

Emotion Coaching: Overcoming the Impact of Family Violence

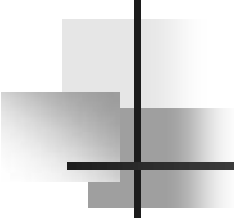


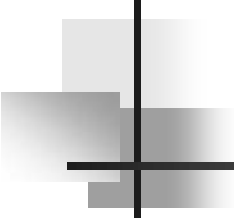
Lynn Fainsilber Katz



Overview of Presentation

- Background of effects of DV on children
- Emotion Coaching
 - What is it ?
 - How does it build resilience in children ?
- Emotion Coaching Program for Survivors of Domestic Violence
 - Description & sample exercises

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- Domestic violence has reached alarming rates in the United States
 - Estimates: between 3.3 – 10 million women are battered each year
 - Children as unintended victims



Understanding relations between Domestic Violence and Child Adjustment

- Research is in its infancy
 - Early studies began appearing in late 1970's
- First generation research:
 - Well known association between domestic violence and child adjustment



Domestic Violence and Child Adjustment

- Associated with child behavior problems
 - Aggression
 - Delinquency
 - Depression
 - Anxiety
 - Poor self-esteem
 - Worse peer relations



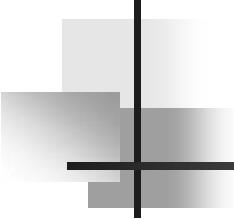
Next step ?

- Understand how to buffer children from negative effects of exposure to DV



How we think about this

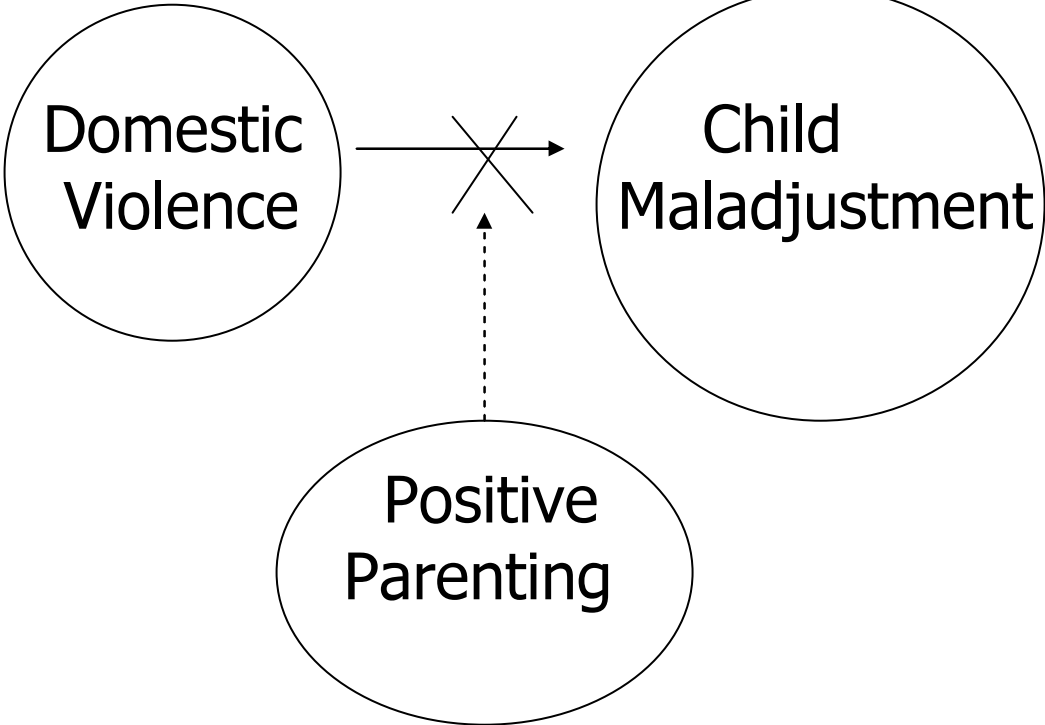
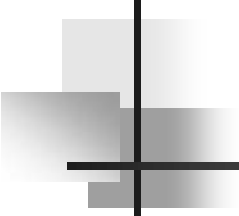
- Domestic violence as stressful life event
 - How children react *psychologically* to the stress of domestic violence
 - How children react *physiologically* to the stress of domestic violence
 - Changing stress hormones
 - Ability to calm down the body

