



## ACT-based parenting: *“Confident Carers Cooperative Kids”*



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# Aims

- Share some pieces from an ACT-based parenting program.
- Share findings from current research looking at whether an ACT-based parenting intervention improves outcomes for multi-problem families.
- Inspire your practice?!



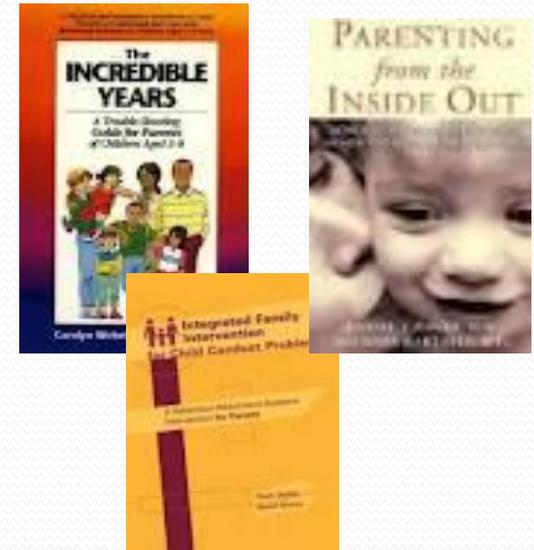
# The Context

- Stressed ('multi-problem') families often lurching from one family conflict to the next.
- In preschool and primary-aged children this often presents in terms of severe temper tantrums and defiance.
- In teenage years this ramps up into more extreme emotional and behavioural dysregulation, self and other destructive behaviours and 'delinquency'.
- Parents/Carers caught in reactive 'auto-pilot' mode – they feel helpless and out of control.



# Research indicates that...

Existing Behavioural Family Interventions are effective for ~ 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

# Can ACT help these 30% of families?

## The Confident Carers – Cooperative Kids Program (Konza & Donovan, 2006-2015)

- Explicitly integrates mindfulness exercises as well as ACT-based exercises, metaphors and images.
- Evolved over past 9 years to improve parents' engagement and perseverance with proven social learning theory (SLT) techniques (Incredible Years).
- Explicitly incorporates neurobiology of attachment.

# Confident Carers - Cooperative Kids

Week	Content
1	Becoming aware of your parenting values (parenting compass); Values-Goals-Actions
2	Understanding problem behaviour via defusion exercise (the Bushfire, Mind Struggles & Power Struggles); Monitoring non-cooperation; Soothing rhythm breathing
3	Strengthening relationships through mindful play; Monitoring cooperation; taking mind for a walk exercise
4	Encouraging positive behaviours through effective praise and rewards; mindfulness of 'skittle'
5	Preventing misbehaviour through clear instructions, routines, rules & planned ignoring; mindfulness of breath
6	Managing misbehaviour through effective consequences (including time-out); 3 minute breathing space
7	Managing upsetting thoughts & feelings through defusion exercises (virus x/mind struggle, sweet-spot exercise) & values-based parenting
8	Integrating skills via behaviour action plans; wheel of noticing exercise
9	Evaluating outcome, integrating skills II & celebrating changes

# Some Pieces of CCCK...



# Noticing the Struggle

## THOUGHTS & IMAGES

*I'm a bad parent*

*It's impossible*

*Does it on purpose to hurt me*

*I can't cope*

*Guilty*

*Tired*

*Helpless*

*Tense*

**RED**

## BODY SENSATIONS

## FEELINGS

*Exhausted*

*Hopeless*

*Give up*

*Angry*

*Overwhelmed*

*Shout*

*Yell*

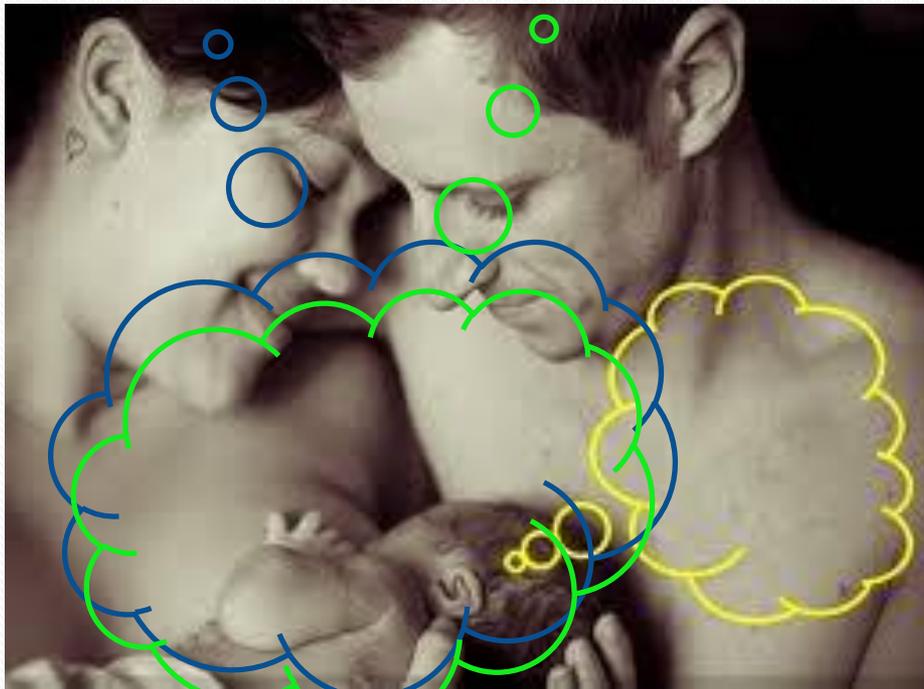
*Jump in and make assumptions*

*Smack*

## ACTIONS

# Guided Mindfulness Exercise

*“Now I’d like you to take a few moments to think about how you’d like to be as a parent, ...about your deeply held parenting values..., what you want to stand for as a parent... and to do that, ...almost like a dream, I’d like you to imagine that you have recently found out that you are expecting your first child...(long pause). Take a moment to create this moment in time, ... Notice what you can see around you... possibly other important people, where you are,... In this special moment, you would probably make some open or private promises to yourself about how things will be in your family... What it is that you ideally want for your child,... **and how you want their life to be.... The kind of parent you want to be for your child... What you want to be remembered for by your child when they grow up...What qualities you want to show as a parent... What you want to stand for as a parent...** Take a final moment to think about these promises you made to yourself, and particularly about how you wanted to be as a parent.*

