

Name: A Group Intervention for the Enhancement of Mothers' Mediation Abilities: Effects on Quality of Mother-Child Interaction and Maternal Self-Image.

Written by: Anat Avrutzky

Carried out under the supervision of: Prof. Pnina Klein, Dr. Ariela Waniel and Dr. Nurit Jaegermann.

Abstract:

The objective of the current study was to assess the MISC (More Intelligent and Sensitive Child) a parenting group intervention. The MISC program was designed to promote mothers' mediation ability when interacting with their children. In the past few years there's been a growing interest in early intervention programs designed to change and improve early childhood outcomes. The majority of these early intervention programs focus on improving the parent-child relationship. The MISC early intervention model thrives to improve the quality of mother-child interactions, combining emotional, mediational and also communication factors together (Klein, 1996; 2000). In the current pilot study, we examined the effects of a MISC early intervention program, delivered for the first time in a group format, on the quality of interaction between mothers and their young children and on the mothers' maternal self-image.

The research group consisted of 18 mother-child dyads. Nine mother- child dyads participated in the MISC intervention program and nine mother- child dyads were a control group. The MISC intervention consisted of six group meetings during a two-month period. Four of the meetings involved only the mothers and included lectures on the MISC approach, using video demonstrations. Two additional meetings were for both the mothers and their children, including a "hands on" practice with the instructors. In the general developmental guidance mothers met the instructors twice with their children, receiving only developmental feedback regarding their children.

Both at Pre intervention and post intervention, all mother-child dyad participated in a videotaped 10 minute free-play interaction in order to assess their mediating (teaching) behaviors and communication behaviors. In addition, mothers completed a questionnaire in order to assess their maternal self-image. It was hypothesized that differences would be found between the two groups in the level of improvement in mothers' quality of interaction, regarding emotional, mediational and communicational behaviors. Furthermore, it has been hypothesized that there would be an improvement in the research group mothers' self-image following the group intervention- that would not be present in the control group.

Analysis of the mother-child interaction showed significant differences in only some of the variables that were tested. A significant difference was found between the research groups regarding the improvement in the general emotional atmosphere in the interaction filmed post intervention. Regarding the communicational behaviors, a significant difference was found only with regard to the average length of communication chain and not in other communicational behaviors: initiation and blockage of communication chains, and missed mediation oppertunities. The findings regarding the mediational behaviors showed a significant difference only in mediation of meaning and not in the other mediational variables: Focusing, expantion, feelings of competence and regulation of behavior. Finally, it's been found that mothers who took part in the group intervention program did not show a significant difference in the improvement in maternal self esteem.

The current study's findings suggest that it might be possible to use the MISC approach in a group format, maintaining some of its positive outcomes. These findings may have important future implications, and can greatly contribute to the development of future early childhood intervention programs. Nevertheless, the

current study is a pilot study, and as such, requires further testing on a greater number of subjects, and further studies in order to better assess the use of a group format and its outcomes.