Tuning in to Kids
An Emotion Coaching Parenting Program

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Parenting in the 21st Century
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Mindful: Centre for Training and Research in Developmental Health
University of Melbourne
Overview of Presentation

• Overview of Tuning in to Kids
• Understand differences in parenting styles
• Explore how emotion coaching is learned
• Consider brain functioning and use of emotion coaching
• Learn about Emotion Coaching and it’s benefits
  – How it works
  – Why it works
• What is the research evidence so far?
What is Tuning in to Kids?

*Tuning in to Kids (TIK)* is an evidence-based program that helps parents/carers teach their children about emotions while building a close and supportive relationship.

http://www.cebc4cw.org/program/tuning-in-to-kids-tik/detailed
What is the TIK program?

- A parenting program (6-10 sessions)
- Focus on emotions in parents and children
- Parents become aware of their child’s emotion and coach their child in understanding/regulating emotion
- Parents become aware of and regulate own emotions
- In children - prevents or reduces behavioural problems
- Group delivery in community and clinical settings as well as individual parent education/therapy
- Used by childcare workers, teachers, nursing staff, residential carers, etc
What is Emotional Intelligence/competence?

• Identify and understand your own emotions.
• Successfully use emotions during social interactions
• Use your emotional awareness to guide you when solving problems
• Deal with frustration and be able to wait to get what you want
• Keep distress from overwhelming your ability to think
• Be in control of how and when you express feelings
Why is Emotional Intelligence important?

• Allows you to have awareness and control over what you do
• Results in lower levels of stress, which are associated with better health
• Enables more satisfying friendships and lasting intimate relationships
• You can soothe yourself and are therefore able to calmly focus, concentrate and think when faced with a challenging situation
• It makes you more resilient (better able to deal with change and stress)
Development of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence/Competence:
- Emotion expressiveness
- Emotional regulation
- Emotion understanding

These influence:
- Behaviour
- Social competence
- Academic functioning
How is emotional intelligence shaped?

Children’s emotional intelligence is shaped by:

- Parents’/significant others’ modelling, reactions to, and coaching of emotions
- The emotional atmosphere in the home
- Parents’/significant others’ meta-emotion philosophy

Styles of Emotional Communication

Four patterns of responding to children’s emotions are identified in the parent emotion socialisation literature:

• **Emotion Dismissing**: ignores uncomfortable emotions. Often motivated by need to rescue and fix the problem.

• **Emotion Disapproving**: disapproves or is critical of emotions being expressed. Often motivated by a need to control and regain power and/or to make the child ‘toughen up’.

• **Laissez-Faire**: accepts all emotions but fails to place guidance around behaviour. Often motivated by avoiding conflict or uncertainty.

• **Emotion Coaching**: values all emotions and helps understand feelings while also guiding behaviour. Often motivated by noticing the child’s emotion world and giving child skills that help with understanding and regulating emotions.
Emotion Coaching

To emotion coach your child you:

• Become aware of their emotion, especially if it is of a lower intensity

• View their emotion as an opportunity for emotional connection and teaching

• Communicate your understanding and acceptance of the emotion – empathy

• Help them use words to describe feelings

• If necessary, help them to solve problems

(All wishes and feelings are acceptable, but not all behaviours)

Messages the child receives - EC

• We all feel emotions and it is useful to recognise them in ourselves as well as others
• I am not alone and I am loved, accepted, supported, valid, cared about, understood, trustworthy and respected
• I am capable of solving problems; problems and conflicts can be resolved
• All feelings are acceptable and normal, and I can learn to regulate emotions and express them constructively
• Emotions are transitory – all feelings will pass

Child learns to develop a variety of emotion competencies, including emotion acceptance, regulation and healthy self-talk
Emotion Dismissing Responses

When a parent responds in an emotionally dismissive way they might still be warm and engaged with their child but respond by:

– Asking ‘why...’ the child feels this way
– Telling the child not to worry
– Problem-solving immediately
– Offering advice e.g., “You should have…”
– Setting limits immediately
– Offering distraction or reassurance
– Moralising/trying to teach values
– Engaging in defensive responding

(These responses can be helpful but not if the emotion is not also responded to.)
Message the child receives - ED

• What I am feeling is not right, I must/should not feel this way
• I am not worthy of connection when I feel uncomfortable emotions

• Child does not learn to trust their own feelings affecting decision-making
• Not given the opportunity to learn to self-regulate or problem-solve
• Generates more negative feelings – resentment, guilt, shame, anger
• May primarily learn suppression or distraction as emotion regulation strategies
Why does Emotion Coaching reduce behaviour problems?

