

# Promoting Positive Parenting to Prevent Mental Disorder of Children from Divorced and Bereaved Families

Irwin Sandler

Webinar Presented to Banner Trauma Sensitive Schools

Contact: [irwin.sandler@asu.edu](mailto:irwin.sandler@asu.edu)

## DISCLOSURE

conflict of interest: Sandler, Wolchik & Porter are marketing online New Beginnings through our LLC Family Transitions: Programs that Work

## Team of Collaborators

### Support

Eunice Kennedy Shriver  
National Institute of  
Child Health and Human  
Development (NICHD  
R01HD094334)

New York Life  
Foundation

- Sharlene Wolchik
- Jenn-Yun Tein
- Michele Porter
- Kara Thieleman
- Kathryn Vaca
- Tim Ayers
- Emily Winslow
- Guy Davis
- Monique Lopez
- Karey O'Hara
- All the caregivers and children who shared their lives with us

# Presentation Overview

- Quiet revolution in parenting programs
- Parenting programs for divorced and bereaved families prevent long-term mental health problems and disorders
- Example of New Beginnings Program for divorced families
- Translation of in-person New Beginnings to online New Beginnings (eNBP)
- Skills taught in eNBP
- Example of how we teach interparental conflict reduction skills
- Does it work? What's the evidence?

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# Quiet Revolution in Parenting Programs

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Randomized trials provide impressive evidence that we have the technology to strengthen parenting

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- Growing evidence that parenting programs are an effective approach to prevention as well as treatment of child mental health problems
  - Online parenting programs can be equally effective as in-person programs

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Implications are that online parenting programs may be an inexpensive, effective resource schools can offer to promote resilience of children who have experienced major family traumas such as divorce and bereavement

# Increasing Evidence that Online Parenting Programs Promote Positive Parenting and Reduce Child Mental Health Problems

- A meta-analysis of 28 randomized trials find positive effects (Spencer, Topham and King, 2019)
  - Positive parenting
  - Child mental health problems
  - Parent confidence and mental health
- In many cases the effects are comparable in strength to that from in-person parenting programs
- Professional support did not add to the effect size of the online programs

# Implications of the Quiet Revolution for Trauma Sensitive Schools?

- Online parenting programs can be an evidence-based resource for parents of children who have experienced two major family traumas
- Parental Divorce – eNew Beginnings Program (eNBP)
- Death of a Parent – Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families (eRPBF)
- Let's look at the evidence and the programs and how they moved from in-person to on-line programs

