

# U O W

## Cultivating Flexible Families:

Defusion techniques, metaphors and images that engage parents and enable them to effectively respond to childhood behavioural and emotional problems



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ACBS World  
Conference  
**DUBLIN, IRELAND**  
25-30 June, 2019



UNIVERSITY  
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I have not received and will not receive any commercial support related to this presentation or the work presented in this presentation.



## Workshop learning outcomes...

- (1) Describe the benefits of creating shared metaphors and images with parents
  - (2) Apply defusion techniques that enable parents to employ a broader, flexible and more attuned approach
  - (3) Implement a simple metaphor that enables parents to defuse from coercive cycles and conceptualise a way forward
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# Introductions – 'The Konz'

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# Typical Family



# “The Problem”:

## Escalating Disruptive Behaviours

Childhood ‘disruptive behaviours’ are a developmental precursor to a wide range of negative life outcomes, including:

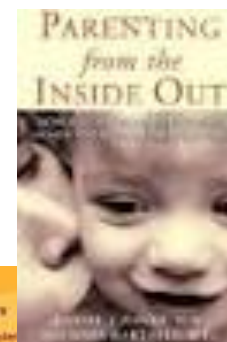
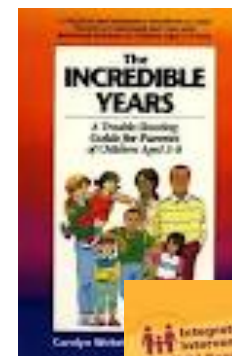
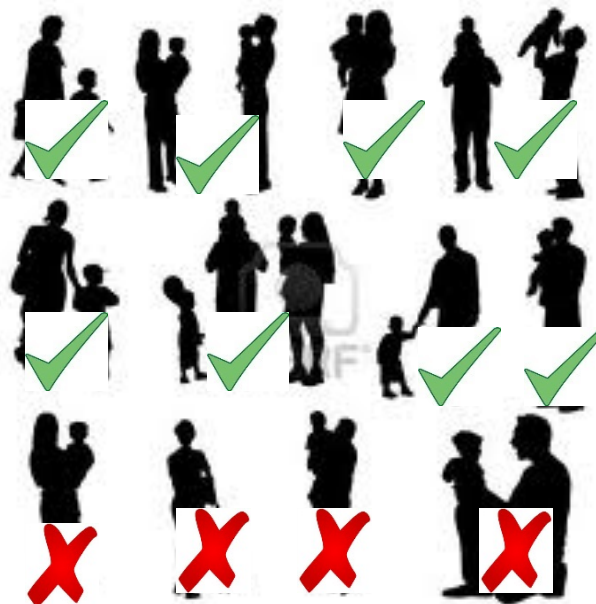
- Criminal activity (Farrington, 1998),
- Substance use (Flory, Milich et al, 2003),
- Academic difficulties (Brook & Newcomb, 1995),
- Unemployment (Fergusson & Horwood, 1998),
- Teenage pregnancy (Bardone, Moffitt et al, 1998),
- Mental health problems including suicidal behaviour (Fergusson & Lynskey, 1998; Darke, Ross & Lynskey, 2003),
- Poor outcomes as parents (Fergusson et al., 2005).

Nearly 50% of most severely disruptive children become antisocial as adults (Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1994).



# Research indicates that...

## Existing Behavioural Family Interventions are effective for ~ 50-70% of parents



## ...But what about the other 30+% of parents?

Brestan & Eyberg, 1998; Dretzke, Davenport, Frew, Barlow, Stewart-Brown, Bayliss, Taylor and colleagues, 2009; Eyberg, Nelson & Boggs, 2008; Kaminski, Valle, Filene and Boyle, 2008; Serketich & Dumas, 1996; Drugli, Larsson, Fossum & Tore-March, 2010; Hautmann Hoitjink, Eichelberger, Hanisch, Pluck, Walter & Dopfner, 2009; Lundahl, Risser and Lovejoy, 2005; Nixon, Sweeney, Erickson & Touyz, 2004; Sanders, Markie-Dadds, Tully & Bor, 2000; Webster-Stratton, 2005



# Typical Components of BFI's

- ❖ Primarily Based on Social Learning Theory and the role of parental attention in maintaining problem behaviours.
- ❖ Length of program varies between 8 to 12 weeks.
- ❖ Aimed at toddlers & primary school children.
- ✓ Encourage positive Parent-Child Interactions through consistent positive attention & play.
- ✓ Reinforce Desirable Behaviours using praise & rewards.
- ✓ Setting Effective Limits through clear rules, effective instructions, behaviour correction and planned ignoring.
- ✓ Respond to more serious misbehaviour with the consistent use of non-physical consequences such as natural consequences, removal of privileges and time out.
- ✓ Plan for high risk situations eg. Shopping, bedtime etc





# What gets in the way for 30+%?

- Single-parent status
- Marital discord
- Low family income
- Parents' level of education or occupation
- *Critical parenting style (Behaviours)*
- *Parental psychological processes including maternal depression (Thoughts & Emotions)*
- *Therapeutic alliance*

Orrell-Valente, Pinderhughes, Valente & Laird, 1999; Reyno & McGrath, 2006 Reid, Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 2003; Webster-Stratton & Hammond, 1990; Scott & Dadds, 2009



5 questions for us to  
address in today's workshop

1.

How can we engage with  
families who have complex  
lives and feel so  
emotionally burdened?



2.

...how can we help parents to  
find a way through the layers  
of hurt, anger, guilt, shame,  
helplessness, hopelessness,  
fear...?



3.

...how can we help parents to  
re-discover 'the parent they  
want to be?

...and to re-connect with  
their child?



4.

How can we help parents to  
see their child's behaviour  
for what it is ...

...and not what their Mind  
tells them?



5.

How do we help parents to step  
back from escalating coercive  
cycles that increase  
behavioural problems?  
...and then engage in well-  
proven SLT strategies?



# Can Integrating ACT/Mindfulness with traditional SLT help the 30+%?

## Confident Carers – Cooperative Kids Program

(Konza & Donovan, 2006-2019)

For parents/carers of 3-11yo children with disruptive behaviour problems

Evolved over past 12 years to improve parents' engagement and perseverance with proven social learning theory (SLT) techniques

9 week group program (2 hours per week)





# Exploring Some Pieces of CCCK...

**MIND  
STRUGGLE**

**POWER  
STRUGGLE**

**PARENTING  
COMPASS**

**VIRUS X**

**BUSHFIRE  
MODEL**



1.

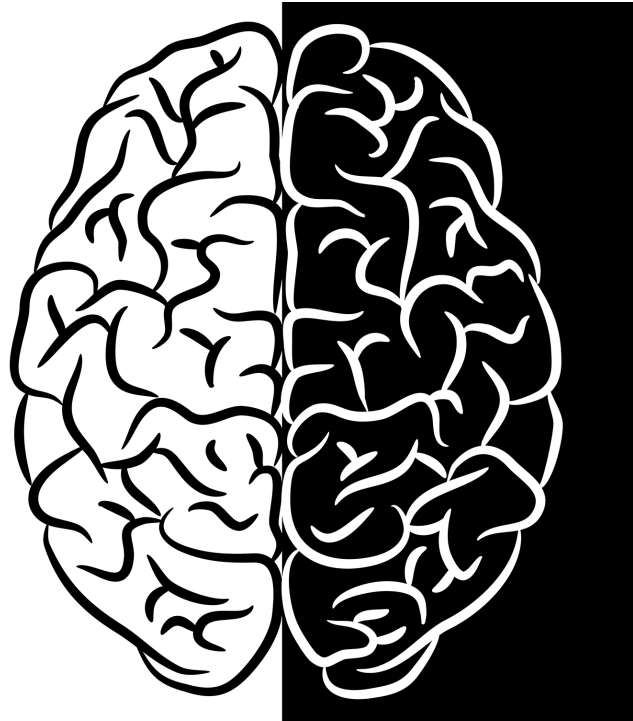
How can we engage with  
families who have complex  
lives and feel so  
emotionally burdened?