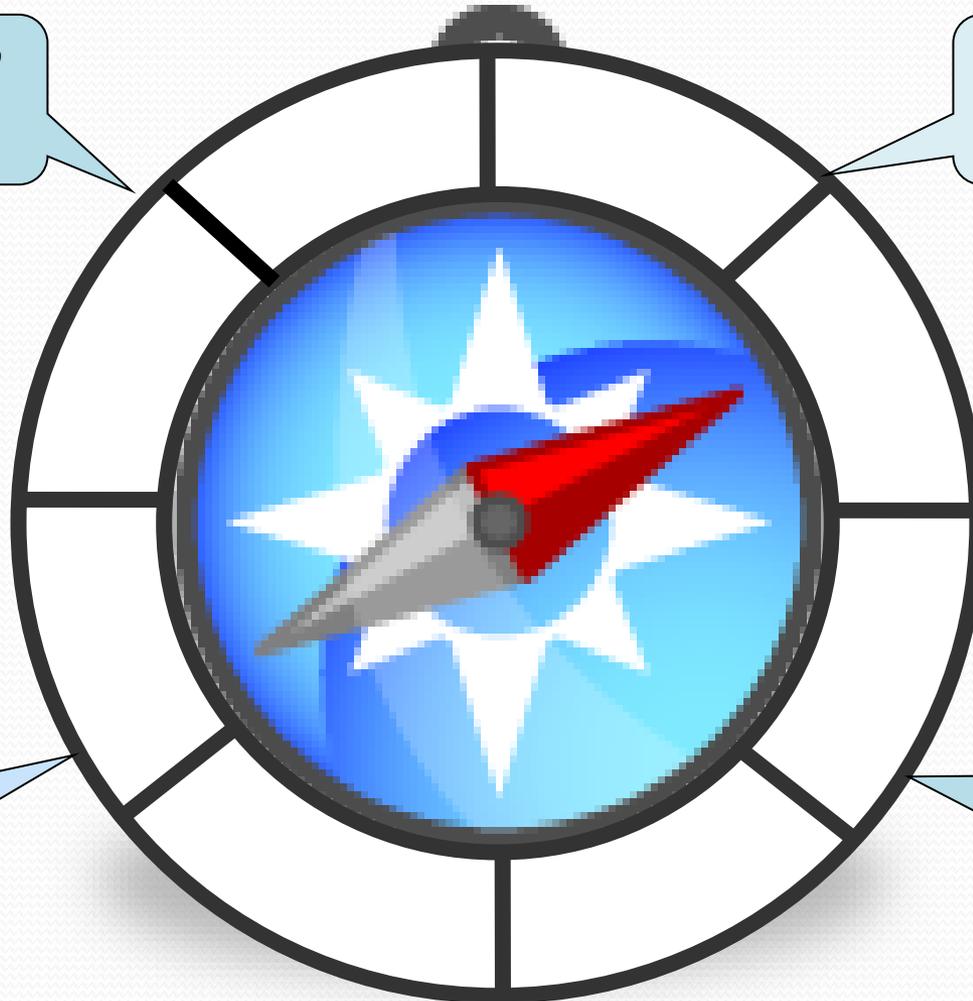


# Becoming Aware Your Parenting Values

**“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?*

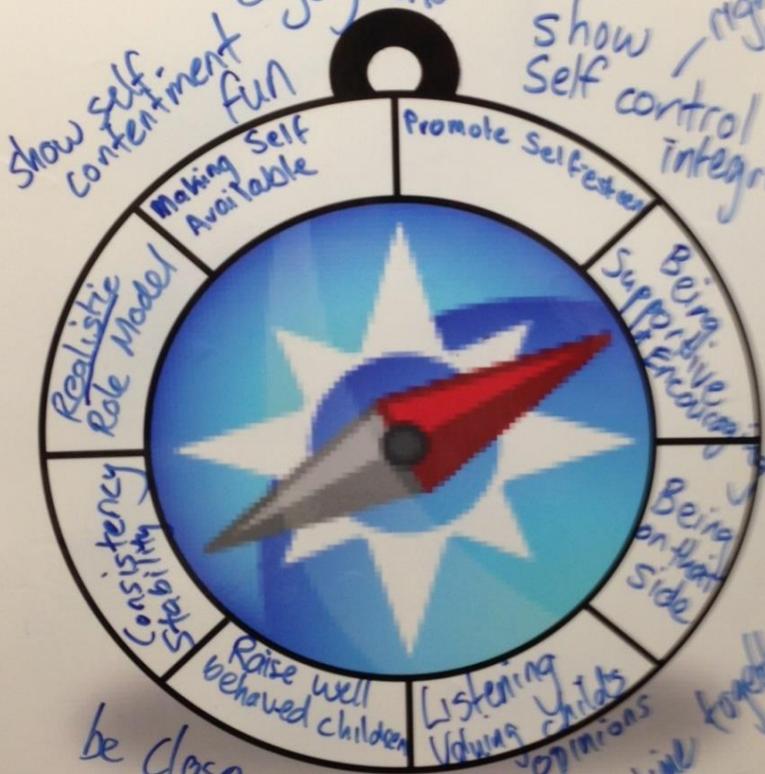


*What qualities do you want to show?*

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

# PARENTING COMPASS

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

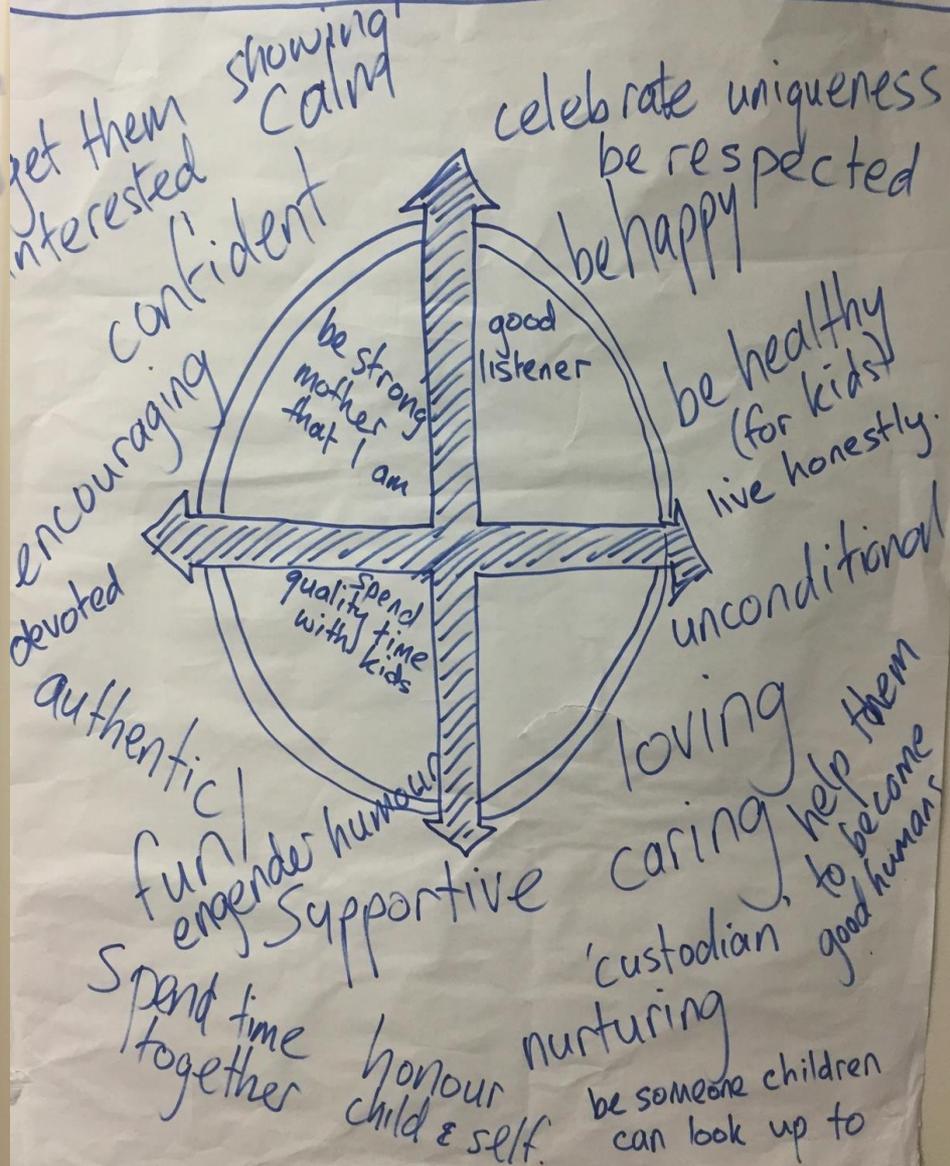


Write the Values in the segments around the compass

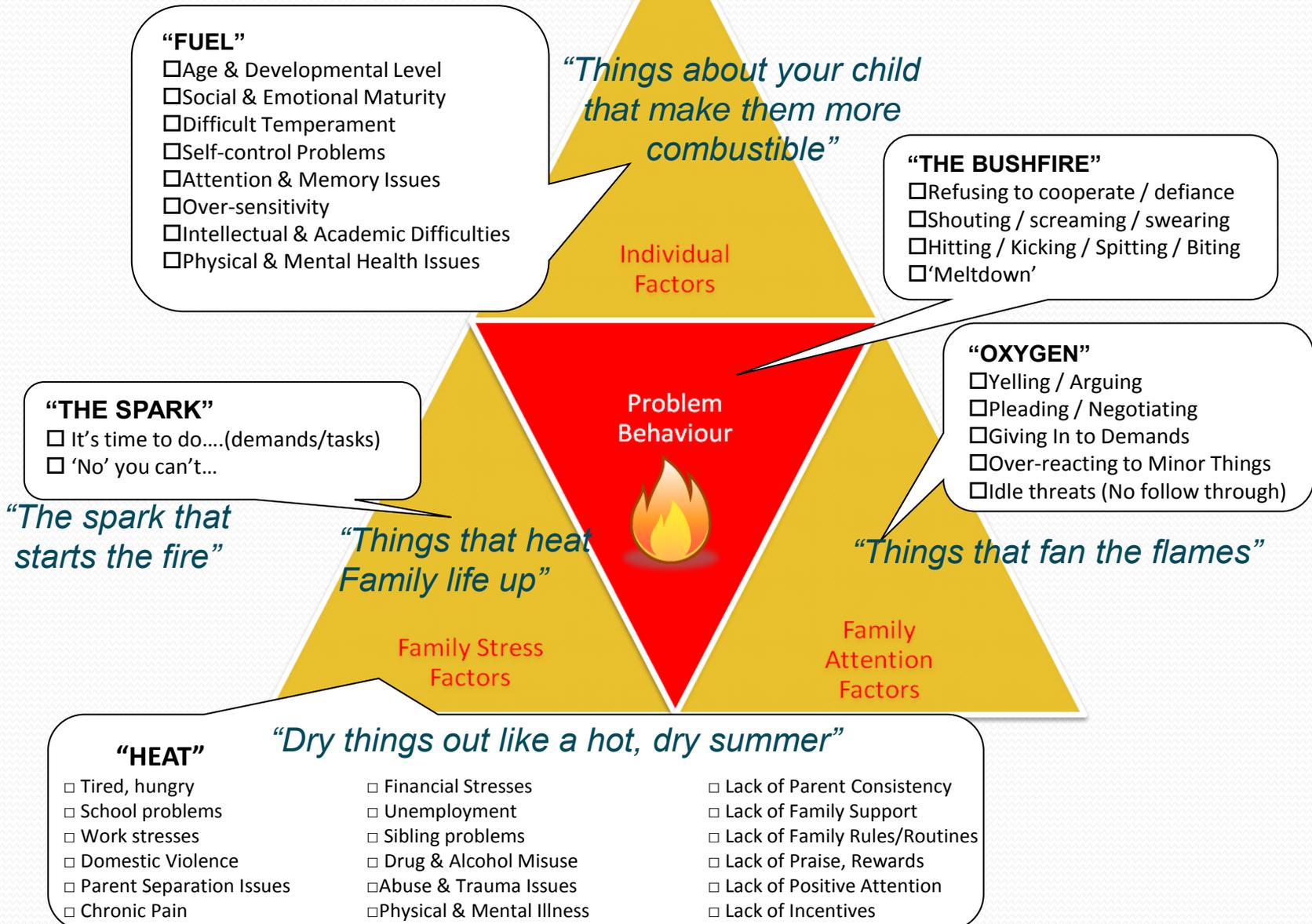
CONFIDENT CARERS - COOPERATIVE KIDS  
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# PARENTING COMPASS

What's Most Important to You as a Parent?



# Bushfire Metaphor



# FUEL

Individual Factors.

excited to see Mum

low frustration  
reacts quickly

4y.o. "ADHD"  
-distractible  
impulsive  
hyperactive

excitable

# BUSHFIRE

destroying  
throwing things



not listening  
rough to Mum

restraining  
yelling

"do not" Single parent & child daycare (au pair) transition pain  
cries doing things to get attention  
playmate  
Dad contact.