# Can a Parenting Program Promote Resilience of Children Following Parental Divorce?

## In-Person New Beginnings Program

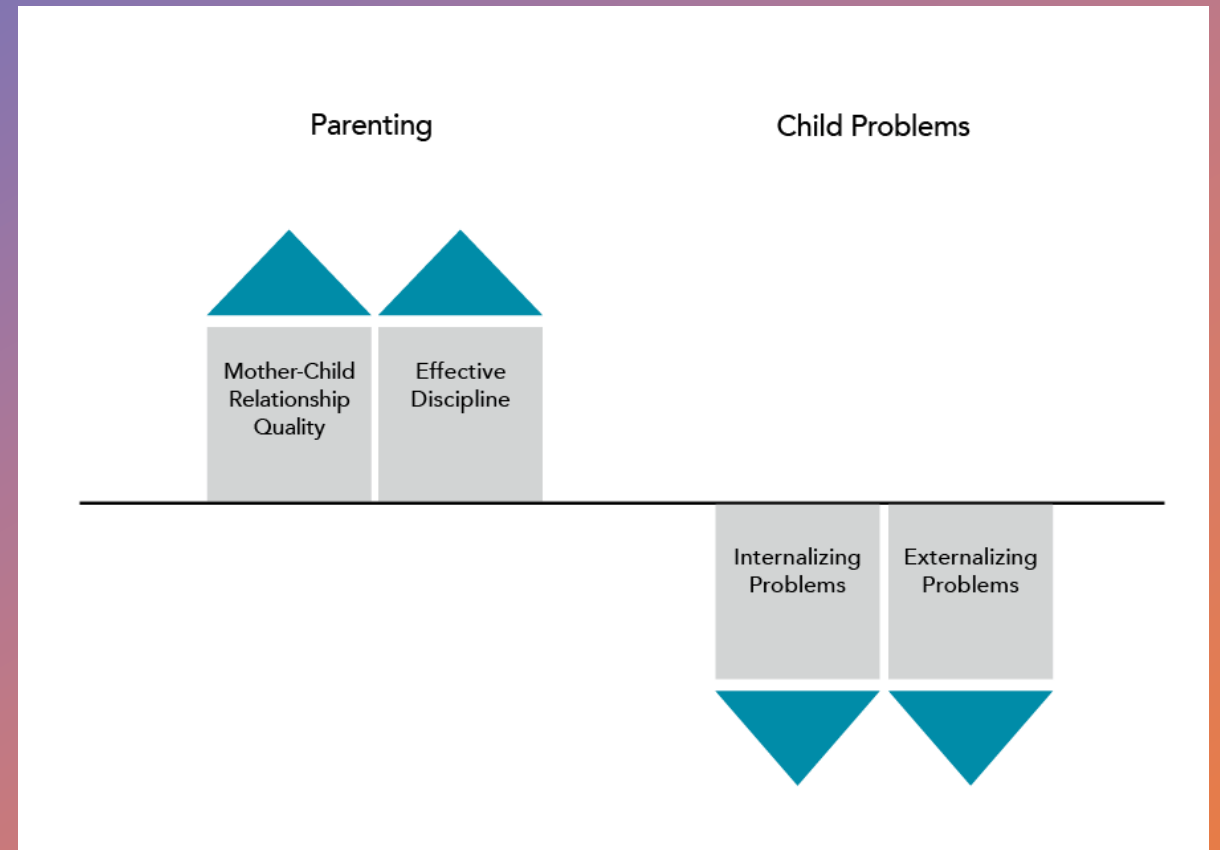
- New Beginnings Program (NBP): In-Person Group Program for Divorced/Separated Parents
- 10 group session + Phone check-in
- Most extensively evaluated program for divorced families
- Tested in 3 randomized trials with over 1000 participants over 30 years
- New Beginnings Compared to Literature Controls and Brief Didactic Teaching
- Demonstrated to have multiple long-term benefits for children up to 15 years later

# Parenting Skills Taught in NBP Parenting Program

Goal	Parenting Tools
<b>Improve</b> Parent-Child Relationship Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Fun Time</li> <li>• One-on-One Time</li> <li>• Catch 'em Doing Good</li> <li>• Active Listening</li> </ul>
<b>Improve</b> Effective Discipline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear and appropriate rules</li> <li>• Consistent and contingent consequences</li> <li>• Catch 'em Doing Good</li> </ul>
<b>Reduce</b> Interparental Conflict	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger management</li> <li>• Self-talk</li> <li>• Adult ears</li> <li>• Respectful requests</li> </ul>