# What does CCK do Differently?

## Integrates:

- ACT
- Attachment Theory
- Neurobiological Processes
- Social Learning Theory



## Engages the Right Hemisphere through:

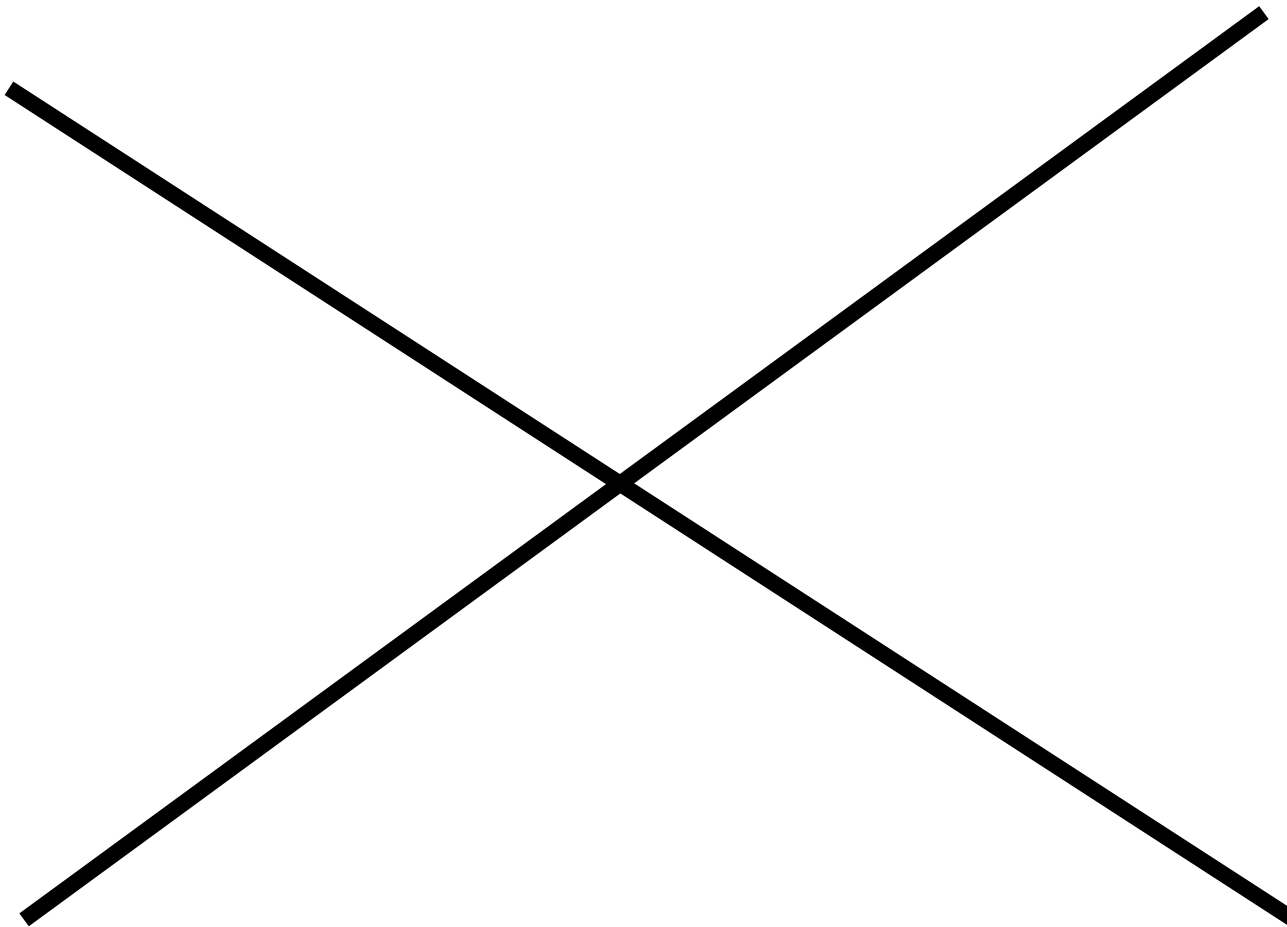
- Metaphors
- Pictures
- Mindfulness
- Videos
- Role plays



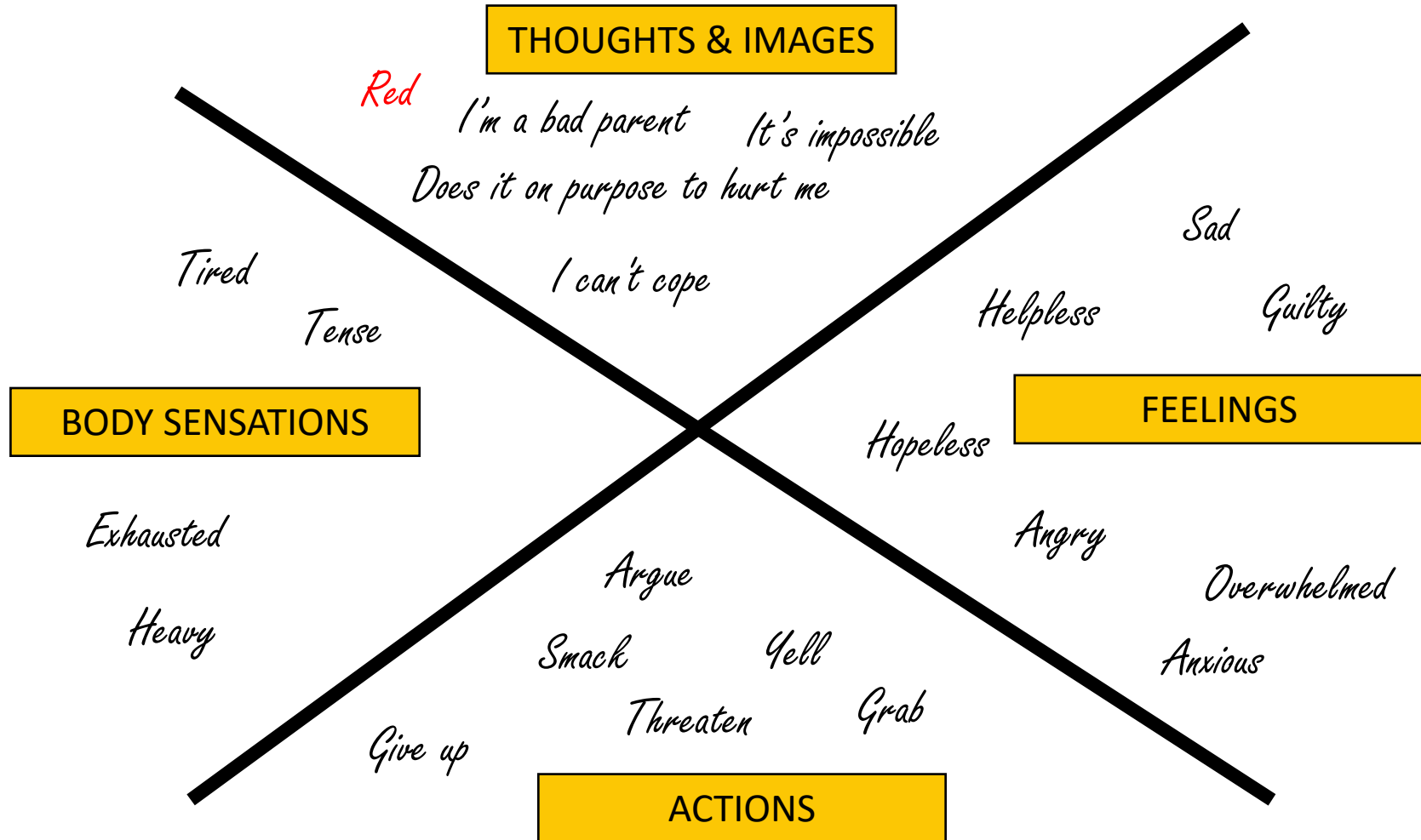
2.

...How can we help parents to  
find a way through the layers  
of hurt, anger, guilt, shame,  
helplessness, hopelessness,  
fear...?





# Acknowledging the Mind Struggle



# Practice: Mind Struggle

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3.

...how can we help parents to  
re-discover 'the parent they  
want to be?

...and to re-connect with  
their child?





# Guided Mindfulness Exercise

*...almost like a dream, I'd like you to imagine that you have recently found out that you are expecting your first child...*

*...In this special moment, you would probably make some open or private promises to yourself about how things will be in your family...*



# Becoming Aware of Parenting Values

## “My Parenting Compass - What’s Most Important”

*What kind of a parent do you want to be for your child?*

*How do you want to be remembered by your child when they grow up?*

*What qualities do you want to show?*

*What do you want to stand for as a parent?*



# PARENTING COMPASS

"What's Most Important To You As A Parent?"