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- Domestic violence disrupts children's ability to handle stress
 - Developmental task: To learn how to handle stress
 - Not if environment is chaotic and overwhelming



Parents as a buffer

- Good parenting can help children manage their feelings and reactions to DV
 - Help children cope
 - Increase resilience





Parenting in the Context of Domestic Violence

- Increased parenting stress levels
- Lower levels of parental warmth and nurturance
- Lower parenting effectiveness
- Higher rates of parent-child aggression



Problems

- Based on women in shelters
 - Time of crisis
 - Single reporter = mom
- Focus on *negative* parenting that increases the child's risk for maladjustment
- Not described the *positive* strategies that parents can use to help



What aspects of parenting are important ?

- ***Being able to talk to children about the child's feelings***
 - Parents who do so create a relationship in which children feel comfortable coming to them with their worries and fears
 - Children feel that parents are a resource to them when they are upset
 - Enables parents to be a social buffer under stress
 - Helps children learn to use their emotions as a source of information in their interpersonal relations
 - Teaches children how to self-soothe



Emotion Coaching

- Aware of Low Intensity Emotions
- Validate Child's Emotions
- Child's Emotions as Opportunity for Intimacy or Teaching
- Verbal Labeling of Child's Emotion
- Problem Solve



Emotion Dismissing

- Deny or ignore emotion
- Change negative emotion quickly
- Emotion is not important



Emotion Coaching and Marriage

- Less hostility
- More happily married
- Lower likelihood of marital dissolution



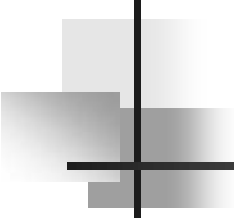
Emotion Coaching and Parenting

- Less rejecting
- More scaffolding/praising



Emotion Coaching and Child Adjustment

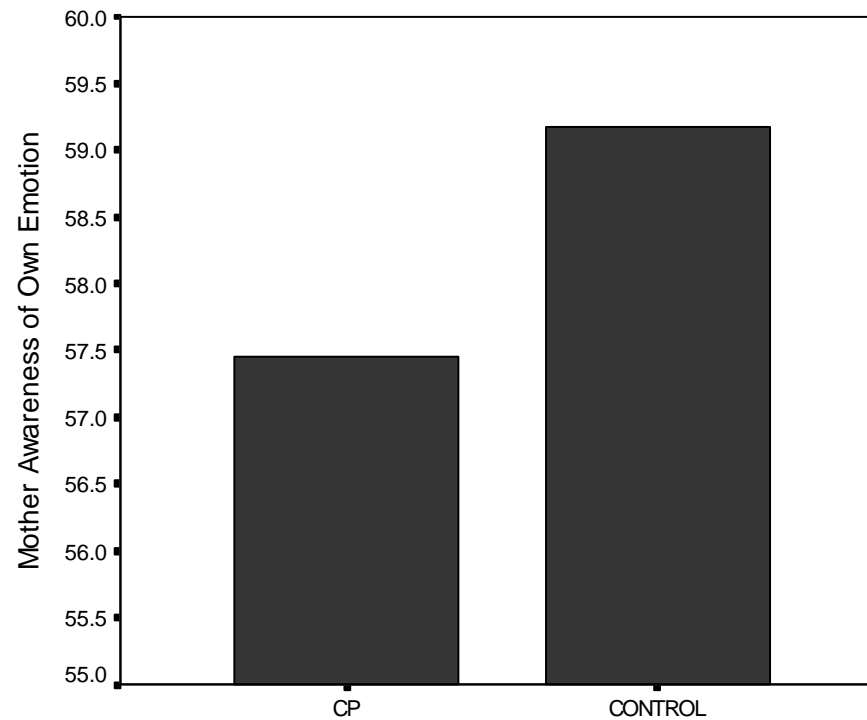
- Less physiological stress
- Greater physiological regulatory abilities
- Greater ability to focus attention
- Less negative peer interaction
- Less physical illness
- Higher academic achievement