# Results of Second Randomized Trial (240 Divorced Families): Post-test



**But no effect to reduce  
interparental conflict**

## 15-year Follow-up Results (age 24-27)

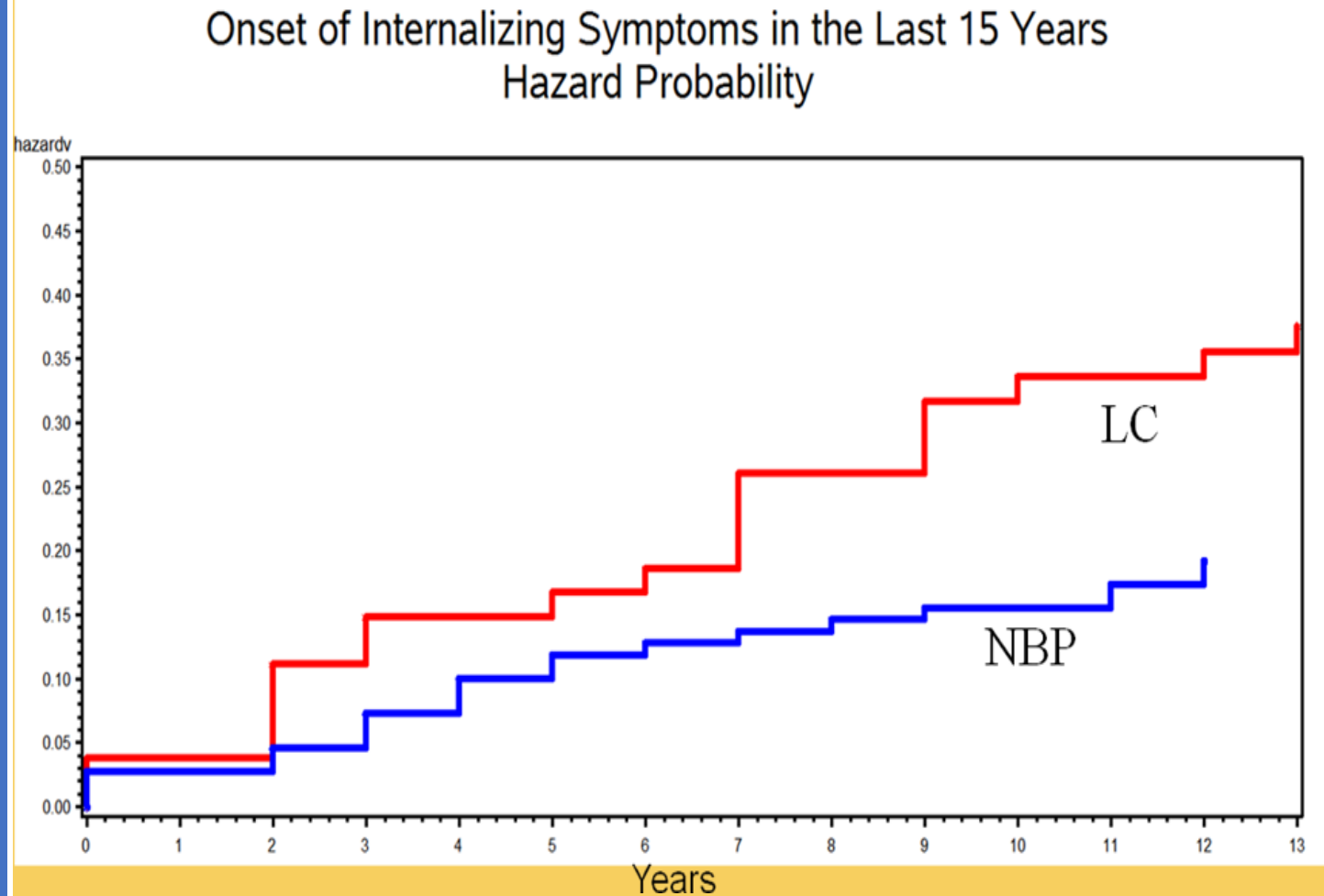
### Lower Levels of Serious Behavior and Legal Problems

Substance Use Disorders (males)	Polydrug and Other Drug Use (males)	Cigarette Smoking	Number of Sexual Partners (ages 15-19 to 24-27)	Incidence Internalizing Disorders (ages 15-19 to 24-27)	Time in Jail

**Cost Benefit – Cost = \$633 per family**  
**Saving of \$1077 per family**

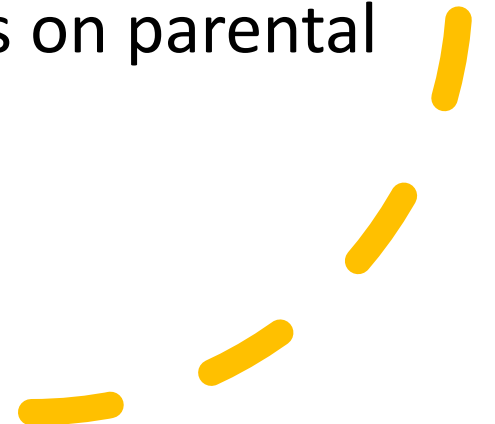
### Example of Long-Term Effects of NBP:

- Hazard Model Reduced Child Internalizing Problems (Depression) 15 Years Later



# Similar Findings for Program for Parentally Bereaved Children

- Family Bereavement Program
- Multiple component 12 meeting group program
- Caregiver component teaches same parenting skills as program for divorced/separated parents (New Beginnings Program)
- Adds a grief discussion and focus on parental self-care



# Evaluation of the Family Bereavement Program Using a Randomized Trial

- **Random assignment of families (55/45 ratio) to:**
- Group program (E) (N = 135)
- Self-study (C) (N = 109)
- Total of 156 families – 244 children and youth (age 8 – 16)
- **Assessed**
- Pre
- Post (N = 238; 97.5% )
- 11-month follow-up (N = 220; 90.1%)
- 6 years (N = 218; 89.3%)
- 15 years (N = 209; 85.6%)