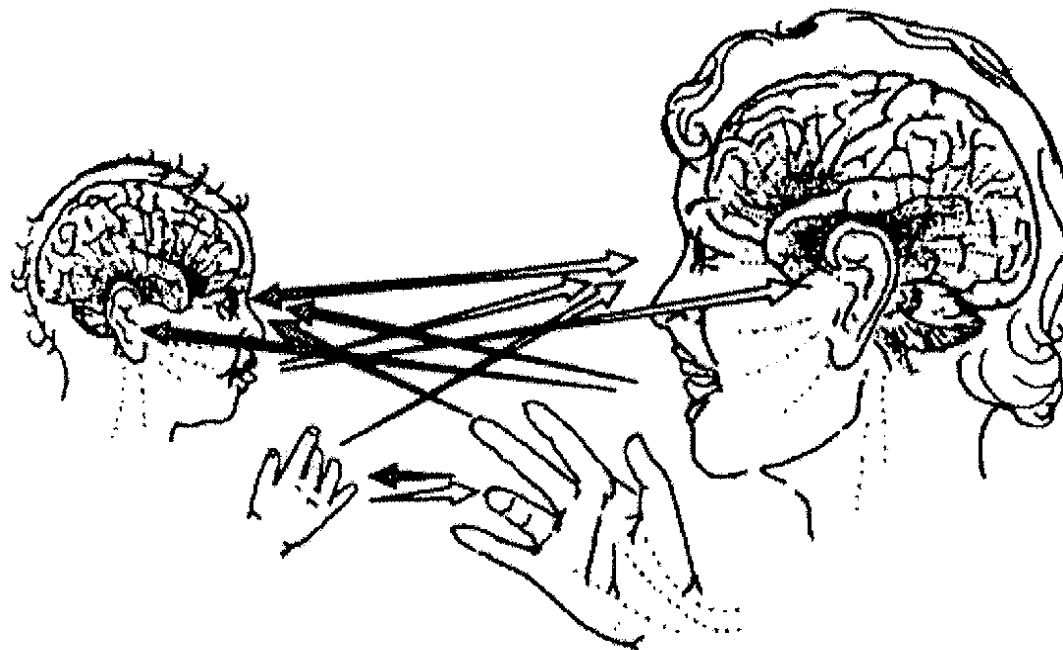
Write the Values in the segments around the compass

CONFIDENT CARERS - COOPERATIVE KIDS  
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"Take yourself back to when you'd just had your baby ...how did your baby try to communicate with you?"



"...we leave an imprint in  
their brains"

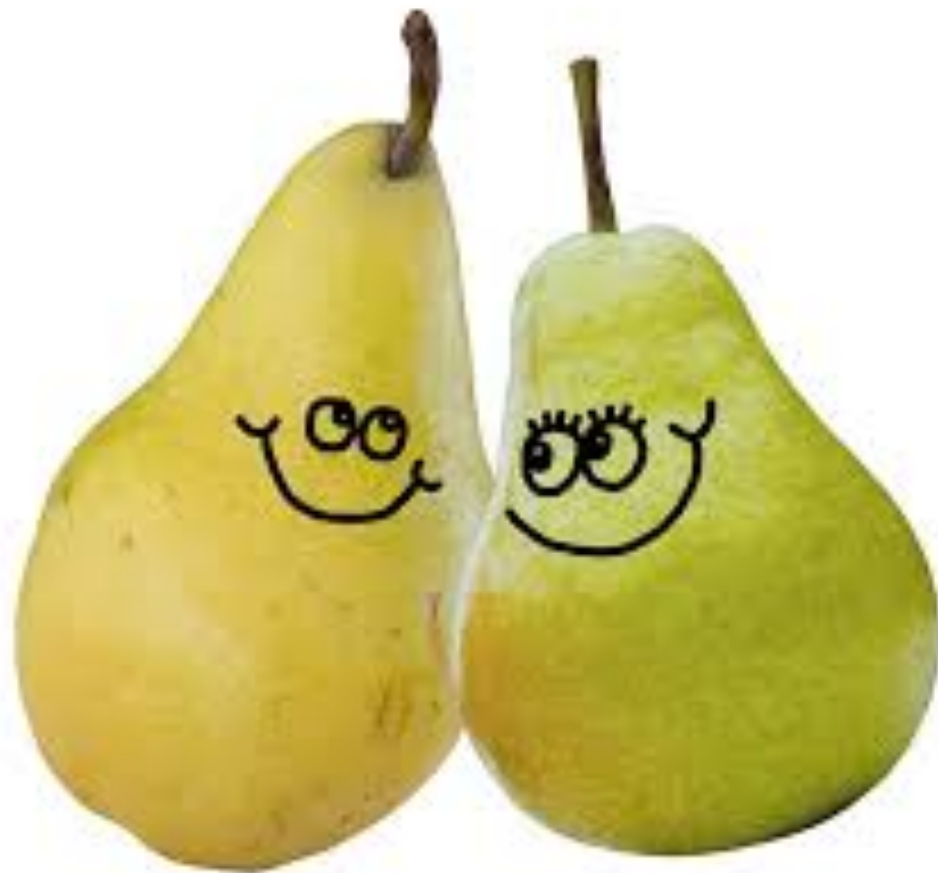


Mindfulness



# Practice: Parenting Compass

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4.

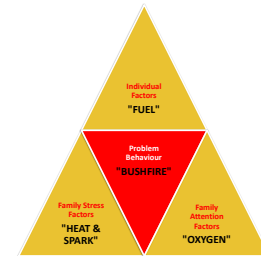
How can we help parents to  
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...and not what their Mind  
tells them?





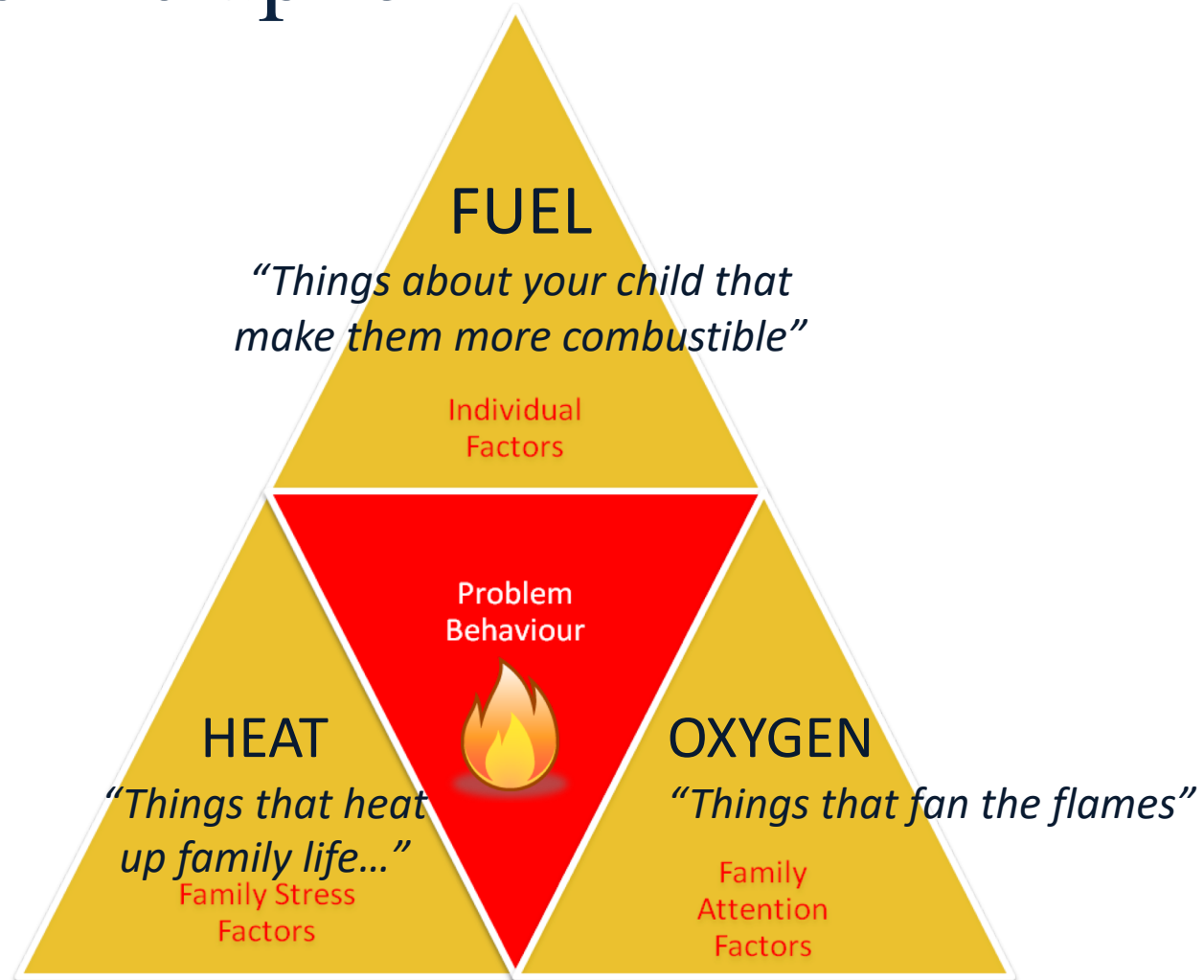
# Bushfire Metaphor



*In this program we find it useful to think of a parent's experience of dealing with their child's problem behaviour is like "being in a Bushfire".*