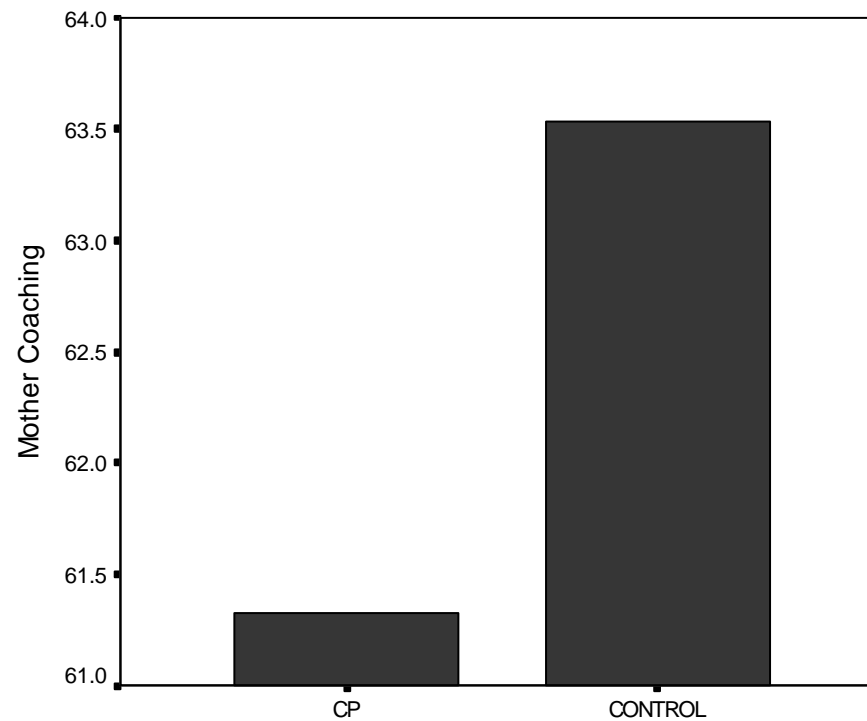
Emotion Coaching in Families with Conduct-Problem Children

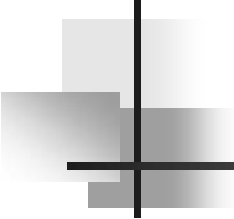
1. Are mothers of CP children less aware and coaching of emotion than mothers of non-CP children?
2. Do CP children show better peer relations if their mothers are more aware and coaching of emotion?

Mothers of CP children were less aware of own emotion



Mothers of CP kids less coaching of child emotion





Do conduct-problem children show better peer relations if their mothers are more aware and coaching of emotion ?



Main findings (Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2004)

- Yes !
- When parents are coaching, children:
 - Less negative affect during peer play
 - Less disconnected play
 - More fantasy play



Domestic Violence and Emotion Coaching

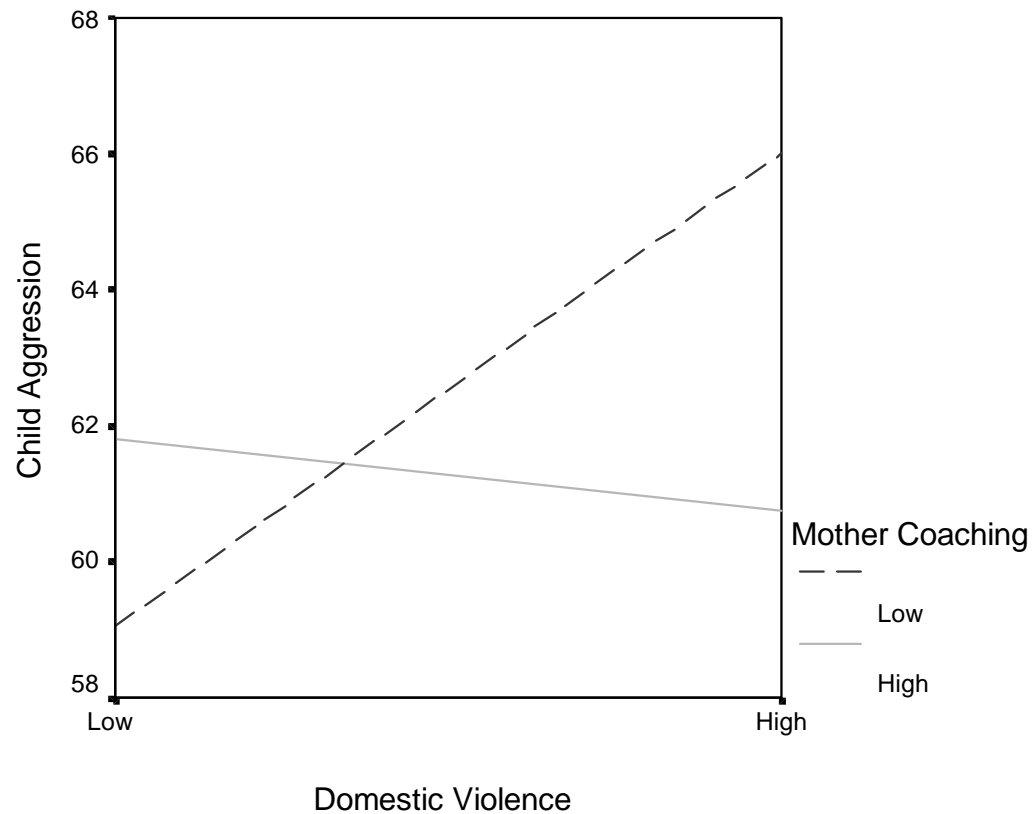
- Do parents in domestically violent homes have difficulty talking to and helping their children manage their emotions ?
- Does emotion coaching reduce problem behaviors in children exposed to domestic violence ?