# Effects of FBP on Youth Mental Health and Positive Functioning at 6- Years

- Reduced externalizing problems (parent, youth and teacher report)
- Reduced prevalence of externalizing diagnosis on DISC (14% FBP vs. 27% C)
- Reduced teacher report of internalizing
- Reduced teacher report of total behavior problems
- Improved self-esteem
- Reduced intrusive grief thoughts
- Reduced biological stress dysregulation (cortisol as indicator of HPA functioning)

Effects of FBP on  
Parent's Disorder  
at 6-years -  
Logistic  
Regression  
Results for  
Mental, Alcohol  
Abuse and Grief  
Disorders

6-year Binary Outcome (% endorsement, FBP vs. Self-study)	% FBP	% Self- study	Unstandardized Program Effect [95% CI]	Odds Ratio of Program Effect [95% CI]	Number Needed to Treat (NNT)
BDI Diagnosis – Mild Depression	<b>22.6%</b>	<b>35.9%</b>	<b>-1.09* [-2.03, -0.14]</b>	<b>0.34 [0.13, 0.87]</b>	<b>7.54</b>
CIDI-Depression Diagnosis	19.4%	26.4%	-0.78 <sup>†</sup> [-1.67, 0.10]	0.46 [0.19, 1.11]	14.16
Persistent Complicated Bereavement Disorder (symptom criteria)	<b>4.8%</b>	<b>23.5%</b>	<b>-2.53** [- 3.99,-1.07]</b>	<b>0.08 [0.02, 0.34]</b>	<b>5.35</b>
Persistent Complicated Bereavement Disorder with Impairment	<b>0%</b>	<b>11.8%</b>	NA	NA	<b>8.50</b>
SMAST-Alcoholism Diagnosis	<b>1.6%</b>	<b>15.1%</b>	<b>-2.40* [-4.65, - 0.16]</b>	<b>0.09 [0.01,0.63]</b>	<b>7.41</b>

# Effects at 15- Years on Young Adult Depression

(Sandler et al., (in press)  
*Journal of the American  
Academy of Child and  
Adolescent Psychiatry*

- Age of participants – 8 – 16 when entered program; 23 – 31 when assessed 15 years later
- Major Depression assessed using CIDI – with onset following the 6-year follow-up
- 80% successful follow-up



# Effects of the Family Bereavement Program to Prevent Major Depression in Young Adulthood

Measure	%Control	% FBP	Program Effect [Logistic Regression]	Odds Ratio	Number Needed to Treat
Major Depression Onset Following 6- year Assessment	<b>23/82 (28.05%)</b>	<b>14/104 (13.46%)</b>	<b>**B = -1.103, SE = 0.474, z = - 2.326</b>	<b>(OR) = .332 (95% CI= .13, .84)</b>	<b>(NNT)= 6.85</b>



# Although NBP and FBP are Highly Effective: Many Barriers to Use By Divorced/Separated or Bereaved Parents



## **Cost to parents**

- travel, child care, time

## **Low engagement**

- When offered to families for free – although 45% expressed an interest in NBP, only 10% signed up and 24% of them did not attend a single session