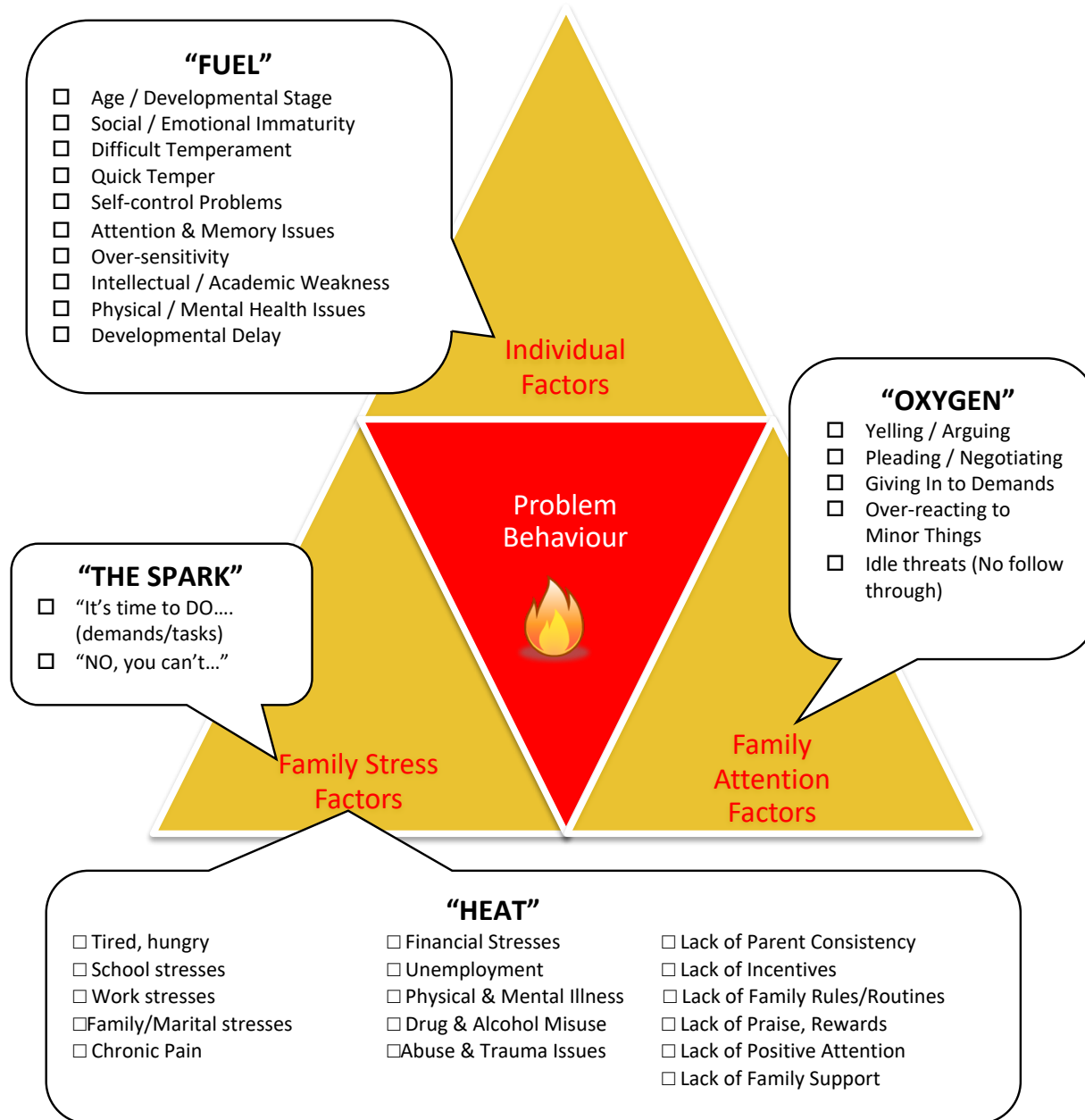
*Sparks of "I don't want to" or "I want...", turn into flames of whinging and defiance that then seem to blaze out of control as full-on tantrums and emotional meltdowns. A parent's attempts to fight the fire and put things out only seem to make things worse. Recovering from the Bushfire is often just as difficult as people's feelings are hurt and often embers are glowing leaving parents feeling like an outbreak could occur any moment soon...*

# Bushfire Metaphor



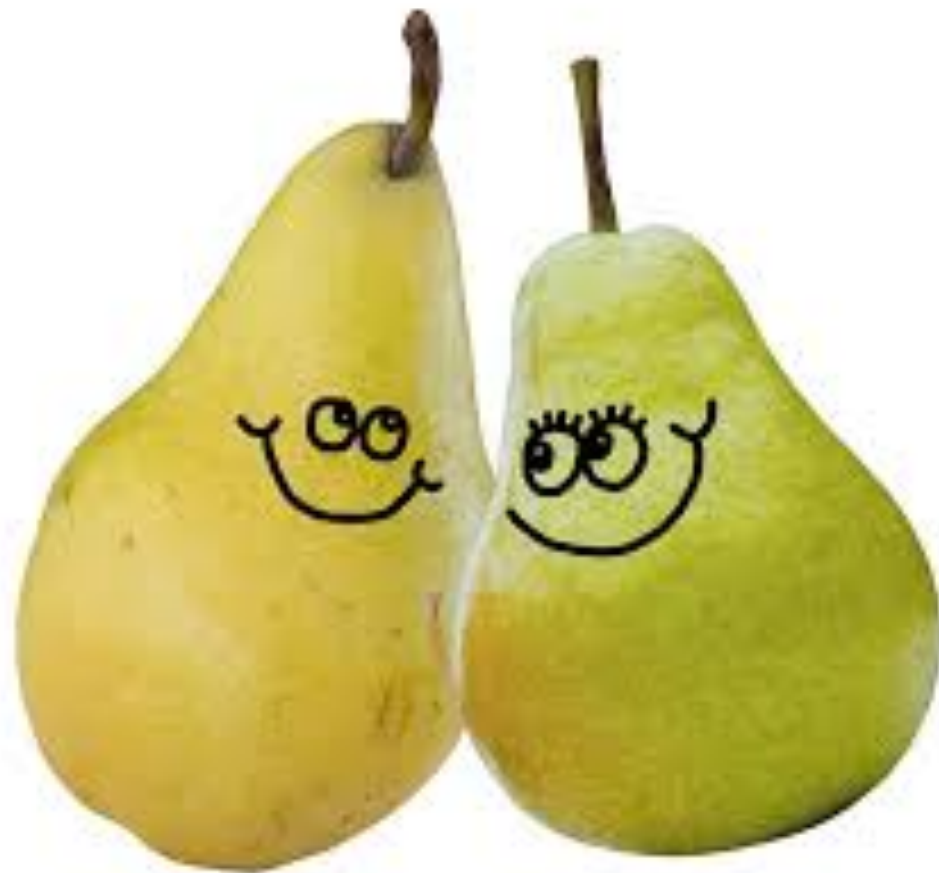
*“...and dry things out like a hot, dry summer”*

