



Mental health in infancy and early childhood affects every aspect of individuals' lives throughout their lifetime, including social functioning, psychological well-being, and physical health.

Research Update

The Importance of Fathers

Dr. Jessica Ball, one of the keynote speakers for the Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's biennial conference, Prevention Matters 2013, researched the developmental and health outcomes of father involvement in children's lives. Evidence has shown that children, whose fathers are involved in their daily lives, have higher cognitive functioning, better academic achievements, higher levels of resilience and life satisfactions, lower levels of stress, and more positive peer networks than children who did not have an involved father.

There are many barriers to father involvement, including:

- mainstream services and programming being mother-focused
- fathers not being placed on school and social services contact information sheets
- increased likelihood of children from multiple partners
- fathers not being placed on birth certificates as biological fathers
- lack of understanding of the father's role and importance

Some of Dr. Ball's research has focused particularly on Aboriginal fathers. Although there are several barriers that are specific to Aboriginal fathers' involvement, there is also evidence that Aboriginal fathers want to parent. Fathers have indicated a desire to develop positive relationships with their children, to contribute to their well-being, and to be involved despite limited resources. Some fathers spoke of the desire to be the "turn around generation by recreating positive roles of Aboriginal men in raising their children". (pg. 374)

Ensuring that we are including fathers in both policy and programming can help to invite fathers' involvement. As well, system policies and practices that are inclusive to fathers would decrease barriers; for example, paternity recognition and positive media. Finally, helping men to develop resiliency skills, while recognizing socio-historical events, will allow men to maintain involvement with their families.

Ball, J. (2012). 'We could be the turn-around generation: Harnessing aboriginal fathers' potential to create child well-being'. Pediatrics and Child Health (17, 7), 373-375.

Programs

United Through Reading

The United through Reading program (U.S.A.) was developed to help those in the military stay connected or establish a connection with their children during times of separation. Military personnel with children are invited to video record themselves reading a storybook. This is then placed on a DVD and a copy is sent home. The program has been evaluated and has been seen as effective in decreasing children's anxiety during parental separation, helping military personnel stay connected to their families, increasing children's interest in reading, and making reuniting easier for all members of the family.

Although this program is focused on military families, it could be adapted to any family where prolonged parental separation occurs. An example of this includes parents who are incarcerated, work away from the home (e.g., mining) for long periods of time, and new immigrants whose families do not live in Canada.

Yeary, J., Zoll, S., & Reschke, K. (2012). When a parent is away. Promoting strong parent-child connection during parental absence. Zero to Three: National Centre for Infants and Toddlers (32 (5), 5-10.

Resources

Building Resilience in Young Children - Booklet

This booklet is available free of charge for parents and caregivers of children from birth to six years. It is also an excellent resource for people who work with young children. The booklet focuses on information and practical tips that can help children develop resiliency skills.

The booklet is available free of charge in PDF version or in a print version.

To view or download go to: http://www.beststart.org/resources/hlthy_chld_dev/index.html

To order print versions go to: <http://beststart.org/resources/order.html>

Website: Healthy Baby Healthy Brain

This new website provides useful information to parents, caregivers and professionals. The website provides both text and video about a variety of topics regarding the early development (prenatal to age 3) of the brain. These include, but are not limited to, attachment, nutrition, play, environment, routine, and stress.

To access the website, please follow: www.HealthyBabyHealthyBrain.ca.

Professional Development

27th National Training Institute: Your Time to Learn

Making a Difference in the World of Babies, Toddlers and Their Families

November 28 - December 1, 2012

Los Angeles, California

<http://www.zttntconference.org/register/>

Prevention Matters Conference 2013

Saskatchewan Prevention Institute's Biennial Conference

Save the Date

October 2 - 4, 2013

Saskatoon, SK

Please feel free to distribute this information to others. If you or someone you know is interested in participating in the network, please contact Lee Hinton at lhinton@preventioninstitute.sk.ca

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