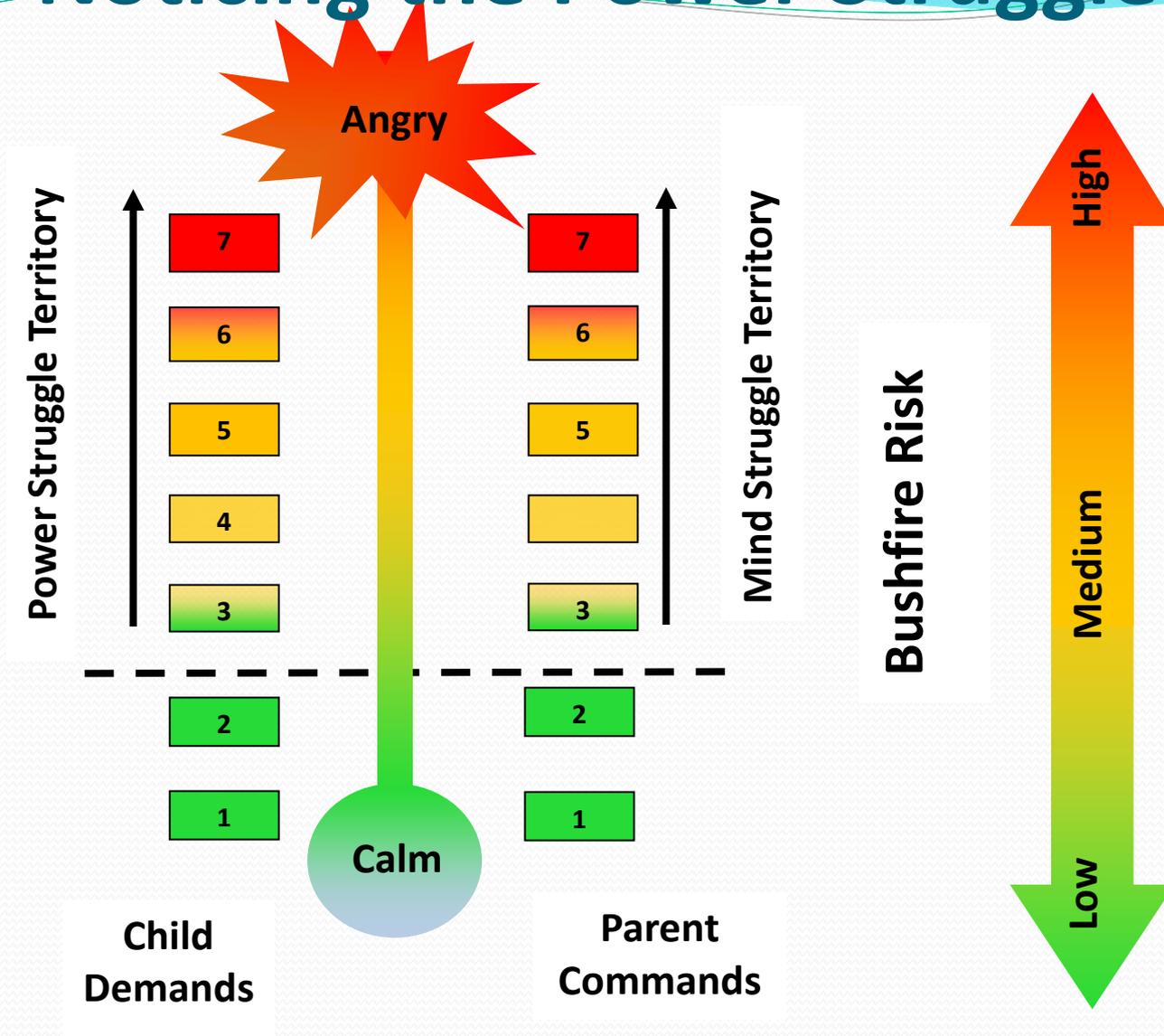
threatening  
begging

# Oxygen.

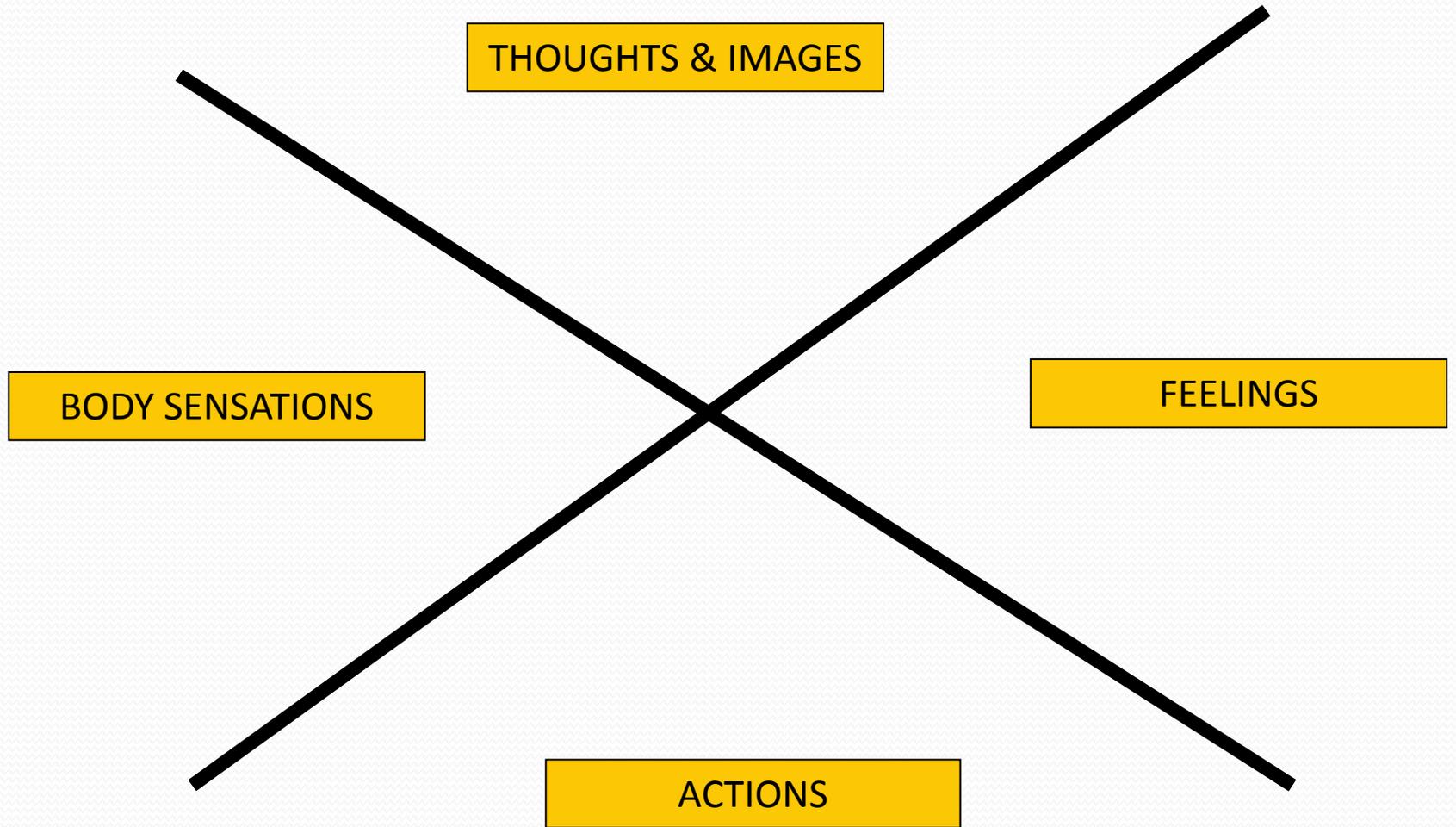
attention (parents response)

# HEAT - Situational / family stress.

# Noticing the Power Struggle



# Acknowledging the Mind Struggle



headaches.  
breathing.

ranting.  
**sensations**

tense  
teeth grinding  
"difficultly restraining"

"What will neighbours/others think?"

"I can't  
Am I a good parent?"  
"I want to  
run away"

"What about the  
other kids?"

"When's my  
time?"

"list of ways  
I might  
ruin child's  
life"

**Thoughts/images**

"I dunno  
What else can I do?"

"What am I imprinting  
on my child?"

"What am I doing wrong?"

"not being  
good  
enough"

yelling

giving  
self a  
time-out

"down to their level  
6 year old!"

threats  
"I am the adult"  
ignore.  
Try to keep  
calm.

**actions**

low  
confidence

frustration

invalidating  
embarrassed

upsets

guilt

**feelings**

sorry

# The Social Learning Theory Stuff ...but done with a difference!

- Wk3: Mindful play
- Wk4: Effective Praise & Rewards
- Wk5: Clear Instructions, Rules & Routines  
& Planned Ignoring
- Wk6: Consequences (including time-out)

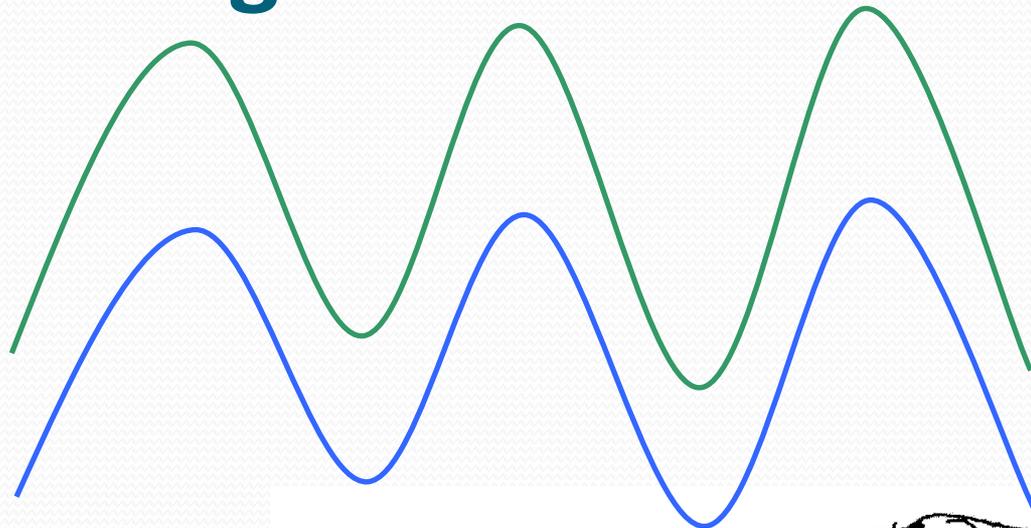
# Mindful Play

- Parents asked to play with their child 15 minutes each day during and after the program following the principles of 'Mindful Play'.
- Mindful play involves being fully attentive to your child and what they are doing, in each moment, and showing acceptance rather than judgment towards your child and yourself.
- Two important principles of Mindful play
  - Follow your child's lead
  - Describe and praise their actions

“Take yourself back to when you’d just had your baby ...how did your baby try to communicate with you?”

