



Young Hearts: Re-connect group

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Aims of presentation

At the completion of this presentation, participants will:

- Be aware of Young Hearts and it's re-connect program
- Understand the child's world when subjected to DV
- Understand the implications of family and domestic violence on parent-child attachment
- Case study: working through the re-connect program
- The aims and delivery format of the program



Statistics

Family and Domestic Violence (FDV) occurs in intimate partner or **family** relationships

Statistically, 1 in 3 families have experienced family and domestic violence (2012 Aust. Bureau of statistics Personal Safety Survey)

Domestic violence is the single biggest cause of homelessness for women in Australia

The cost of domestic violence in Australia in 2013 was estimated at \$15 billion

Although the majority of abuse is perpetrated by men this is not always the case, for today's presentation, we will be focusing on the effects on women and children



Family and Domestic Violence



Understand the child...Understand their world

- The child and mother's experience
- Safety issues for the child/ mother
- Effects on the mother/child and their relationship
- Developmental and neurobiological effects, how this impacts on the child and their behaviour
- Long and short term effects



Safety – Women and Children

The most dangerous time:

- When the women leaves the relationship
- When the perpetrator perceives any loss of his power and control



Implications for Mother and Child

- Leave the family home, school, pets, belongings and job
- Possible isolation
- Difficulty for the mother to establish her authority.
- Emotional numbness, depression, physical avoidance, attachment and bond between mother and child is often not secure or non existent. Mother and child have to learn how to be with one another



Implications for Mother and Child

- Anger and blame towards each other and self
- Child may have little or no trust in the mother or her ability to protect them
- Difficulty trusting anyone
- Financial hardship
- Family court issues
- Trauma responses, eg: mother triggered by child's anger and responds by attacking
- Grief and loss



Implications for Mother and Child

- Child's expression of feelings may show the worst behaviour to whom they feel most safe with
- Mother can react to a child as if they are the ex partner
- May still be living in fear
- Feelings of shame and guilt by children and mother
- Self loathing



Attachment theory

- Individual's attachment style is developed during childhood
- Influenced by the child's relationships with primary caregivers
- Earliest bonds formed by children with caregivers have a major impact that continues throughout life influencing the way that individual related to others during their lifespan.
- The success of the attachment bond depends on the caregiver's ability to understand and respond to the child's physical and emotional needs



Case study

- Jarrad is 11 years old and is an only child
- Jarrad's dad left when he was 2 years old and he now lives with his mother fulltime and has not seen his father for 2 years
- Mum has a new partner that works FIFO
- Jarrad's mum was subjected to verbal, emotional and physical violence from her husband for many years.
- Jarrad's dad would not allow her mum to attend to him when he cried



Case study (continued)

- Dad became violent towards Jarrad.
- Mum was brought up in a dysfunctional family and states that her parents were not there for her emotionally.
- Jarrad was scared of staying with dad as he was still physically abusive to him.
- Mum insisted that Jarrad spend time with his dad knowing that he was fearful.
- Jarrad began Young Hearts counselling 2 ½ years ago.



Case study (continued)

- Jarrad spoke of his fear of dad.
- Mum was described as not caring.
- Jarrad was not able to make strong friendships at school and he was struggling academically.
- Jarrad and his mum were invited to attend the 6 week “Young Hearts – reconnect group” and then the reconnect camp over one weekend



Re-connect program

- 6 children and their non-offending parent
- 2 facilitators (counsellors)
- Outcomes sought:
 - Week 1 Trust
 - Week 2 Touch and trust
 - Week 3 Touch and connection
 - Week 4 Communication
 - Week 5 Consolidation
 - Week 6 Have fun with each other



Re-connect program for Jade & her mum

- Week 1 – Trust

Icebreakers – getting to know each of the group members

Group setting their own guidelines– ensuring that trust is built around issues such as confidentiality, respect for each other, safety, having fun

Balloon tennis – Jarrad and his mum were opposite each other and their gaze met during the game



The re-connect program (continued)

The lolly game – each of them encourages the other to gather as many lollies from a central bowl when their number was called. Together they would share their booty.

