



Safe, Secure, and Loved: Parent Education

Why is mindfulness-based, trauma-informed community-led parent education important? Is it because:



Figure 1 Project Logo. Used with permission from the authors.

The overarching goal of this work is to provide community-led parent education for immigrant families from Mexico that supports healthy early child development. We collaborated with a nonprofit agency in San Jose, CA and offered a 6-session parent education program, called *Safe, Secure and Loved*, which combines mindfulness and self-compassion practices, discussion, role-play, and crafts to establish nurturing parenting strategies. These strategies help manage parenting stress, clarify parenting goals, and strengthen young children's resilience.

- when young children are exposed to high levels of environmental stress it negatively impacts their feelings of being safe, secure, and loved?
- parents experience a deep sense of relief when they can mitigate the stress of poverty through community-centered approaches?
- mindful parents have improved capacity to care for and nurture their young children?

Highlights

Community-led parent education focused on managing parenting stress, clarifying parenting goals, and strengthening nurturing parenting can engage and mobilize a volunteer community workforce.

Methods

We gathered information (online surveys and in-person interviews) from community health workers/promotoras, agency staff, and the lead researcher about their roles in the initiative and their views of changes in leadership and infrastructure. Questions

“Across 5 years, a volunteer community workforce of promotoras transformed an academic-community research partnership into a community-led program partnership and established sustainable agency parent education programming.”

were organized around events across different stages of the project. Representative responses suggest that as promotoras gained more confidence and expertise in facilitating the manualized curriculum, they shared more and more ways to contextualize the specific parent education strategies, learning activities and application exercises. The demonstration of this expertise shown by the promotoras created a positive feedback loop for increased leadership and ownership of the programming.

Results

- This project represents a holistic approach for the prevention of child abuse and neglect which has the potential to strengthen child-serving workforces in low-resource communities.
- *Safe, Secure and Loved* engaged and mobilized a volunteer workforce in a low-resource community.
- The transformation from an academic-community research partnership to a community-led program partnership was led by the recognition of increasing expertise shown by the promotoras in contextualizing the parent education strategies.

HOW DID A COMMUNITY PSYCHOLOGY PERSPECTIVE INFORM YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE ISSUES, RESULTS, AND IMPLICATIONS?

There are not enough therapists, counselors, psychologists and faith-based professionals to effectively support families facing the poverty-related stressors of discrimination, community violence and economic scarcity. We must create new approaches to translate the science of child and family resilience so communities can heal themselves. New and effective approaches to develop a volunteer workforce will require full and authentic community partnerships. Policy makers and practitioners who want to improve the lives of families need to recognize the power of a volunteer workforce for community resilience.

What Does This Mean For?

Research and Evaluation— We need to create a culture of sustainable academic-community partnerships and more training for community-based participatory research. The pressure to complete a project quickly experienced by most researchers is at odds with effective and sustainable community programming.

Social Action—Community-led parent education is effective, important, and sustainable. We think that this approach can also shift the thinking about methods to prevent of child abuse and neglect.

People Working in Similar Community Settings — Community centers, schools, health-centers, and faith-based institutions that provide parent education programming and employ a volunteer community workforce have the potential to support not just family resilience but community resilience! While writing the answer to this question-- I received a note from one of the promotoras who was interviewed as a part of this program review. She just had a new baby. She writes “...the best gift I received is knowing how to make my baby feel safe, secure and loved. I am practicing all with my baby.” When you get a note like this and you see how community members have embodied new knowledge and then adapted it to their lives, you will never give up hope for community solutions!

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