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The Connect® Program: What We Know So Far

Marlene M. Moretti, Rachelle A. Yu, & Stephanie G. Craig
Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada

BACKGROUND
- Adolescence is a sensitive developmental period, highlighted by vulnerability to the onset of serious mental health problems
- There is strong evidence for the protective role of attachment security during adolescence
- Attachment in adolescence looks different: teens strive to manage on their own and will not necessarily turn to their parent as frequently than in childhood
- Attachment security can be promoted through parental sensitivity, reflective functioning, cooperation and shared partnership
- Several attachment-based interventions exist for parents of infants and young children (i.e., Video Feedback Intervention, Circle of Security, Attachment and Bio-Behavioral Catch-Up Intervention), but few of these programs exist for parents of adolescents

WHAT IS CONNECT®?
- A program designed for parents and caregivers of pre-teens and teens (ages 8-18 years) who may experience significant behavior problems and comorbid mental health problems
- A manualized 10-session (1.5 hours per session) group of 10-14 parents led by two leaders
- Pre-engagement component using motivational interviewing to address treatment barriers
- Integrates experiential exercises such as roleplays and reflective questions to discuss adolescence, attachment and parenting
- Program evaluation and research is integrated into the program

EFFECTIVENESS OF CONNECT
- Effectiveness at the development site (i.e., The Maples Adolescent Treatment Centre)
Following the program, parents and teens experienced reductions in aggressive behavior, conduct problems, internalizing problems, parenting strain, conflict tactics between parent and teen, and increases in parenting satisfaction & efficacy and teen affect regulation.

Effectiveness in community practice
- CONNECT IN SWEDEN
- Two-year Findings from a National Effectiveness Trial: Effectiveness of behavioral and non-behavioral parenting programs on children’s externalizing behaviors.
- Högström, Olofsson, Özdömer, Enebrink & Stattin (in progress)
- Compared outcomes four parenting programs (Comet, Incredible Years, Cope and Connect; N=908)
- Although some differences were noted between programs, all parenting programs produced significant reductions in child behavior problems and significant increases in parent functioning.

CONNECT IN ITALY
- Prevention study of families drawn from local schools, randomized trial with non-clinical sample. 147 mothers and 147 youths, aged 11-14. Compared with youth in comparison condition, those of parents who completed the Connect program reported significantly lower frequency of beer consumption (d = -.55) and wine consumption (d = -.44). The intervention also marginally decreased the level of non-empathic answers from parents, at least in the short term (d = -.32).

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CONNECTION IN CHILDREN
- Preventive program to reduce the onset and severity of serious mental health problems in children and families
- Includes peer group sessions, family sessions, and parenting education components
- Focuses on building parenting skills and reducing behavioral problems

CONNECTION IN YOUTH
- Skilled counseling sessions with caregivers to support youth in the program
- Youth participate in group sessions focused on coping skills, social skills, and problem-solving

CONNECTION IN FAMILIES
- Family therapy sessions to address any concerns or issues that may arise during the program
- Emphasis on improving communication and cooperation between parents and youth

CONNECTION IN COMMUNITY
- Collaboration with local community organizations to promote the program and provide resources
- Use of evidence-based practices to improve program effectiveness

CONNECTION IN RESEARCH
- Continuous evaluation and research to ensure program effectiveness and make necessary adjustments
- Collaboration with academic and research institutions to advance the field of parenting and mental health treatment