## **Expensive**

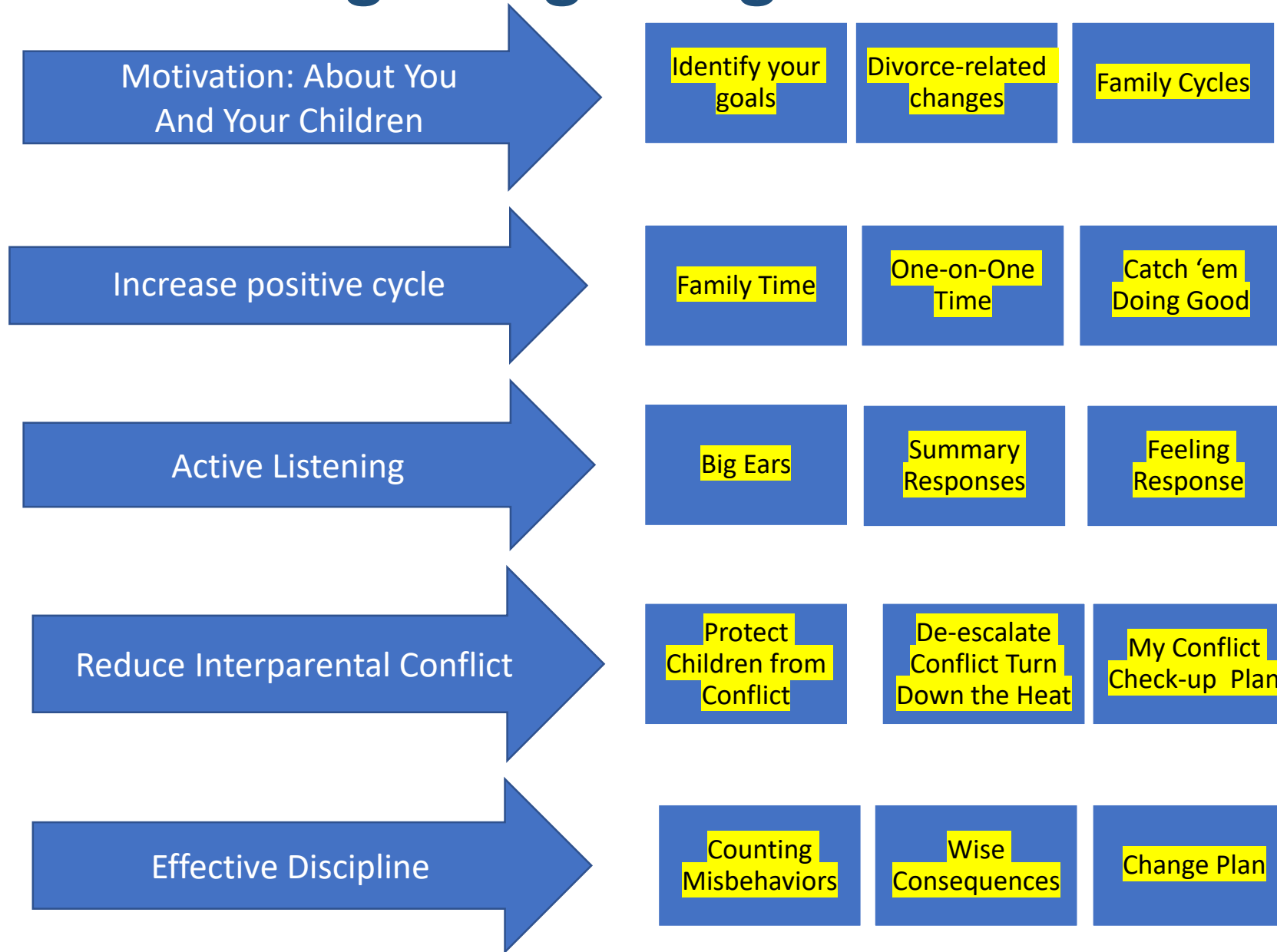
- even group programs can be very expensive (\$600 to \$700 per family for a 10-session program)

- **Divorce:**  
Online eNBP  
Translates in  
Person NBP into a  
fully  
asynchronous  
online format  
(eNBP)

- Teach all the parenting skills as in-person NBP
  - Increase positive family interactions
  - Active listening
  - Reduce conflict
  - Effective discipline
- Add new components to reduce interparental conflict
- Easily accessible to parents on any device
- 30-minute sessions (10 or 6 session versions)
  - One session per week
- Highly engaging format



# Skills for Each Component of New Beginnings Program



Example: How Both eNew Beginnings and Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families teach active listening: Each bullet described a simple listening skill taught over 3 sessions

Avoid the “Quick Fix”

- No advice or reassurance before hearing what child is saying

Listen

- Big ears - Good body language
- Conversation Starters – Say Mores

Stop and Think

- What did I hear my child saying?

Respond

- Content response – Check that you got it right
- Feeling response – Check that you got it right

Show appreciation

- Thanks for sharing. I really appreciate it when you tell me what’s going on.

# Use Modeling to Teach: Start with Model of NOT Listening

## Notice How Father Doesn't Use Good Listening

- Doesn't use good body language
- Doesn't stop and think about what his child is saying
- Doesn't respond to the content or feelings
- Doesn't show appreciation

How does the child feel when her father does not listen?