Check out – giving the group a word or phrase to describe how they felt at that time



The re-connect program (continued)

- Week 2 – Touch and trust

Reflection on changes during their week

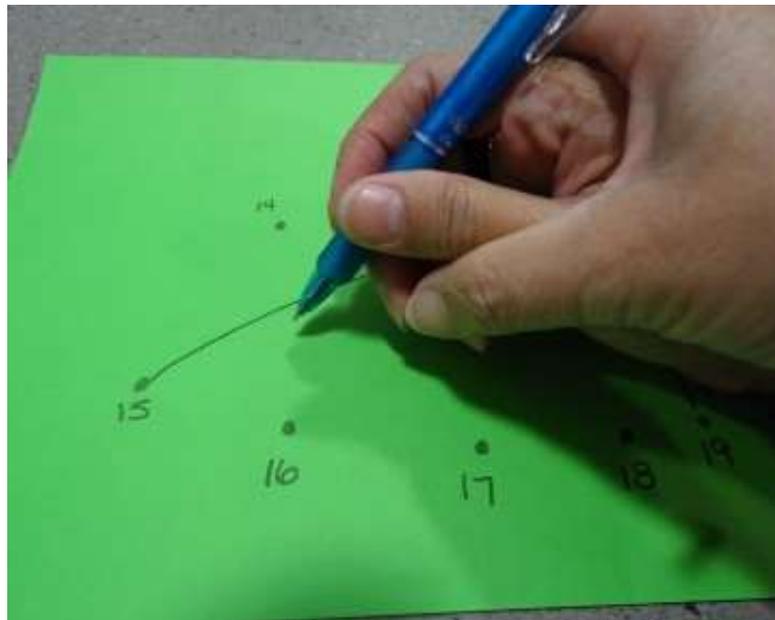
Guided relaxation visualisation – both were asked to close their eyes and listen and respond to the relaxation activity

Pin the tail on the donkey – Jarrad was blindfolded and mum had to lead him through an obstacle course. Instructions were then given for Jarrad to find where to pin the tail. The roles would then be reversed.



The re-connect program (continued)

Dot to dot – Mum would stand behind Jarrad who was blindfolded and hold his hand. She would guide his hand through the dot to dot drawing. Jarrad needed to gauge his anxiety with mum standing behind him, being blindfolded and lead by his mum.



The re-connect program (continued)

- Week 3 – Touch and connection
Hand painting



The re-connect program (continued)

Facial copying – standing opposite, looking at each other, copying the facial expression, movement of eyes etc. Each takes turns. This required both to have eye contact.

Musical chairs – The traditional game where a number of competitive natures shone through. Mother and child would cheer and encourage each other when they were out of the game themselves.



The re-connect program (continued)

- **Week 4 – Communication**

Treasure hunt – Cryptic clues – needed to work as a team to solve the clues and find the treasure

Communication discussion - communication styles. Parents and children grouped to brainstorm

Feelings quoits – Each quoit game has five spikes that are named with a different feeling.



The re-connect program (continued)

Lego building – Ability to give instructions clearly and listen closely



The re-connect program (continued)

- **Week 5 - Consolidation**

Three legged soccer game – inside legs are tied together, putting their arm around each other they kick a ball around a relay path and kick the ball into a pre-drawn goal.

Pop stick game – A pop stick is placed between Jarrad and his mum and he leads his mum around the room communicating only with his body.

Hangman – Mum stood behind Jarrad who was looking away from the hangman puzzle and was asked to write the letters on Jarrad's back that corresponded with the hangman puzzle. Jarrad had to communicate what he felt had been written until the puzzle was completed.



The re-connect program (continued)

Lolly hockey –Flexi straws were used as hockey sticks. M & M were used as soccer balls. This was done also with marshmallows.



The re-connect program (continued)

- Week 6 – Fun with each other

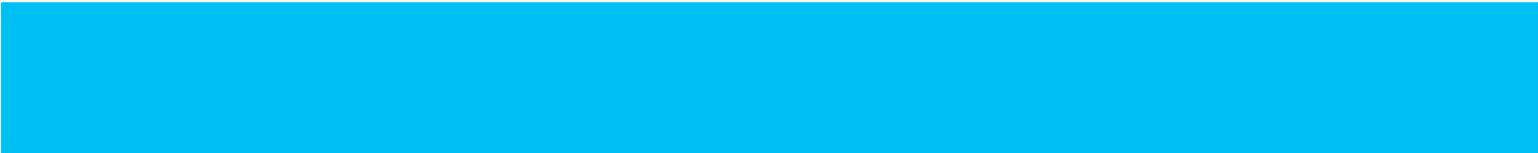
10 pin bowling - Jarrad and mum were placed on the same team with others in the group. This was a fun activity to finish off the successful 6 week program.



Re-connect camp

- 17 children and mums
- Adventure campsite
- Both therapeutic and adventure activities
- Overnight
- Comments





Question time!!

