



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- *There are more spaces now... for example, in the past, after I have scolded him, we will not talk for the following two hours. Now I managed myself, or I try to lower my level of voice and control my anger. I talk to him or even tease him afterwards. Then it is now easier. He is less likely to turn me down or shut me up. (Parent I)*



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Behavioural change**
- The parents reported that their **awareness of the existence of underlying emotions in themselves and their children** had been enhanced.
- Parents experienced a behavioral change from being reactive to **keeping calm and trying to restrain their negative emotions.** From trial and error, they **realized that many possibilities and alternatives exist.**
- They began to have a better understanding and acceptance of the emotions of their children. The parents were more able to control their emotions and to **try to reflect more about the emotions they faced in their children.**



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- *I've tried to change... yes... I have never thought of this method. Yes. I think it is straight forward. When he put it forward suddenly, I am angry in no doubt. There is no space to calm down and see the reason behind his action. The truth is if I scold back at the beginning, he will surely say nothing. Now I try not to react so quickly. I always remind myself to calm down. In this way, I review his action and maybe I can understand his hidden feeling. (Parent F)*



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Perceptual and cognitive change**
- The group had positive effects on the participants' **sense of self**, and the parents **gained hope from the group**.
- The parents **regained their personal identity** from the group and learned that they are not just someone's parent within the school context but are who they truly are, as they were addressed by their names.
- The parents began to notice the difference in perception between their children and themselves: sometimes the children might see the good intentions of the parents in a way opposite to that presented by the parents. Hence, **the parents learned the need to see from the child's perspective and to connect to the child's underlying emotion**.



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- *I was impressed by the fact that when father and mother are talking a lot at home, the children actually found it bothering. It seems like the parents are very caring about their children. But, inside children's mind, they are saying "Oh! That's enough, you are so noisy." This made me reflect myself what role I have to my child, whether the caring I shown is really caring, or it is a distance away from the caring which my child wants. (Parent G)*



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Attitude change**
- The parents realized that the **key to initiating a conversation with their children was often in their hands.**
- Therefore, for a good interaction cycle to be present, the parents learned to be understanding of the emotions behind their children's actions.
- They had an attitude change toward viewing the situation from the child's perspective at times and **letting go of the higher or authoritative parental position.**



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- *I found myself have putting down something. Yes. In the past, I believe parents should perform the role and identity of parents and we should have higher status. But now, I have really been trying to look from his stand point and to understand more his opinions. (Parent L)*



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- **Difficulties and challenges**
- Some parents found difficulties when applying the learning to daily life.
- They found discrepancies between theory and reality, as **real life is much more complicated than role-play scenes.**
- Additionally, they found it **difficult to change the habits and parenting styles that they had adopted for years**; therefore, they reported difficulties in sustaining the effects of the interventions after completing the group.



FOCUS GROUPS FEEDBACK

- *I think my changes are bigger when I am attending the workshop because I will remember the content right after the class and try them out. Thus, when I saw my son, sometimes I will not over-react. I will try to understand him and talk to him. However, after sometimes, I start to forget what I have learnt. I used to my reactions for years. It is hard to change them suddenly. It is very hard to form a new habit to calm down and handle the case.
(Parent M)*



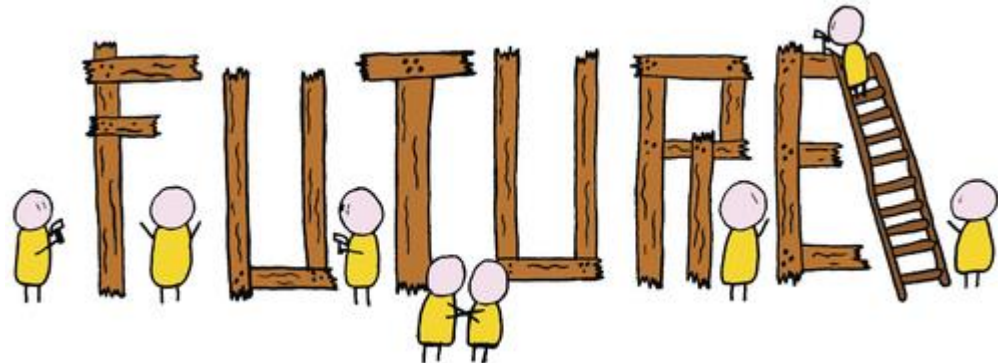
LIMITATIONS & CHALLENGES

- Research design
 - Without control group – unsure whether the changes are from the intervention
- Difficulties to obtain data
 - Obtain consent & support from school to conduct the study (teachers helped to collect children questionnaires)
 - Phone contact participants
 - Research assistant helping data collection
 - Request students to bring questionnaires to parents



CONTRIBUTIONS & SUGGESTIONS

- Robust research design comparing EFT with other modalities
- Conducting parallel groups involve both parents and children
- Long Term and systematic parenting intervention
- Supportive learning environment (Agency support)



SOME LESSON LEARNT

- Preparation
- Tripartite collaboration and “trust”
 - Field (NGO / School)
 - Research participant
 - Academia
- Resources
- Share
 - Webinar
 - Publication
 - Word-of-mouth
- Service advancement