# Now Parents Watch Model Using Good Listening Skills

## Notice How Father Uses Each of the Good Listening Skills

- Listens – Body language – Conversation Starters – Say Mores
- Stop and Think: What did I hear her saying?
- Respond to content and feelings
- Show appreciation

## How does the child feel when her father uses Good Listening ?



# Can eNBP Obtain Comparable Benefits to In- Person NBP?

## Evaluation Using a Randomized Controlled Trial (RCT)

Wolchik et al., (2022),  
*Family Court Review*

Recruited 131 parents online

**Inclusion criteria:** divorced, separated but never married, divorcing, or separating; had one or more children aged 6 to 18

**Randomly assigned:**

- 80 to eNBP
- 51 to wait-list control



## Assessment

- Child and Parent Report
- Pre and Post Program

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Reliable and valid measures

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Interparental conflict (and youth caught in the middle)

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Parental acceptance, rejection, open communication

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Effective discipline

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Child internalizing and externalizing problems

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Child prosocial behavior

# Attendance: Comparison of eNBP with In- Person NBP

	Online eNew Beginnings	In-person Group New Beginnings
% who signed up but did not attend a single unit/session	27%	25%
Of those who attended at least 1 meeting, % who attended all 10 meetings	60%	16%

## Effects to Reduce Interparental Conflict

- Only program to demonstrate efficacy to reduce both child report and parent report of conflict
- Children did not receive the program
- More effective for those with high conflict

Measure	Parent Report	Child Report	Who Benefits Most?
Interparental Conflict (CPIC)	Significant p> .05 	Significant p>.05 	Largest effects for those with high baseline conflict
Caught in the Middle	-	NS	

## Effects to Strengthen Quality of Parenting

- Reports by both parent and child increase confidence in program effects

Measure	Parent Report	Child Report	Who Benefits Most?
Acceptance	ns	ns	
Rejection	Significant $p < .01$ ★	Significant $p < .05$ ★	Higher baseline (parent report)
Consistent Discipline	Significant $p < .01$ ★	Significant $p < .05$ ★	Girls (child report)
Communication	Significant $p < .05$ ★	-	
Follow-through	Significant $p < .05$ ★	Significant $p < .01$ ★	Lower baseline (child report)
Monitoring	ns	ns	

## Effects to Reduce Child Mental Health Problems

- Significant effects by both parent and child raters gives us more confidence in the findings

Measure	Parent Report	Child Report	Who benefits most?
Internalizing Problems	Significant $p < .01$ ★	Significant $p < .01$ ★	
Externalizing Problems	NS	Significant $p < .01$ ★	Girls (child report)
Prosocial Behavior	NS	NS	

# Comparison of eNBP with In- Person NBP

eNBP has **stronger effects** at posttest  
*on (1) interparental conflict, (2) parenting,  
and (3) child mental health problems*

eNBP has **better attendance**  
*better completion rate 59.6% vs. 15.9% of  
those who complete one session*

eNBP is much **less expensive and more  
accessible** - \$49 - \$69 vs. \$600 - \$700



# Parents Seem to Really Like eNBP: What did you like best about the program?

“I really liked the entire program helped me understand a lot of different things of my relationship between myself and my husband...”

“It helped me really invest in time with my child and helped me understand how to communicate with him better”

“It offered progressive solutions to everyday problems you no doubt will encounter during the coparenting process and evolution”

“...it got me and children closer to each other.”

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What would  
you change  
about the  
program?

45% say Nothing....e.g. ...”it was exactly what I need”; “it was wonderful” “...it should be mandated in all 50 states”

Some actual suggestions for change: “Make it shorter”; “A place to explain any special challenges a parent has”; “change the videos and make them more detailed” “...it would be helpful to have activities where both parents were present”



- **Bereavement:**  
Online Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families Program Translates in Person FBP into a fully asynchronous online format (eNBP)

- Teach all the parenting skills as in-person NBP
  - Increase positive family interactions
  - Active listening
  - Reduce conflict
  - Effective discipline
- Add new components
  - Strengthen parent self-care – Self-compassion
  - New component to support healthy child grief – Use listening skills for discussion of memories of the deceased parent.
- Easily accessible to parents on any device
- 30-minute sessions for 10 session
  - One session per week
  - Caregivers practice program tools after each session
- Highly engaging format

# Welcome to the online Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families program

Parenting a child who is grieving the death of a parent can be very challenging. The Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families program provides practical tools backed by research that can help bereaved caregivers care for themselves and build close, strong families to promote their children's resilience during this stressful time.