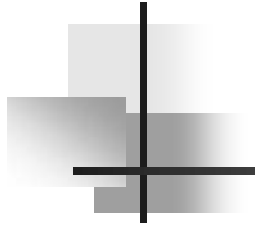


Main findings (Katz & Windecker-Nelson, 2006)

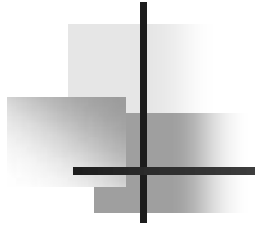
- There were no differences in emotion coaching in battered women and women who had not experienced domestic violence
- *But*, when battered women were emotion coaching, their children showed fewer behavior problems (e.g., aggression, depression, withdrawal)

Domestic Violence and Emotion Coaching





How Does Emotion Coaching Build Resilience in Children ?



Increasing Children's Emotional Competence



Emotional Competence

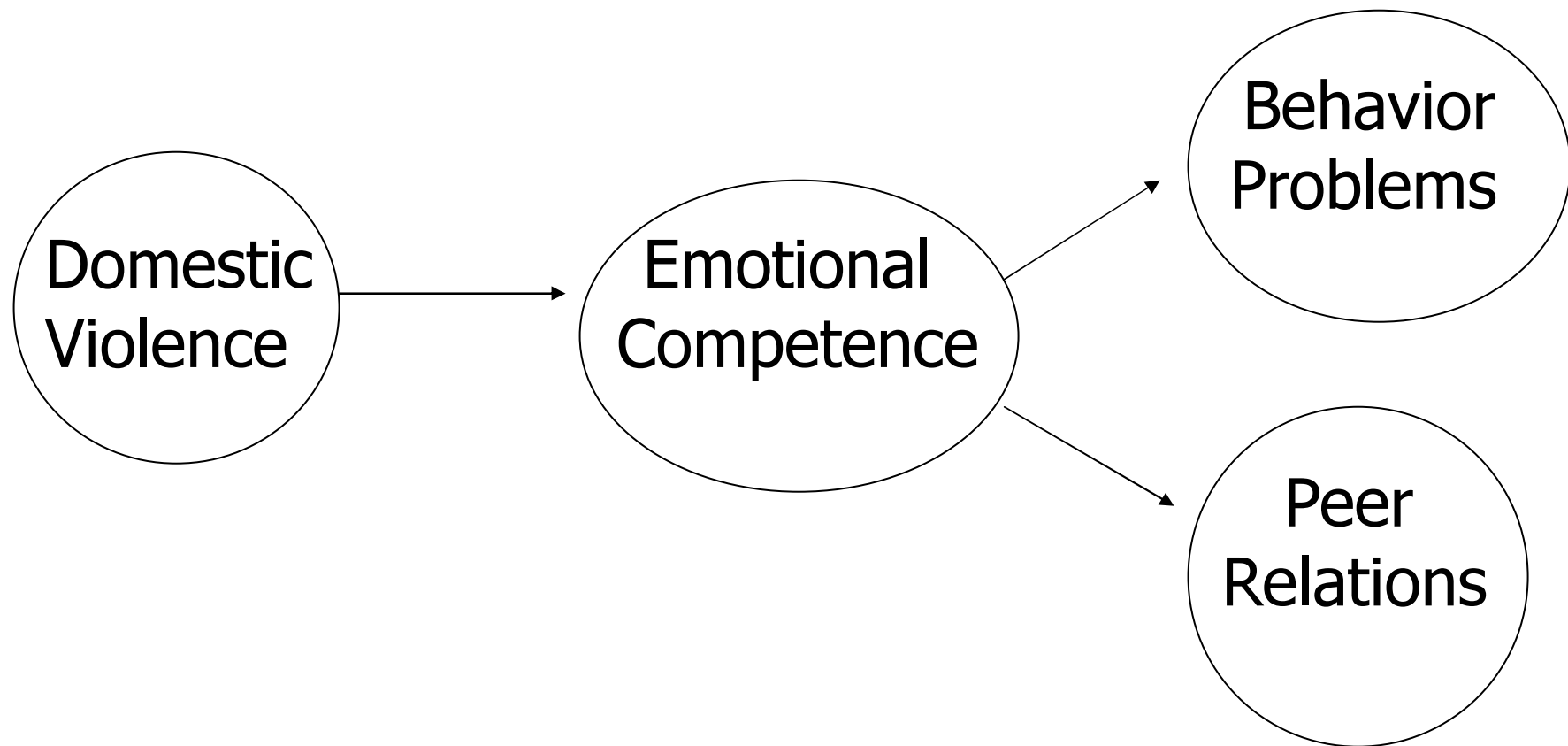
- Awareness
- Acceptance
- Regulation



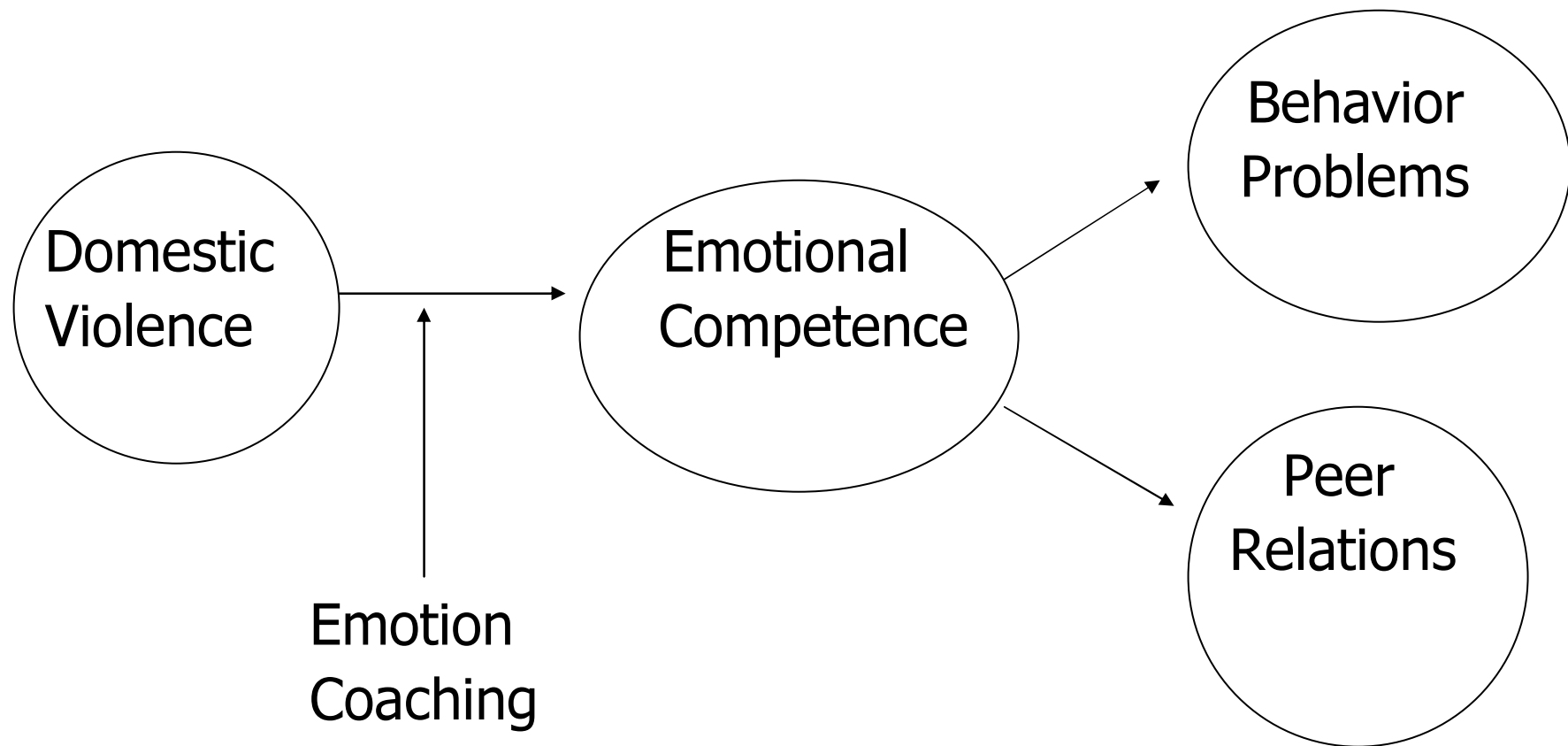
Building Child Resilience

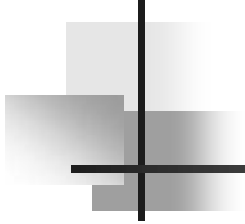
- Difficulty regulating emotions
 - Less aware of their own emotions
 - Require mothers to help them calm down rather than being able to do so themselves