*“The spark that starts the fire”*



# Practice: Bushfire Metaphor

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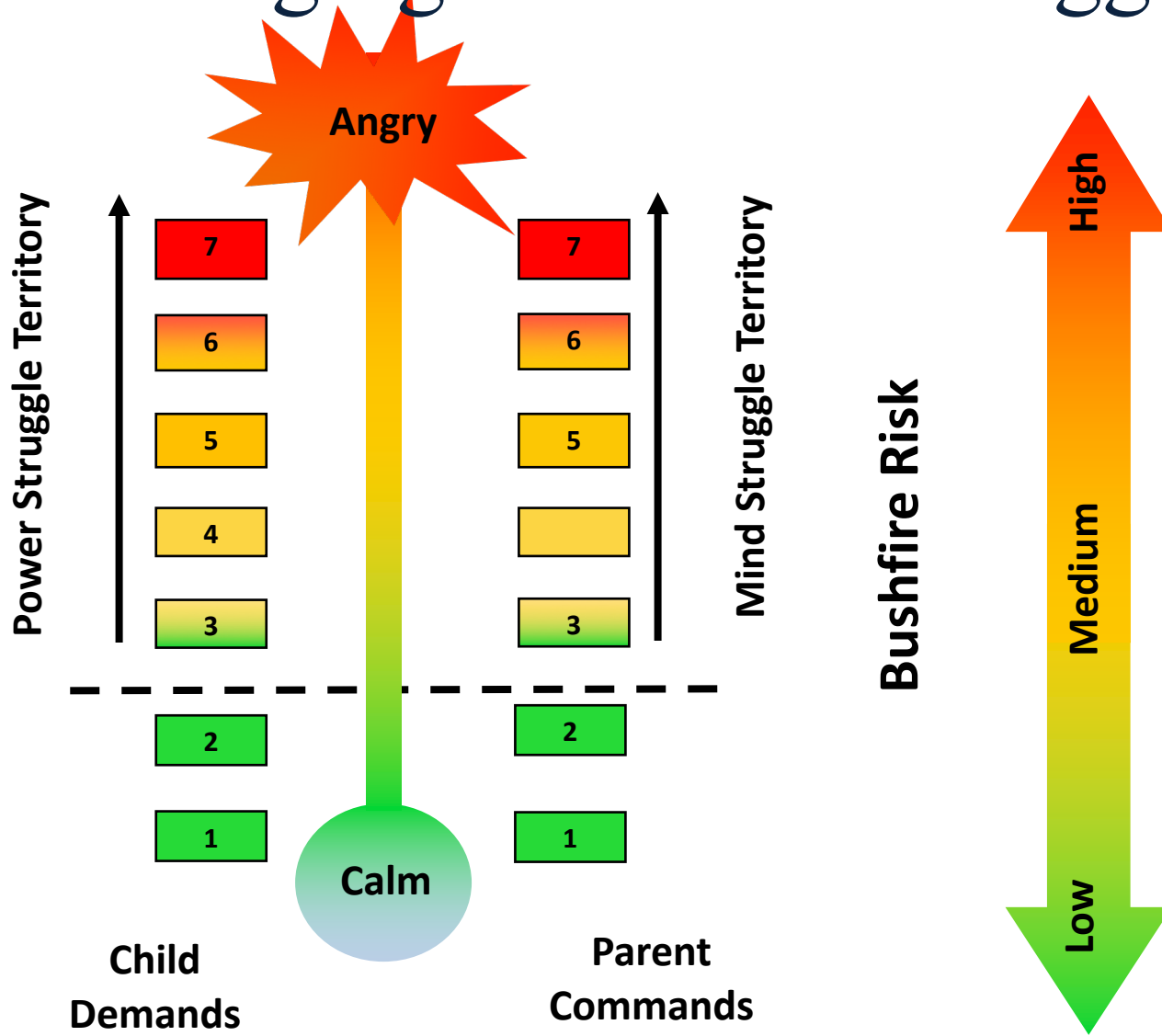
5.

How do we help parents to step back  
from escalating coercive cycles that  
increase behavioural problems?

...and then engage in and persevere  
with well-proven SLT strategies?



# Acknowledging the Power Struggle





# Emotion Coaching



## 5 Steps for Emotion Coaching:

**1. Calm yourself (take a breath) and connect with your values**

**2. Empathise with your child (feelings & needs)**

*"I can hear how upset/.....(insert feeling) you are"*

*"It seems that you need/want/wish..... (insert need/want/wish)"*

**3. Double-check (& listen)**

*"Am I getting it right?", "Is that what you're telling me?"*

**4. Deepen the moment (& listen)**

*"No wonder you're upset,..... (insert some details about what you've heard)"*

*"Is there anything else?" (listen)*

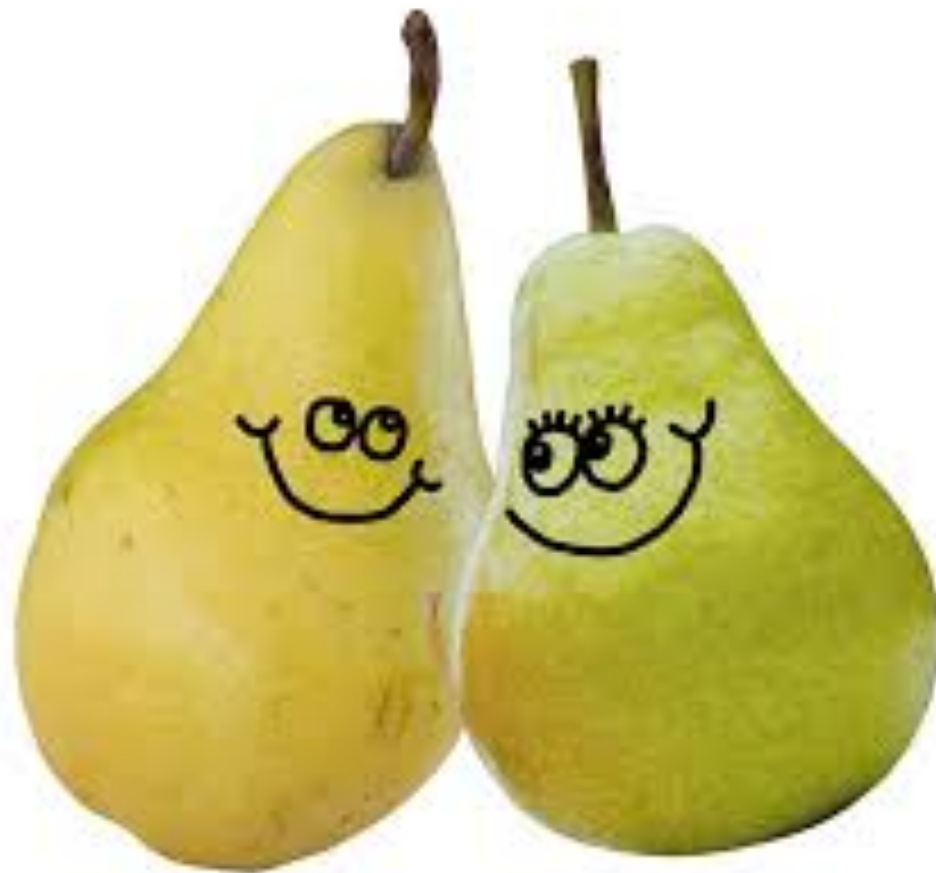
**5. Problem-solve together (only if child & carer calm)**