# How the Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families Online Program is Designed to Meet the Needs of Caregivers of Bereaved Children



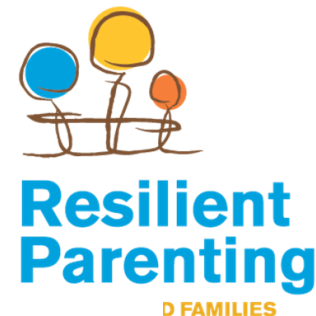
- Support Caregiver use of the Five Building Blocks of Bereaved Parenting

- Highly engaging learning of practical tools of self-care and family care – testimonials, modeling, practice of tools in session
- Home practice of practical tools after each unit
- Problem solving use of each practical tool
- Access to resources to support each tool – Tip Sheets – Audio files – Modeling Videos





# Ten Units Teach and Support Practical Tools For Self-Care and Family-Care



## 1. Welcome and Personal Goals

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 2. Self-Compassion and Family Time

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 3. One-on-One Time

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 4. Good Listening

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 5. Good Responding

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



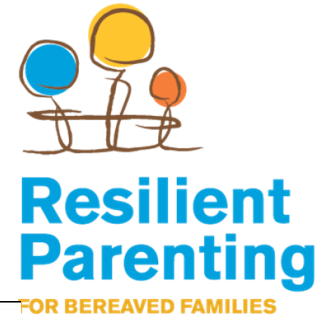
## 6. Kinder Thoughts and Feeling Responses

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



# Ten Units Teach and Support Practical Tools For Self-Care and Family-Care



## 7. Talking About Memories

[See Overview](#)

[Resume Course](#)



## 8. Clear and Realistic Rules

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 9. Helping children cope and develop a change plan

[See Overview](#)

[Replay Course](#)



## 10. Keep Your Program Going

[See Overview](#)

[Resume Course](#)



# Summary

- Long-term effects of in-person programs for divorced and bereaved families
- Online New Beginnings Program had significant effects to reduce interparental conflict, promote positive parenting, improve effective discipline and reduce child behavior problems – outcomes that are of significant interest to those working with divorced/separated families.
- Online version of parenting program for bereaved families currently being tested
- Both programs can

# Parents of Parentally Bereaved Children Can Receive the Online Resilient Parenting for Bereaved Families Program for Free as Part of Participating in an Evaluation of the Program



Eligible parents receive the program immediately or 4 months later and complete two surveys as part of the evaluation

To find out more information about the eRPBF evaluation, please visit the “contact” page of our website and provide your information using the QR code below or at: <https://bereavedparenting.org/contact.html>





# Divorced Families Information Sheet For Referring Parents to eNew Beginnings: Inexpensive: \$49 for 6-week version \$69 for 10-week version



The eNew Beginnings Program is a fully online parenting program. It is your research-based solution to happier, healthier children during and after divorce or separation.

Because **you** are the most important person in your child's life, the eNBP focuses on you so you can help **your children**.

The simple but powerful skills the eNBP teaches have been shown to benefit children up to 15 years later. Benefits that have been demonstrated through careful research include:

- Better relationships with your children
- Less interparental conflict
- More effective discipline
- Less child anxiety and depression
- Less child aggression

The eNBP has the proof to support our results. Many parenting programs say they deliver benefits but none can support their claims as solidly as the eNBP.

But, don't just take our word for it, read what parents have to say.

"I liked that the program wasn't about placing blame, but about creating a positive environment. I will continue the program."

"I like the activities and homework and ideas on how to implement them and explain them to your children."

"I wouldn't change a thing about the program. It is wonderful."

"It got me and my children closer to each other."

"It opened new paths of ways to connect with my children"

"The homework was hands-on. Easy concepts. Provided good resources."

"There are several tools I used immediately that my kids are big fans of. I work in technology and found your interface, videos, an overall performance of the online tools be stronger than other programs I have tried in the past."

FULLY ONLINE

SELF-PACED

INTERACTIVE

Takes between 3 – 5 hours to complete

Separate programs for mothers and fathers

Use on your computer, tablet or phone

Printable worksheets and tip sheets

Starting at \$49

Take the first session for free!





## Professionals Working With Divorced Families:

How you can get  
access to the eNBP  
to learn how it can  
be useful to your  
families?

- We give unlimited access to the 6-week program for two weeks to check it out and see how the eNBP will look, feel and work for your families
- Send an e-mail with your information below to this address to request free access to either the mother or father 6-week program for two weeks.
- [familyfriend@divorceandparenting.com](mailto:familyfriend@divorceandparenting.com)
- First Name
- Last Name
- Company/Hospital/Clinic Name (their place of employment or name of business)
- City
- County
- State
- Phone Number
- e-mail address