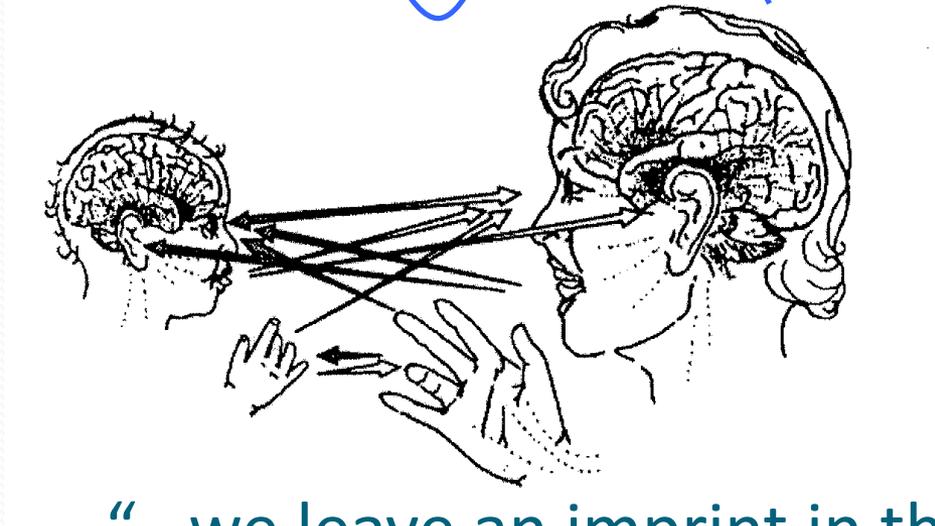


# Being on the Same Wavelength



Child

Parent



“...we leave an imprint in their brains”



# Taking your mind for a walk...

- How do parents notice this ‘mind struggle’ in their own interactions with their child?
- How do they notice themselves distracted by various thoughts or images rather than giving their child full attention?

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

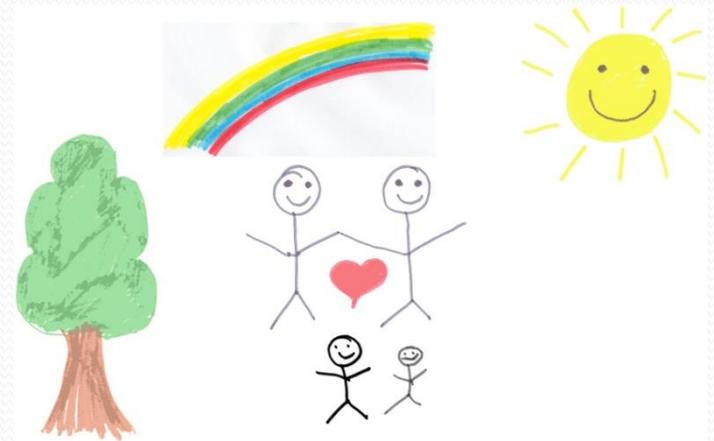
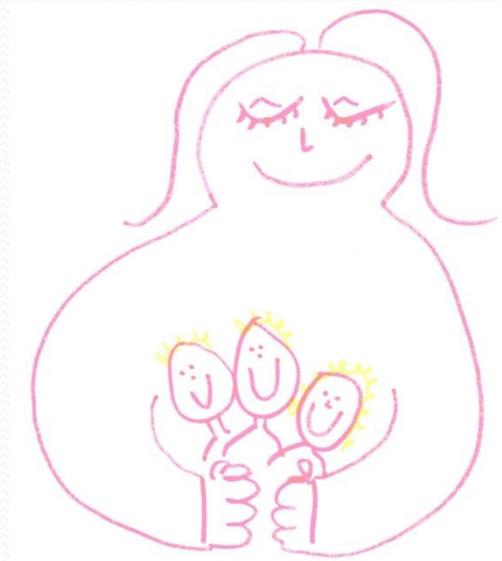


# Guided Mindfulness Exercise:

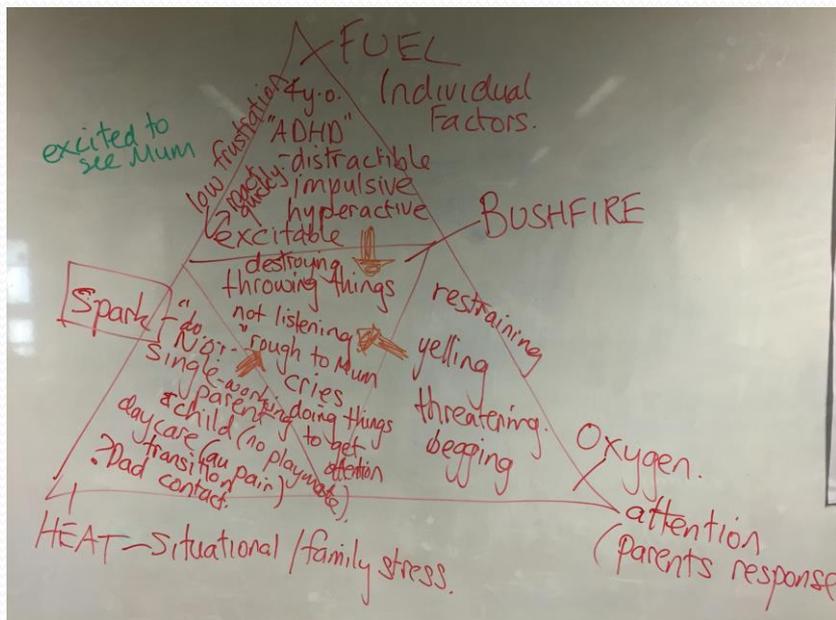
## “Sweet Spot” – Being the Parent you Want to Be

- *I'd like you to think about some of the things that you've been working on during the program, and to then choose one moment with your child over the past five weeks when these things worked out, and it went well. Take your time - just sort of scroll back through all the best moments of the past five weeks. Make sure the memory is of a specific event.....*
- *...Now, I'd like you to focus on all the specific details of that memory.... I'd like you to pay special attention to what you were doing back then.*
- *...See if you can bring that 'essence' of the memory back into the room with you when you open your eyes.*

# Drawings of 'Being the Parent Want to Be'



# Integration – Behaviour Action Plans



## BEHAVIOUR ACTION PLAN

Values: calm + confident  
loving, caring persistence.