• Responding to emotions – especially low level emotions
  – Emotions are noticed, the child does not have to escalate to have feelings noticed
  – Emotions are accepted, conflicts are not escalated
  – The child feels connected and respected
  – More optimal time to teach about emotions when emotion intensity is lower (frontal lobes enable thinking about emotion experience)
• Clear limits are set early while emotions are recognised and respected
  – All feelings are OK – behaviours can be OK or not OK
• Children learn to self-soothe, stay calm
• When a child experiences connection – power struggles are less likely
Research Evidence

• Children who are emotion coached are more likely to:
  – Have better cognitive abilities
  – Stronger social skills
  – Display more pro-social behaviour
  – Have fewer physical illnesses
  – Lower externalising and internalising problems

  Kehoe et al 2011; Katz & Maliken, 2013

• Greatest benefit for children with higher levels of
  – Emotional negative reactivity
  – Externalising behaviour (particularly at a young age)
  – Internalising problems

  Denham et al, 2000; Duncombe et al 2012; Kehoe et al 2011
The Development of TIK

• Developed by Sophie Havighurst and Ann Harley as a program for parents of preschoolers (1999)
• Efficacy - Randomised controlled trial with community and clinical participant. (2006-2008): prevention and an early intervention program
• Effectiveness – RCT with community practitioners delivering program (2008-2010) – universal prevention
• Dissemination (2007- current)
• Further research studies and program adaptations
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Toddlers - Tuning in to Toddlers (TOTS)</th>
<th>School aged - Tuning in to Kids</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Pilot study</td>
<td>• Effectiveness with conduct problem children - RCT</td>
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<td>• RCT efficacy trial (current)</td>
<td>• Comparison of TIK &amp;Triple P for conduct problem children – RCT</td>
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<td>Preschool - Tuning in to Kids (TIK)</td>
<td>• Children with chronic illness – RCT</td>
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<td>• Pilot study</td>
<td>• Trauma-focused pilot study</td>
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<td>• Pilot study</td>
<td>Pre-adolescents - Tuning in to Teens (TINT)</td>
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<td>• Efficacy trial - RCT</td>
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<td>• RCT clinical efficacy trial</td>
<td>• Qualitative study</td>
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<td>• Case studies with anxious children</td>
<td>• New Jersey adoption/kinship carers</td>
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<td>• Dads TIK pilot study</td>
<td>Adolescents - Tuning in to Teens</td>
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<td>• Dads TIK RCT efficacy trial</td>
<td>• Efficacy study (current)</td>
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<td>• Pilot with child care workers</td>
<td>• Whole School Approach (current)</td>
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<td>• Norwegian Tuning in to Kids</td>
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<td>• German Tuning in to Kids</td>
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<td>• Iranian Tuning in to Kids</td>
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Research Publications


Research Publications continued...

Main Findings - TIK Research

Parents:
– Reduced emotion dismissive parenting
– Increased empathy
– Improved emotion awareness and regulation

Children:
– Improved emotion knowledge
– Reduced behaviour problems
– Reduced anxiety
– Improved social functioning
Tuning in to Kids: Program Content
Emotion Coaching

To emotion coach your child you:

• Become aware of their emotion, especially if it is of a lower intensity
• View their emotion as an opportunity for emotional connection and teaching
• Communicate your understanding and acceptance of the emotion – empathy
• Help them use words to describe feelings
• If necessary, help them to solve problems. All wishes and feelings are acceptable, but not all behaviours.

Emotion Awareness

• Aim: Develop parent’s emotion awareness
• What emotion is behind the situation?
• Notice body language/bodily signs. Where do you feel the emotion in your body? Any somatic complaints? (physiological experience)
• What thoughts went through your mind? (cognitive component)/ What is the emotion behind children’s verbal statements?