- “Emotional Competence”

Current thinking

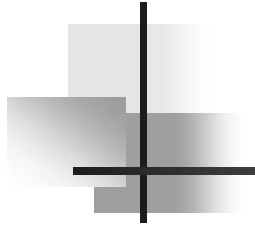


Points of Intervention: Early in the cascade





Transcripts



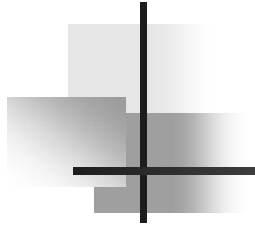
From Understanding to Helping

Implications for Helping Children Exposed
to Domestic Violence

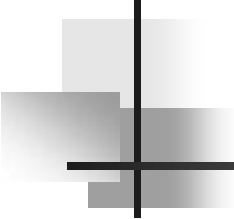


In our work

- Building an emotion coaching parenting intervention
 - Goals:
 - Reduce problem behaviors in children
 - Improve the quality of the parent-child relationship
 - Builds trust
 - Sets the stage for intimacy
 - Conveys to child that parent is on their side
 - Increase children's emotional competence
 - Teach children how to self-soothe
 - Approach:
 - Skills-based approach
 - Leads to changes in parenting behavior

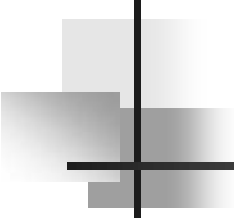


Overview of Emotion Coaching Program



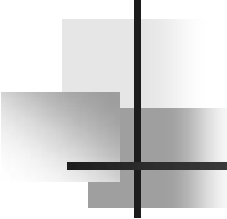
Overview of Emotion Coaching Parenting Program

- Week 1: Introduction
 - Introductions, goal-setting
- Weeks 2 & 3: Mother's Awareness of Emotion
 - Expanding emotion vocabulary; labeling emotion
 - Identifying behavioral expressions of emotion



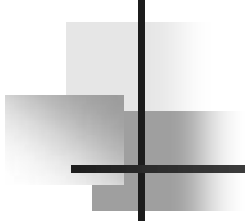
Overview of Emotion Coaching Parenting Program (cont'd)

- Weeks 4-6: Mother's Acceptance of Emotion and Emotion Regulation Abilities
 - Identifying self-soothing strategies (proximal and distal strategies)
 - Becoming aware of own reactions to child's emotions



Overview of Emotion Coaching Parenting Program (cont'd)

- Weeks 7-11: Emotion Coaching
 - Acknowledge and validate child feelings
 - Accepting emotions without defensiveness and personalization
 - Active listening
 - Soothing: Providing calm, comfort and understanding
 - Dealing with an angry child
 - Talking about the abuse and the abuser
- Week 12: Wrap Up



Sample Exercises