### ENGAGE MOTIVATE & REWARD

- routine - one on one time
- "calming down" → predictable.  
reading → water ready
- hugs + kisses. lamp
- reward. CD

### RULES, ROUTINE, INSTRUCTIONS

- "you know the routine" (I)
- 15 minutes (instruction)
- "turn off TV."
- planned ignoring (mum....)

### PLANNED CONSEQUENCES

- data
- take them back
- consequences

# Does it Work?



Early Quantitative Research has indicated CCK is effective in:

- Reducing child problem behaviour (ECBI), reducing parental depression, anxiety and stress (DASS21), and increasing the use of more appropriate parenting styles (Parenting Scale) (Pritchard, 2008)
- Increasing parental self efficacy (PSE) from pre to post, with increased self efficacy associated with lower levels of problematic child behaviours, parental depression and stress, and problematic parenting behaviours at three-month follow-up (Horsfield, 2009).
- *In both studies small sample size, lack of control group and the reliance of data on parent self report only were acknowledged as limitations (Pritchard, 2008; Horsfield, 2009).*

# The Recent Research (2012-14)

- Parents attending CCK groups
  - University 'Psychology Clinic'
  - Families 'At Risk' due to Child Protection concerns ('Community')
  - Control Group (no intervention)
- Measures (pre-post):
  - Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting (IM-P)
  - Parenting Scale (PS)
  - Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
  - Eyberg Child Behaviour Inventory (ECBI)
  - Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS21)

# Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting

Duncan, L.G. (2007). Assessment of mindful parenting among parents of early adolescents: Development and validation of the Interpersonal Mindfulness in Parenting Scale. Unpublished dissertation. The Pennsylvania State University.

31 Items on a 5-point scale ('never true' to 'always true')

## Sample items

1. I find myself listening to my child with one ear because I am busy doing or thinking about something else at the same time
2. When I'm upset with my child, I notice how I am feeling before I take action.
3. I notice how changes in my child's mood affect my mood.
4. I listen carefully to my child's ideas, even when I disagree with them.
5. I often react too quickly to what my child says or does.
6. I am aware of how my moods affect the way I treat my child.
7. Even when it makes me uncomfortable, I allow my child to express his/her feelings.
8. When I am upset with my child, I calmly tell him/her how I am feeling.
9. I rush through activities with my child without being really attentive to him/her.
10. I have difficulty accepting my child's growing independence.

# Research Questions

- Does attendance at CCCK lead to an increase in parental mindfulness?
- Are changes in mindfulness associated with reductions in child behaviour problems and unhelpful parenting styles, as well as increases in parental mental health?
- Does attendance at CCCK lead to similar improvements in more disadvantaged 'multi-problem' families?

# 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%)

Note –

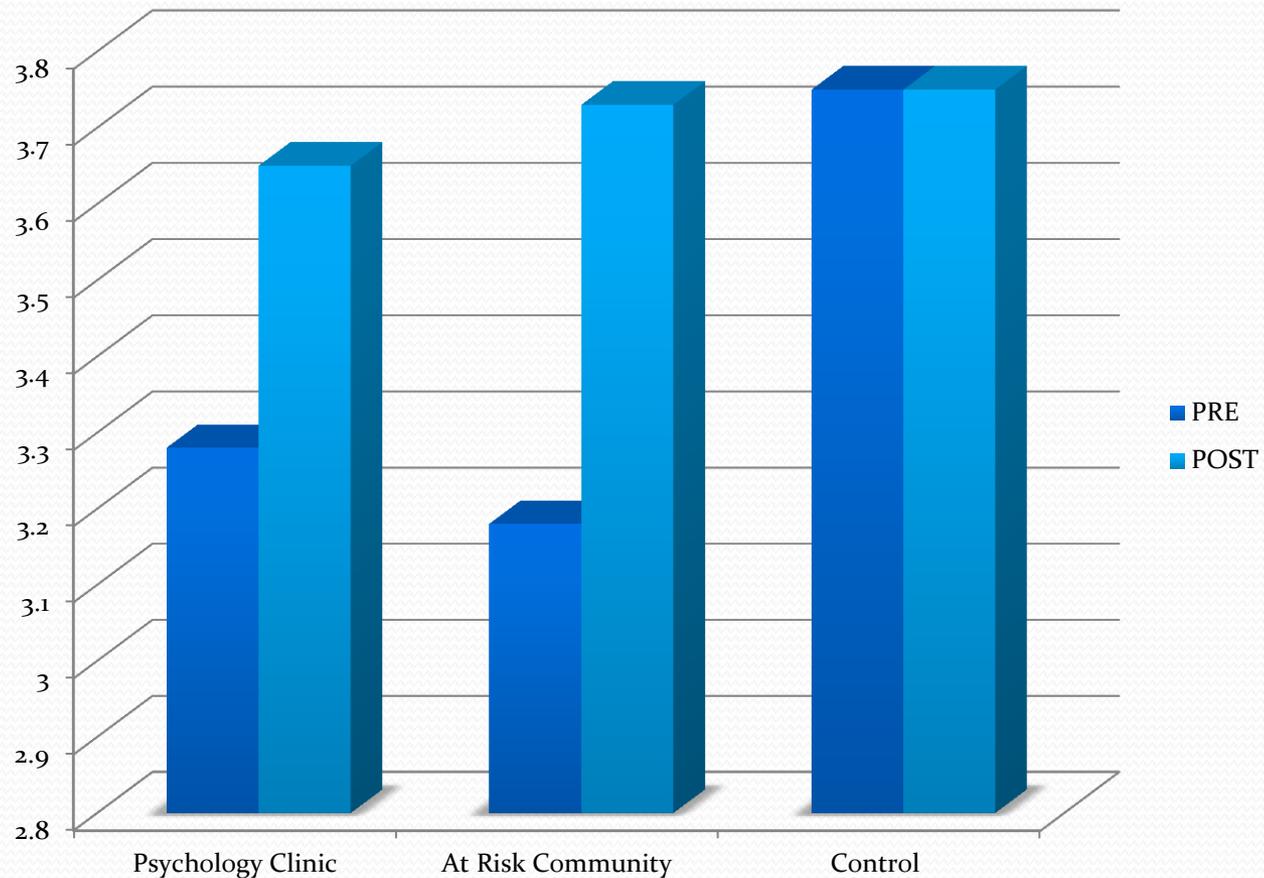
<sup>a</sup> defined by ABS 6523.0 - Household Income and Income Distribution, Australia, 2011-12