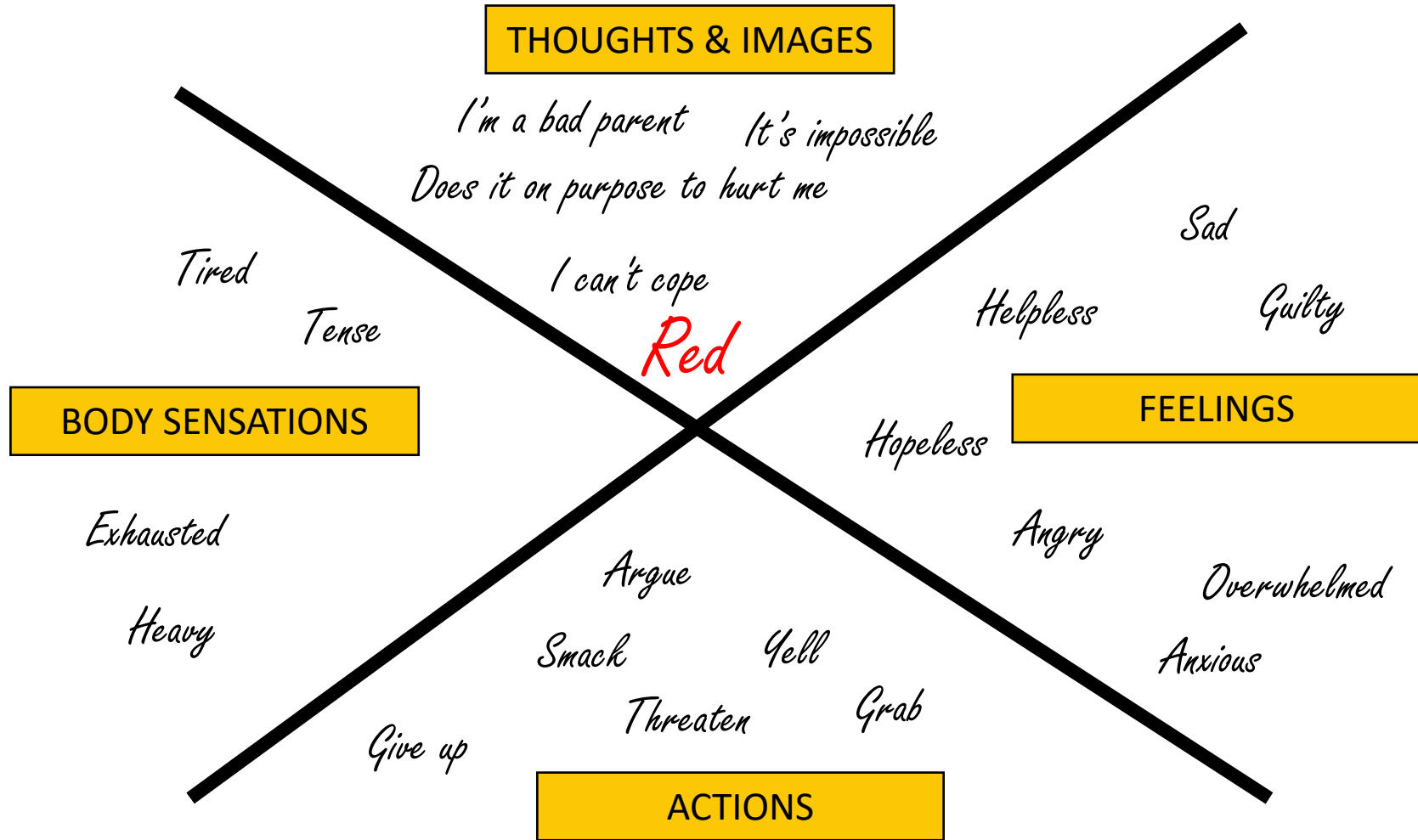


# Practice: Values-in- Action

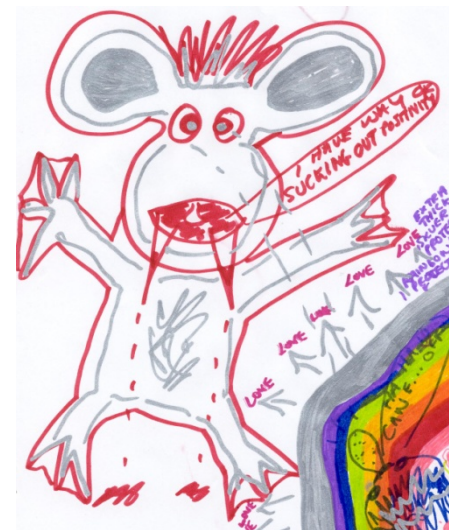
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# Acknowledging the Mind Struggle



# Drawings of 'Virus X' (aka Mind Struggle)



# Guided Mindfulness Exercise:

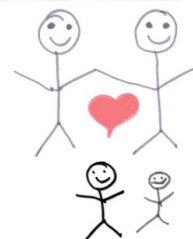
## “Sweet Spot” – Being the Parent you Want to Be

*I'd like you to choose one moment with your child over the past five weeks when these things worked out, and it went well.*

*... just sort of scroll back through all the best moments of the past five weeks. Make sure the memory is of a specific event.....*



# 'Being the Parent Want to Be'



The Rest of the Story...



# The Confident Carers – Cooperative Kids Program

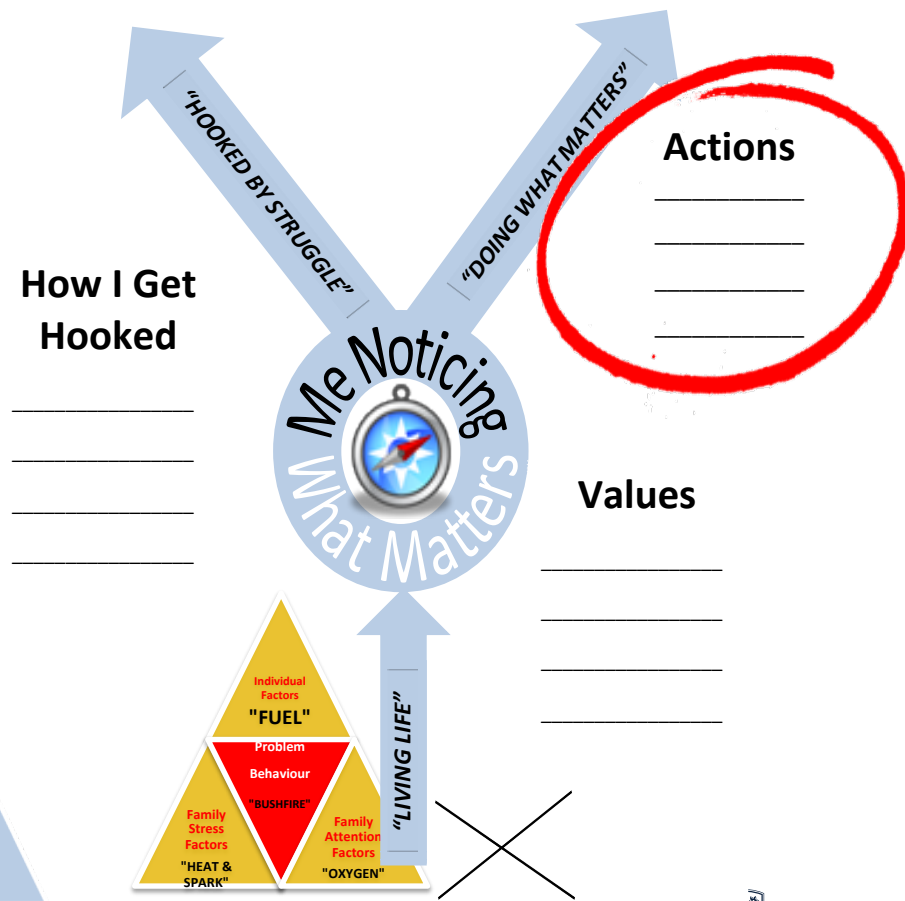
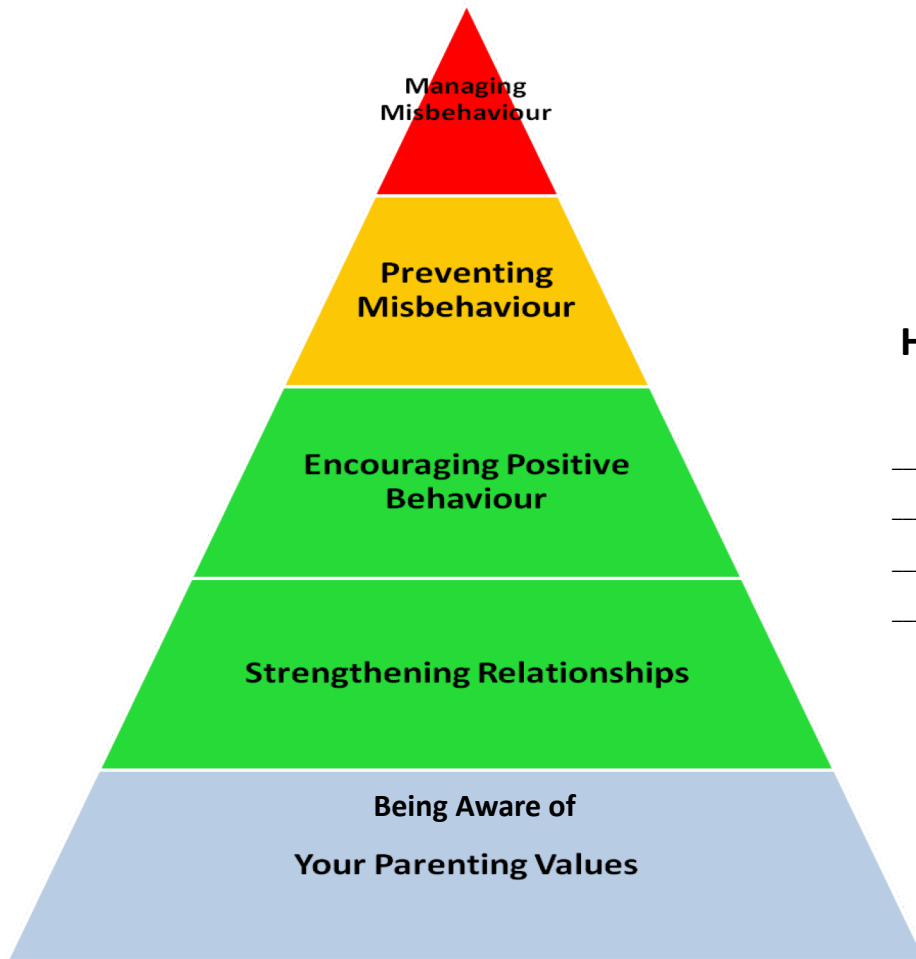
## Program Objectives:

- Clarify parenting values
- Develop a broader contextual understanding of problem situations
- Increase parent-child attunement through mindful attachment focussed play
- Encourage and reinforce behaviour utilising mindful attachment focussed strategies.
- Utilise values based Behaviour Action Plans in common problem situations.



