

Does the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program work for fathers?

Triple P aims to improve children's behaviours by training parents to parent more effectively. It is one of the most widely marketed parenting programs in the world.

The program is strongly promoted as based on evidence. Several randomised controlled trials have shown that children's behaviour improves after the program; so the parenting training does work. Yet, to date, no study has been able to assess if it works for fathers.

Last week, the US-based journal *Fathering* released an analysis of all the English language randomised controlled studies of Triple P published before June 2011. The study examined the numbers of fathers compared to mothers, how many fathers stayed the distance and what effect the program had on fathers' and mothers' parenting.

The study results

Attendance

The number of fathers attending was low. Out of the 4959 parents recruited into these studies, 983 (20%) were fathers. In one of the largest studies only 16 fathers were recruited compared to 1,610 mothers (and no, this wasn't because all the participants were single mothers).

Completing the program

Deciding how many fathers stayed until the end was difficult because so few studies evaluating Triple P kept track of the fathers. Some studies managed to keep dads until the final session others lost every dad. Getting an overall figure for how many dads completed the program from the research to date is just about impossible.

Effect on parenting

The effect of the program on mothers' and fathers' parenting was judged by their answers to questions on a parenting scale measuring how lax, verbose or overreactive they were. Overall, the parenting of fathers included in the reports did improve, however it was significantly less than that for the mothers.

Making Triple P father-inclusive

Taking this report-card for Triple P as a guide, changes are needed in three areas. Clearly the way that Triple P programs are now marketed needs to change to attract dads. Once dads enrol they need to be tracked separately to notice when they drop out (and then asked Why?) Finally, the program content and delivery should be reviewed to better apply to dads' parenting.

The *Fathering* paper pointed out that there were many examples of programs being adapted to include fathers (The South Australian Children's Centres for one). As a leader in the provision of evidence-based parenting programs, Triple P is ideally placed to develop and test improvements to attract and assist fathers alongside mothers.

The impact of Behavioural Parent Training on fathers' parenting: A meta-analysis of the Triple P-Positive Parenting Program

Richard Fletcher¹, Emily Freeman¹, & Stephen Matthey^{2,3}

¹Family Action Centre, Faculty of Health, The University of Newcastle, Australia

²School of Psychology, University of Sydney, Australia ³Sydney South West Area Health Service

Abstract

Behavioural parent training programs have been developed to address child behaviour problems through improvement in parenting practices. Ideally, programs would demonstrate effectiveness with all parents. The Triple P-Positive Parenting Program is widely reported as an effective, evidence-based program for parents. However, in this meta-analysis we demonstrate that there are significant differences in program effectiveness for mothers and fathers. We show that while Triple P has a large positive effect on mothers' parenting practices, it has a smaller effect on fathers' parenting practices. Considering that fathers make a significant and unique contribution to child development, we argue that it is important for parenting programs to assess their effectiveness with fathers as well as mothers.

The complete article can be found at <http://www.mensstudies.com/content/g0x573746630/>