† 1 missing response

†† 2 missing responses

††† 3 missing responses

# Results – Mindfulness (IM-P)



***p=0.000***

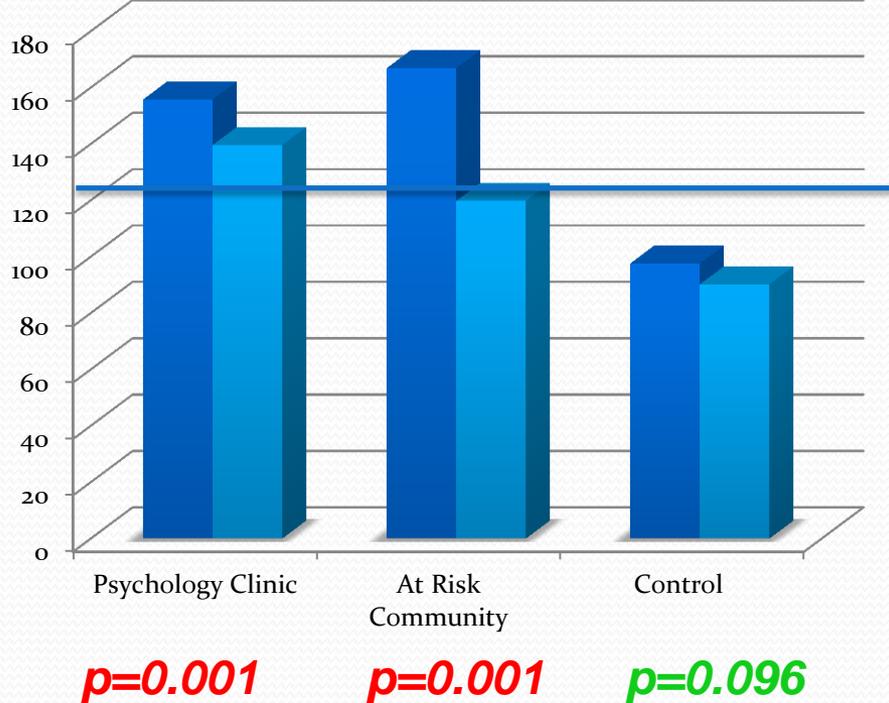
***p=0.000***

***p=0.892***

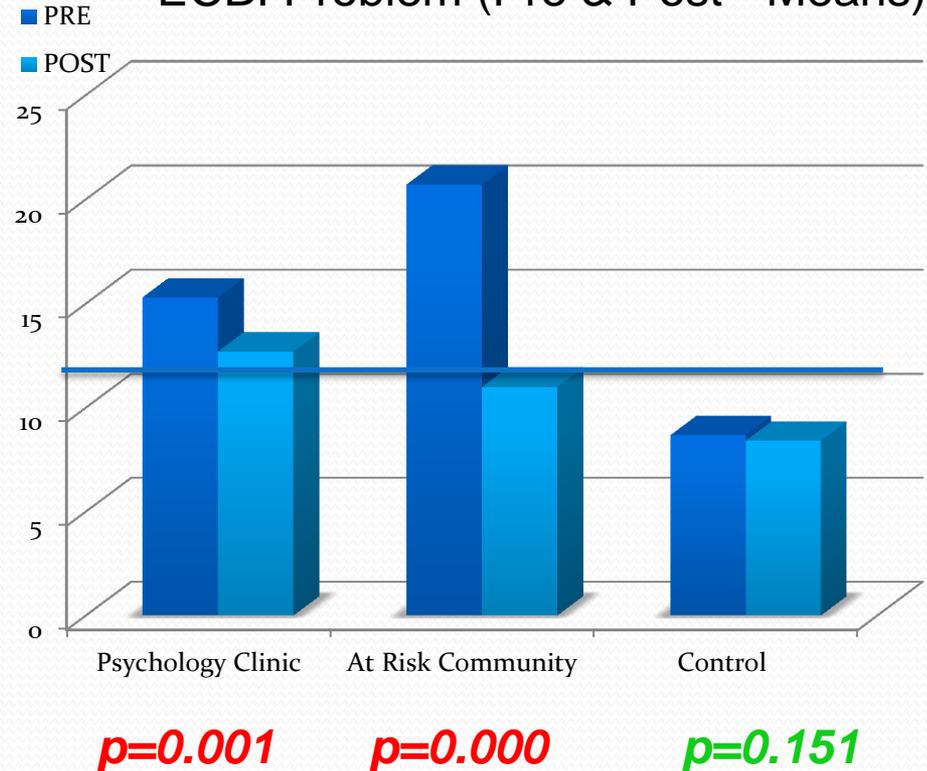
Paired t-tests  
Pre/Post

# Results – Behaviour (ECBI)

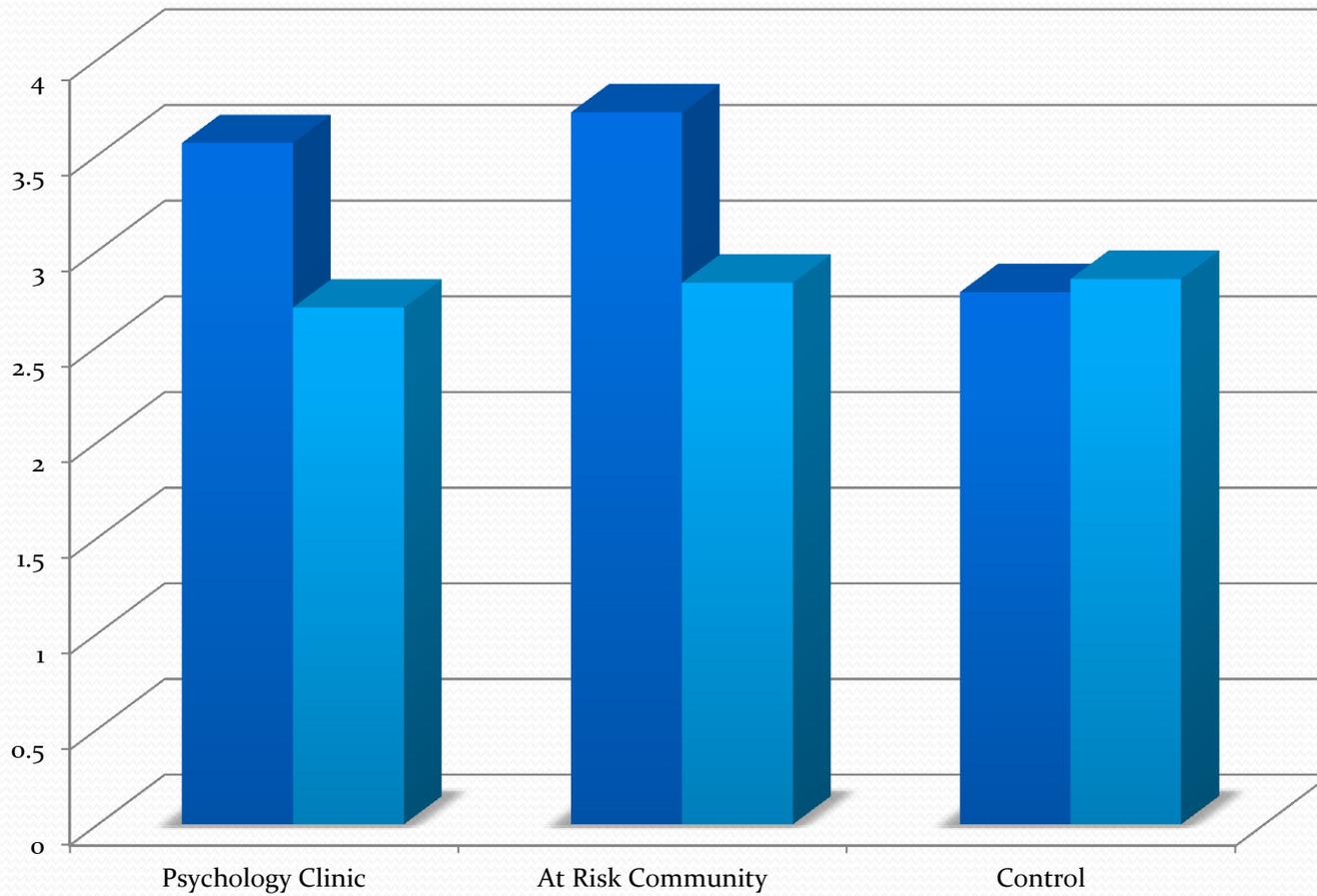
ECBI Intensity (Pre & Post - Means)