# CCCK: Weekly Program Goals

How I want to be as a parent  
How I want to live my life





# The Social Learning Theory Stuff (done differently)

Wk3: Playing for keeps

- Mindful Play & Describing

Wk4: Making things stick

- Praise & Rewards

Wk5: Firming things up

- Household Rules, Clear Instructions,  
Ignore-Distract-Praise

Wk6: When things get too hot

- Natural Consequences, Removal  
Privileges, Time-out

Wk8 & 9: Putting it all together

- Behaviour Action Plans



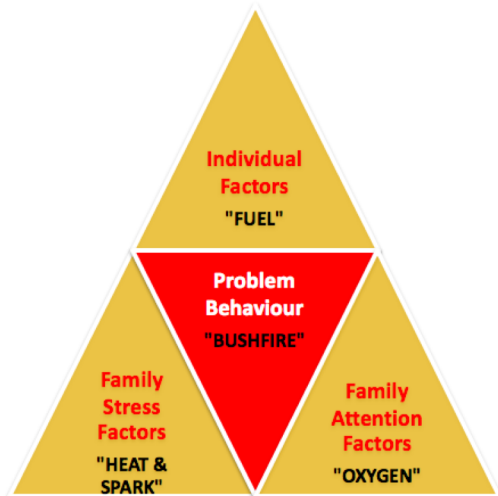
## Behaviour Action Plan - Part 1

1. What is the Problem Behaviour 'Bushfire' you are trying to prevent or reduce? When and where does it happen?

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2. Complete the "Bushfire Model" below and identify the factors that play a role in the Problem Behaviour: (Review Page 11 if necessary)



3. Once you have completed the "Bushfire Model", go to Part 2 of Encouraging Specific Behaviours to create a plan that will:

- (a) Reduce the influence of the three 'Bushfire' factors; and
- (b) Encourage your child to do the specific behaviour you want.



## Behaviour Action Plan - Part 2

What Specific Behaviour are you trying to encourage?



Values guiding your parenting in this situation

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Strategies to Engage, Motivate and Reward Your Child

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Rules, Routines, Instructions & Planned Ignoring

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Planned Consequences

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# Does it Work?

## Early Research

(Pritchard, 2008; Horsfield, 2009)  
indicated CCK is effective in:

- Reducing child problem behaviour (ECBI)
- Reducing parental depression, anxiety and stress (DASS21)
- Increasing the use of more appropriate parenting styles (Parenting Scale)
- Increasing parental self efficacy at three-month follow-up.

## More Recent Research

**Sample:** Parents attending CCK groups

- University 'Psychology Clinic'
- At Risk Families - 'Community Clinic'
- Control Group (no intervention)

**Measures** (pre-post):

- Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting (IM-P)
- Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI)
- Parenting Scale (PS)
- Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS21)

Study 2 – above measures &

- Dyadic Parent-Child Interaction Coding System (DPICS)

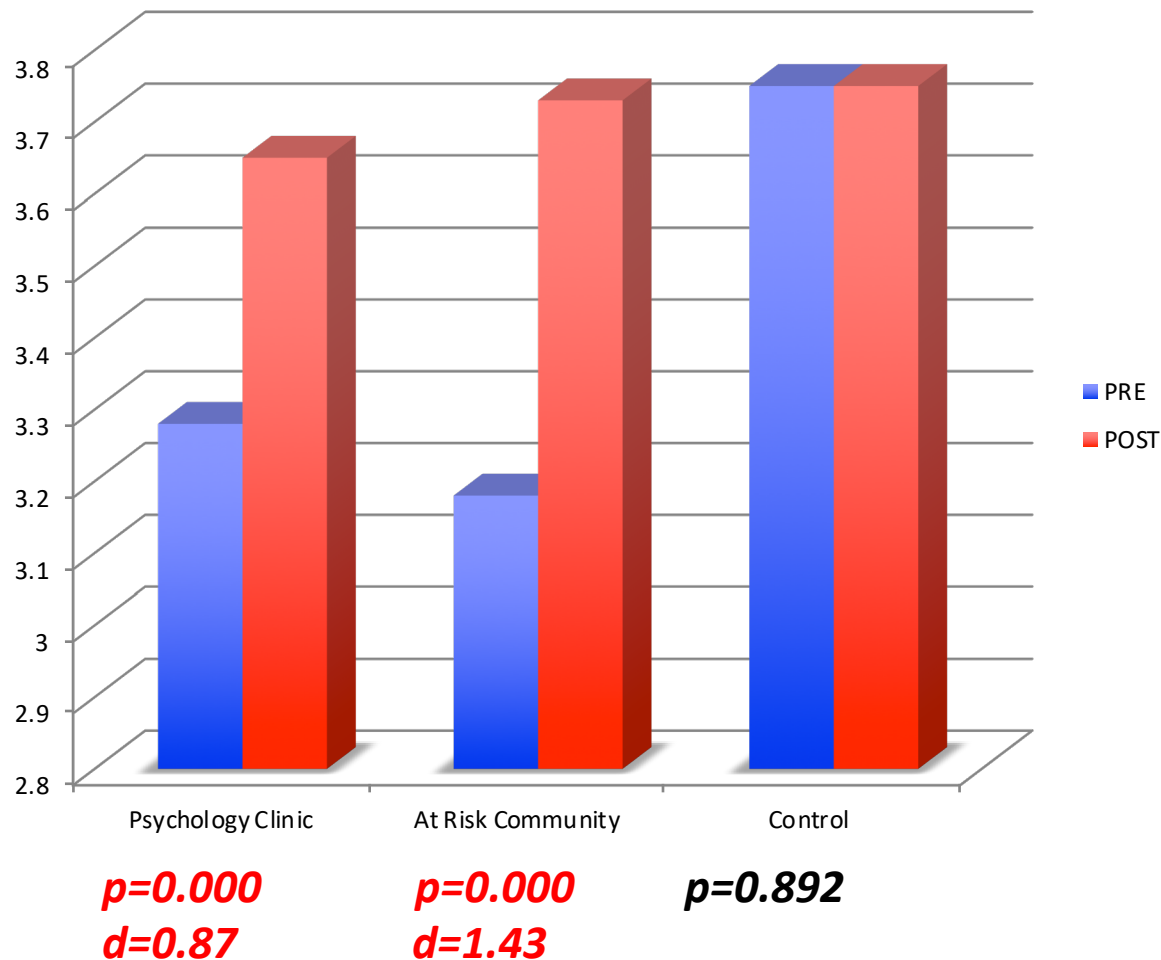


# Study 1: Sample Demographics

**Table 1** Demographic characteristics of the intervention groups and control groups

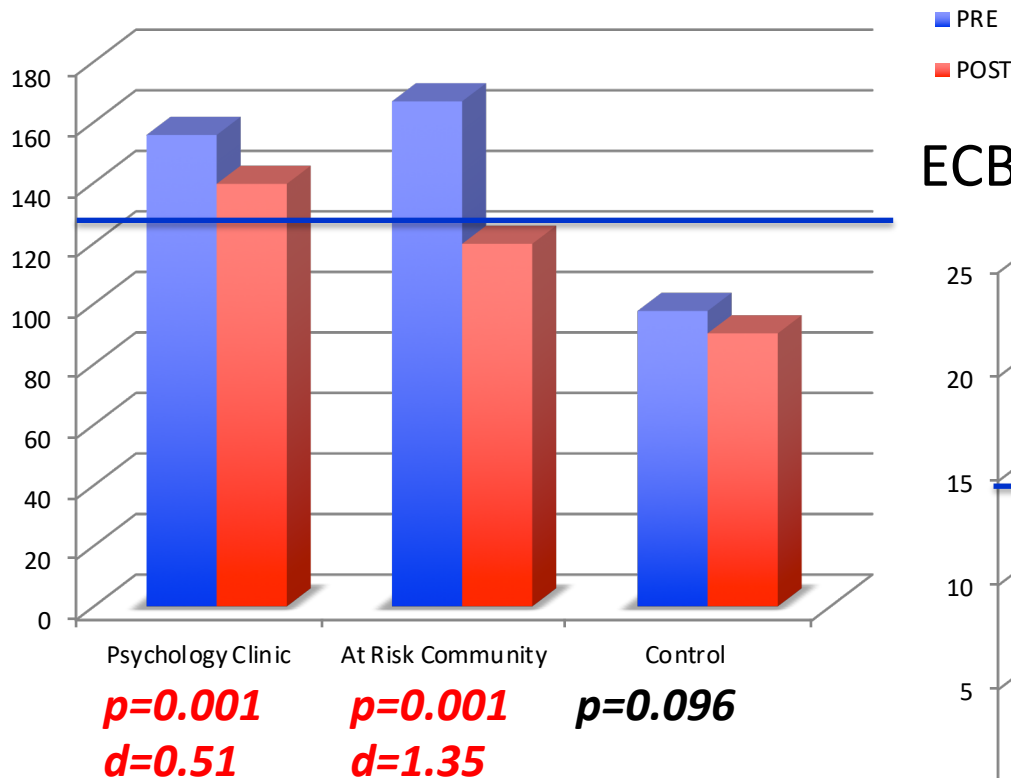
	Control (n = 15)	Psychology Clinic (n = 20)	Community Clinic (n = 14)
Gender of Parent			
Male	7 (47%)	4 (21%)†	3 (23%)†
Female	8 (53%)	15 (79%)	10 (77%)
Gender of Child			
Male	12 (80%)	14 (70%)	10 (71%)
Female	3 (20%)	6 (30%)	4 (29%)
Age of Child (Mean/SD)	8.47 (2.99)	7.55 (1.79)	5.43 (2.34)
Age of Parent (Mean / SD)	41.20 (5.65)	39.63 (4.31)	29.67 (5.416)
Household Income <sup>a</sup>			
Low	-	3 (18%)+++	11 (92%)++
Middle	3 (20%)	4 (24%)	1 (8%)
High	12 (80%)	10 (59%)	-
Education Level			
Low	-	1 (5%)†	7 (58%)++
Middle	5 (33%)	11 (58%)	3 (25%)
High	10 (67%)	7 (37%)	2 (17%)
Employment Status			
Not employed	2 (13%)	5 (26%)†	12 (100%)++
Part or full time	13 (87%)	14 (74%)	-
Family type			
Two Parent	14 (93%)	11 (58%)†	3 (25%)++
Single Parent	1 (7%)	5 (26%)	7 (58%)
Step/Blended	-	3 (16%)	2 (17%)