Bears Exercise
Emotion Coaching and Empathy

• Empathy requires emotion awareness and regulation: this leads to perspective taking
• ‘Stepping into their shoes’
• Rehearse ways to convey understanding and empathy
• Parents manage their own emotional reactions

Emotion detective exercise: adult comparable situations.
Reflecting and naming emotions

• Teach parents language of emotion coaching
• Helpful sentence starters
• Build parents emotion vocabulary

Use of handout materials and posters
HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

©2004 Celene E. Domitrovich, Ph.D., Mark T. Greenberg, Ph.D., Carol A. Kusché, Ph.D. & Rebecca Cortes, Ph.D. 501323A
Role plays of Emotion Coaching

- DVD demonstrations (link to https://vimeo.com/166350061)
- Role play scripts
- Fishbowl role plays
- Unscripted role plays

Try an emotion dismissing response then contrast with an emotion coaching response.
Debriefing - especially what it felt like to be the parent or child – helps with empathy.
Brain Regions and Functions

**Brainstem**
- Breathing, heartbeat, temperature

**Midbrain**
- survival functions such as safety and responses to threat (reflexes, sleep)

**Limbic Area – Emotions Centre**
- feelings and emotions, especially the experience of fear,
- danger and threat

**Cortical Area – Thinking Centre**
- Logical thinking, reasoning, planning, anticipating, predicting, impulse control, meta-emotion, and meta-cognition

Hand Model of the Brain - Dan Siegel [www.drdansiegel.com](http://www.drdansiegel.com)
## The Brain and Emotion Coaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kids 0-100</th>
<th>0 = CALM</th>
<th>ALERT</th>
<th>ALARM</th>
<th>FEAR/ANGER</th>
<th>TERROR/RAGE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Brain areas</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>NeoCortex and Subcortex</td>
<td>Subcortex/ Limbic</td>
<td>Limbic/ Midbrain</td>
<td>Midbrain/ Brainstem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5 steps of Emotion Coaching</strong></td>
<td>All 5 steps appropriate</td>
<td>First 4 steps are appropriate</td>
<td></td>
<td>First two steps plus calming and grounding Time in; letting off steam; time away</td>
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Adapted from Bruce Perry
Emotion regulation for parents and children

• Attachment function of parent - physical contact – proximity, touch, holding, rocking, stroking
• Naming emotions – engaging frontal lobes helps to down regulate
• Techniques to regulate anxiety – mindfulness (Turtle), breathing, relaxation (The Noodle)
• Techniques to regulate anger – building in a pause, letting off steam (Lester), calming self
Things to do when you are angry!

Let off steam!!
- Jump on the trampoline
- Run up and down the stairs twenty times
- Go for a run around the house/yard
- Punch a cushion or punching bag (but don’t punch people or things)
- Shut yourself in a room and have a yell
- Tell your toys how you feel and why
- Bang a drum!
- Play with a ball outside
- Twist a towel
- Have a good cry
- Listen to your favourite music
- Yell your anger down the plug hole and rinse the words away

Calm yourself...
- Breathe slowly in and out ten times
- Have some quiet time in your bedroom
- Have a bath or a shower
- Talk to someone who is a good listener
- Draw how you feel or make it out of play dough
- Pretend to be a turtle – crawl into your shell
Address parents’ meta-emotion

• How do you feel about being angry/sad/worried?
• Automatic reactions
• Reflection on where these reactions and beliefs were learned
• What messages about emotions are conveyed to children
  – “Feelings are important and are acceptable to show”
  – “Crying is a sign of weakness”
  – “There is nothing to worry about”
  – “How dare you be angry with me!”
• Messages children receive (verbal and non-verbal) shape their emotional competence
• Emotionally dismissive/disapproving parenting may lead to emotional suppression/dysregulation in children.
Tuning in to Kids
Dissemination and Implementation
TIK Dissemination

• First TIK professional training - 2007
• Since then – over 4500 professionals trained
• Training delivered in Australia, the UK, Hong Kong, the USA, New Zealand, Norway, Iran, Germany
• Translations of handouts for delivery in 12 languages (including Cantonese, Somali, Arabic, Vietnamese, Amharic, German, Persian and Norwegian)
• Dads Tuning in to Kids and Tuning in to Teens training
• Tuning in to Toddlers manual/training – 2018
• TIK Online - available in 2017
Other services using adaptations of TIK

- Child and Adolescent Mental Health (CAMHS) (outpatient clinicians and inpatient nursing staff)
- Trauma services
- Drug and Alcohol Rehabilitation
- Prisons
- Educational settings (early childhood, primary, secondary) – Whole of School Approach
- Indigenous services
- Multi-cultural services
- Young single mothers playgroups
- Kinship carers, grandparents and foster carers
- Child protection and residential workers
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