ECBI Problem (Pre & Post - Means)



# Results – Parenting Style (PS)



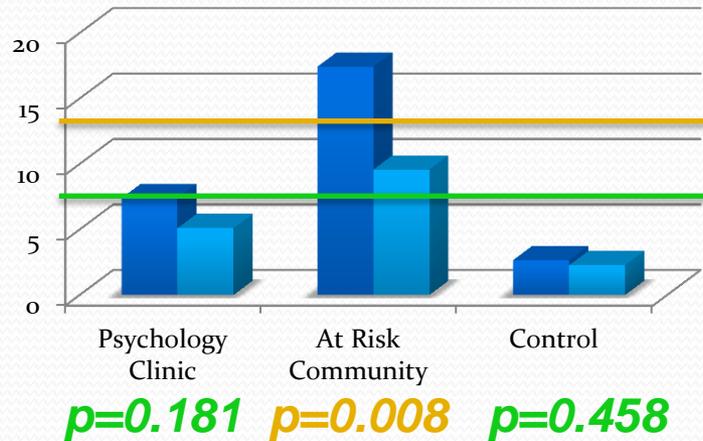
$p=0.000$

$p=0.000$

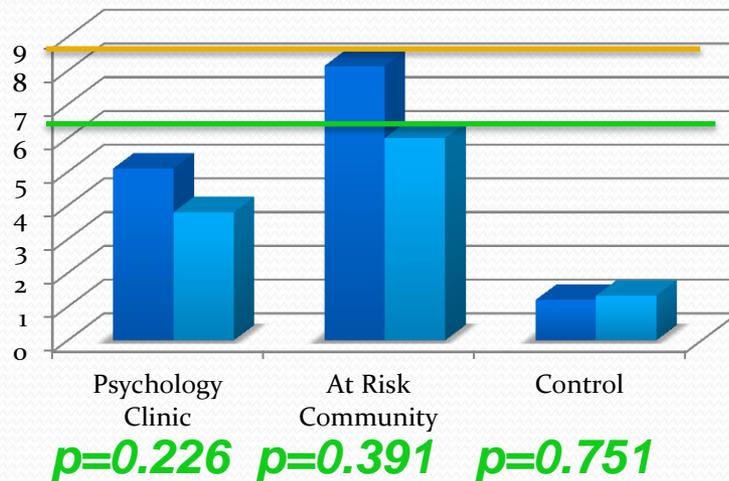
$p=0.278$

# Results – Parental MH (DASS21)

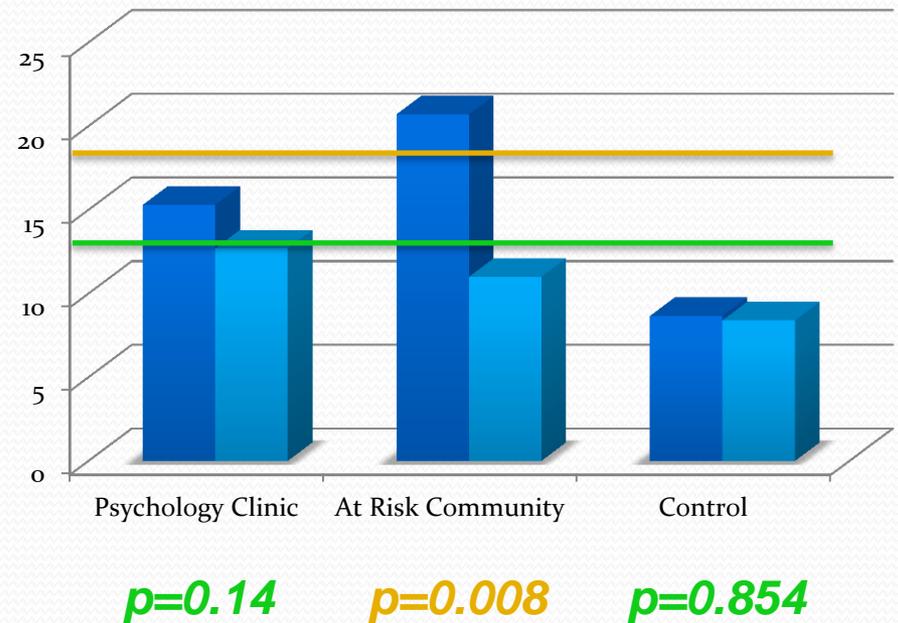
## DEPRESSION



## ANXIETY



## STRESS



# Means, SDs, t-tests

**Table 2** Means and standard deviations of outcome variables and paired t-tests pre post-test scores

	Control Group		Pairwise Comparisons		Psychology Clinic		Pairwise Comparisons		Community Clinic		Pairwise Comparisons	
	Pre	Post	t	p	Pre	Post	t	p	Pre	Post	t	p
<b>Child Behaviour</b>												
ECBI Intensity	97.60 (31.51)	90.20 (25.63)	1.78	.096	155.75 (29.23)	139.60 (34.35)	3.782	.001 <sup>***</sup>	166.86 (32.32)	119.79 (37.56)	5.122	.000 <sup>***</sup>
ECBI Problem	7.20 (9.28)	3.27 (4.57)	2.14	.051	18.10 (8.73)	14.05 (9.33)	3.760	.001 <sup>***</sup>	22.14 (8.19)	10.36 (10.65)	4.161	.001 <sup>***</sup>
SDQ Total Score	5.27 (3.49)	5.73 (3.99)	-.861	.404	19.20 (5.48)	18.25 (5.86)	.811	.427	20.00 (6.62)	14.64 (8.04)	2.626	.021 <sup>*</sup>
<b>Mental Health</b>												
Depression	2.67 (3.27)	2.27 (3.62)	.764	.458	7.40 (7.66)	5.10 (7.45)	1.389	.181	17.43 (12.34)	9.57 (9.65)	3.151	.008 <sup>**</sup>
Anxiety	1.20 (1.66)	1.33 (2.45)	-.323	.751	5.10 (5.56)	3.80 (4.35)	1.251	.226	8.14 (10.39)	6.00 (6.97)	.888	.391
Stress	8.67 (6.79)	8.40 (7.5)	.214	.834	15.3 (10.18)	12.70 (8.11)	1.542	.140	20.71 (8.40)	11.00 (8.90)	3.139	.008 <sup>**</sup>
<b>Parenting Factors</b>												
Parenting Scale	2.78 (.50)	2.85 (.44)	-1.128	.278	3.56 (.49)	2.70 (.45)	7.976	.000 <sup>***</sup>	3.72 (.50)	2.83 (.67)	6.771	.000 <sup>***</sup>
Mindfulness	3.75 (.32)	3.75 (.35)	.138	.892	3.28 (.40)	3.65 (.45)	-4.770	.000 <sup>***</sup>	3.18 (.36)	3.73 (.41)	-4.726	.000 <sup>***</sup>

Pair-wise t-test comparison significance - \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01, \*\*\*p < .001

# The Wrap Up

- Parenting programs need to help parents to:
  - (1) Tune into what is important to them as parents, while;
  - (2) Helping parents to tune into, or get on the same wavelength as, their children; and then,
  - (3) Apply SLT techniques as needed.
- ACT & Mindfulness provide processes by which parents can engage with and then persevere with well-proven social learning theory techniques
- Findings from the current research offer initial support to the premise that ACT & Mindfulness processes can indeed assist the most needed 30% of parents...



**THANK YOU**