# Mindfulness (IM-P)

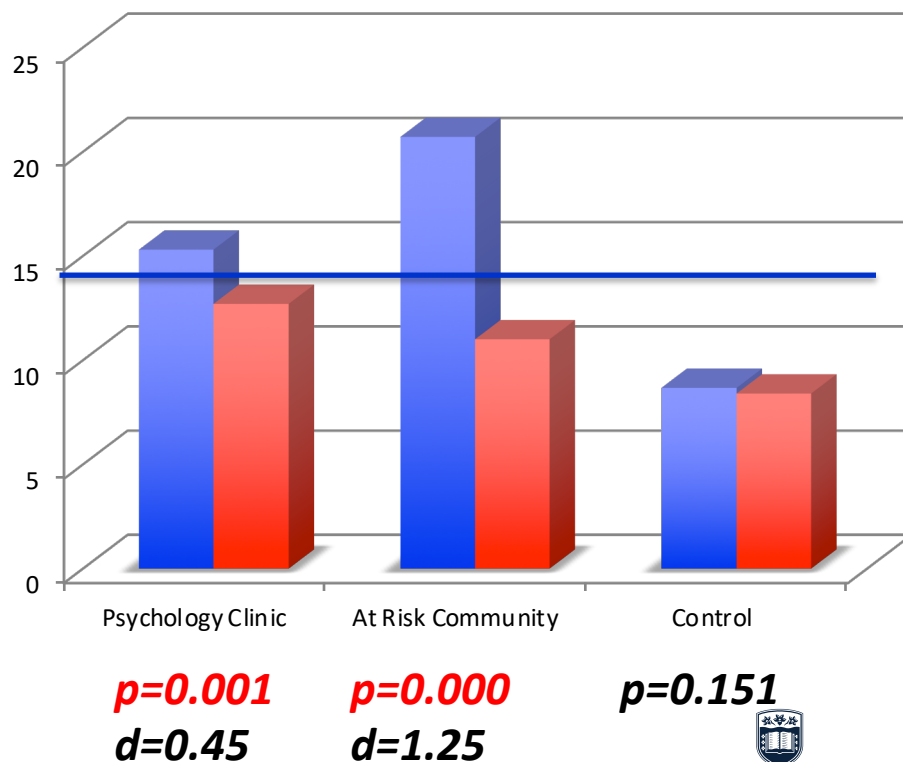


# Behaviour (ECBI)

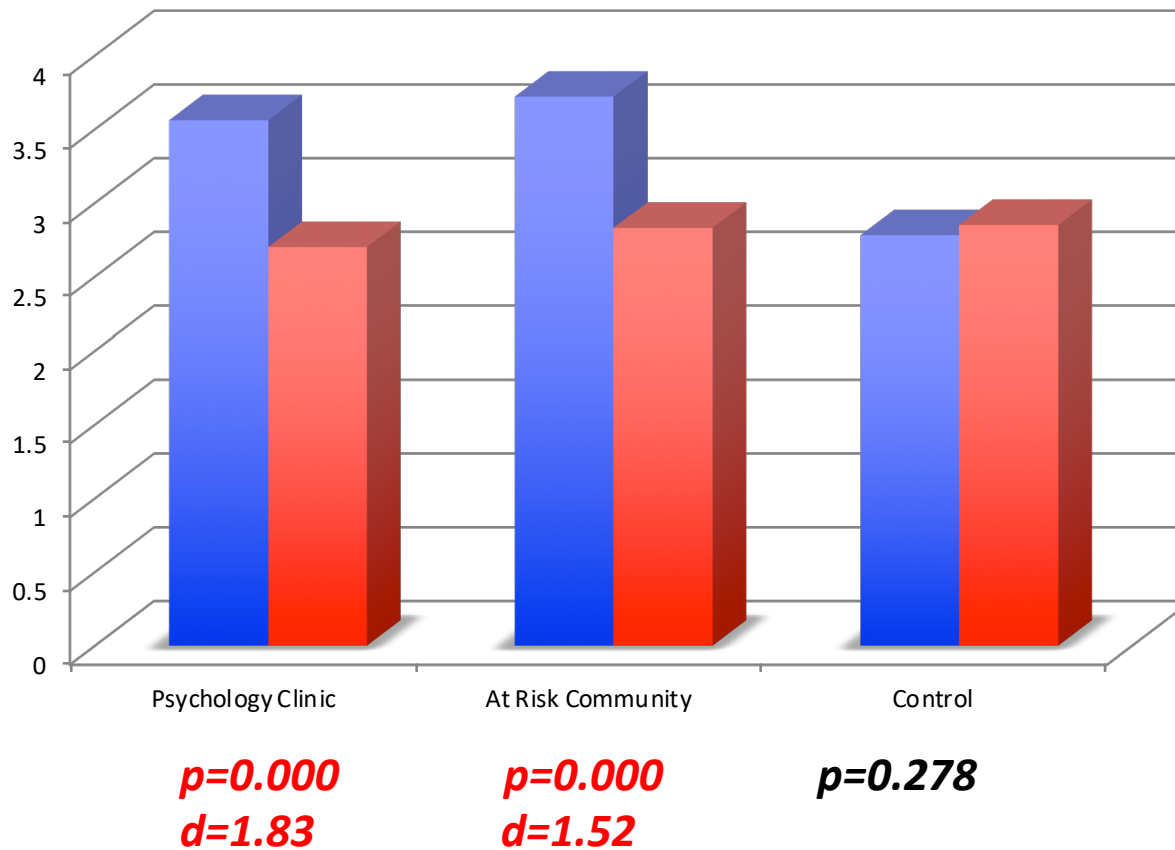
## ECBI Intensity (Pre & Post - Means)



## ECBI Problem (Pre & Post - Means)



# Parenting Style (PS)





Measure	Pre		Post		Wilcoxon Signed Rank		Effect size
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	z value	p value	r
<b>Self-report measures</b>							
ECBI Intensity	164.38	26.27	128.31	17.47	-3.181	.001	0.88
Parenting Scale	3.39	.60	2.54	.43	-3.062	.002	0.85
Mindfulness	3.19	.48	3.64	.39	-2.982	.003	0.83
<b>Observed measures (OPICS)</b>							
Praise	2.31	2.02	4.62	4.46	-1.428	.153	0.40
Behavioural Reflections	2.77	3.75	4.92	4.48	-1.213	.225	0.34
Play Talk	.85	1.57	2.15	3.51	-1.214	.225	0.34
Critical Talk	.77	1.09	.62	.87	-.378	.705	0.10
Commands	4.31	2.75	4.38	3.73	-.419	.675	0.12

# Wrap Up

Parenting programs need to help parents to:

- (1) Tune into what is important to them as parents, and;
- (2) Tune into, or get on the same wavelength as, their children; and then,
- (3) Apply SLT techniques as needed.



# Wrap Up

Mindfulness & ACT  
provide (RH) processes  
by which parents can  
engage with and then  
utilise well-proven (LH)  
SLT techniques



# Wrap Up

Findings from the current research offer initial support to the premise that Mindfulness processes can indeed assist the most needed 30% of parents...

Next: RCT to confirm



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# Thank you



# Any questions?



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