
EVALUATION AND EXPLORATION OF THE PERCEIVED VALUE OF THE “HELPING DIVORCED PARENTS TO BENEFIT ADOLESCENT CHILDREN” PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to evaluate and explore the subjective experiences of parents who participated in the “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children” enrichment programme. A qualitative approach with a phenomenological research design was followed. Participants were selected by convenience sampling and included twelve divorced custodial parents of adolescents who attended the four-week programme. Content analysis was done and themes were extracted from the data. The main themes that emerged from the interpretations were: Positive group experience (value of shared experience and support in the group context); Co-parenting challenges (relationship with former spouse remained challenging); Feelings of guilt and self-blame (for their children’s post-divorce adjustment); Parent’s own personal needs not met (causing frustration); Positive post-divorce and programme outcomes. The general evaluation of the programme was positive and recommendations to improve the programme were made. It was concluded that a group intervention programme for parents can contribute towards positive change in parenting adolescents after parental divorce.

Key words:

adolescents, divorced parents, programme evaluation

INTRODUCTION

Although the importance of parental influence on the adjustment of children after parental divorce is well recognised, most post-divorce intervention programmes for children work exclusively with the children (Crawford, Riffe, Trevisan and Adesope, 2014; Pedro-Caroll, 2005; Dawson-McClure, Sandler, Wolchick and Millsap, 2004; Geelhoed, Blaisure and Geasler, 2001). However, intervention with parents seems to be the ideal way to help children to adjust after parental divorce, because of the many protective factors and environmental stressors that are in within the parents' control (Pedro-Caroll, Nakhnikian and Montes, 2001). Research has consistently shown that children who experience parental divorce are at increased risk of mental health and social adjustment problems (Macie and Stolberg, 2003; Amato, 2000; Krishnakumar and Buehler, 2000). Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee (2000) point out that the consequences of parental divorce increase during late adolescence when fears arise that their own adult relationships will fail. Brief programmes for custodial parents, consisting of support, educational and problem-solving components, can provide the opportunity to help divorced parents understand and cope better with their adolescent children (Sigal, Sandler, Wolchik and Braver, 2011; Hulett, 2004). Several researchers (Feng and Fine, 2000; Stone Clarke and McKenry, 2000) have emphasised the importance of group intervention, as the nature of a group can help people to normalise their situation and develop a mutually supportive and safe environment where they can share concerns and experiences.

Sigal et al., (2011) emphasise how important it is to evaluate these parental programmes to determine the impact of the intervention on various aspects of parent and child functioning and adjustment. Conflicting results regarding the value of enrichment programmes for divorced parents are found in literature. However, the overall assessment of most programmes seems promising and there was some improvement in almost all of the evaluation measures chosen (McIntosh, Burke and Gridley, 2009; Brown, 2008; Bacon and McKenzie, 2004; Goodman, Bonds, Sandler and Braver, 2004; Mackinnon and Kerry, 2000). Although the outcomes of most programmes are positive, there are some exceptions. Douglas (2004) did not report improved parental adjustment or improved amount of non-residential parent-child contact. Homrich, Glover and White (2004) found no reduction in inter-parental conflict. Brandon (2006) and Sonnenblick (2001) found that divorcing spouses showed no difference in hostility, conflict, competition or cooperation after intervention when compared to those in the control groups.

THE “HELPING DIVORCED PARENTS TO BENEFIT ADOLESCENT CHILDREN” ENRICHMENT PROGRAMME

The “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children” programme is a group enrichment programme aimed at educating, supporting and sensitising divorced parents in groups to the unique challenges of their adolescent children. It consists of four sessions and is a multi-component theory-based programme for divorced parents with adolescent children developed by Basson (2013).

The conceptual framework of the programme is based on the multi-modal theory of Lazarus (1997). He emphasises a holistic approach to intervention and refers to five interactive dimensions of functioning, called modalities. When a significant problem in one modality is successfully modified, a ripple effect may mitigate difficulties in other modalities. The programme addresses five dimensions of personal adjustment, education and support, namely: social, affective, cognitive, behavioural and philosophical dimensions. The social component provides emotional support in the same manner as a support group and provides the opportunity for parents to share similar life experiences, reduce feelings of uniqueness while supporting mutual problem solving. The affective component focuses on the emotions and experiences of parents in the post-divorce parenting role and aims at assisting group members to express and share common feelings. The cognitive component includes information about the unique challenges that adolescents face after parental divorce. The behavioural component comprises of teaching communication and listening skills as well as various coping strategies. The last component, the philosophical, encourages participants to discover and find meaning in the divorce for themselves and their children.

Custodial parents attend the programme for four consecutive weeks. Each session lasts approximately two hours. All sessions strive to provide a safe environment for parents in which to share their experiences, feelings and challenges within a group context. A summary of the goals, activities and outcomes of the programme is presented in Table 1 on the following page.

Table 1: Summary of the goals, activities and outcomes of the "Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children" enrichment programme (Basson, 2013)

	GOALS	ACTIVITIES	OUTCOMES
Session 1: Educational focus	<p>Clarify purpose, rules and expectations</p> <p>Establish a supportive group environment</p> <p>Educate parents about normal adolescent development</p> <p>Explain common reactions of adolescents to parental divorce</p> <p>Explain unique problems of adolescent children of divorce</p>	<p>Group exercise to clarify expectations of participants</p> <p>‘Get acquainted’ exercise</p> <p>Starting to share mutual experiences</p> <p>Discussions and hand-outs of Erikson’s “Identity vs. role confusion” developmental stage</p> <p>Information about individual experiences, and discussion</p> <p>Education of parents and invitation to share personal experiences</p> <p>Vignette discussion “Divorce and your Family”</p>	<p>Understand confidentiality and rules of the group.</p> <p>Have a clear idea of what to expect from the programme</p> <p>Establish group cohesion</p> <p>Know that others have similar experiences</p> <p>Understand normal adolescent development and behaviour</p> <p>Understand the way adolescents experience and react to parental divorce</p> <p>Understand the wide range of challenges for adolescents after parental divorce</p>
Session 2: Psychological coping	<p>Provide guidelines to support adolescent children with the unique challenges following parental divorce</p>	<p>Explanation of the six psychological tasks of adolescent children of divorce: Wallerstein (1983). Vignette to address topics of blame, finances, trust, getting married, anger, parental dating and increased</p>	<p>Understand divorce-related problems unique to adolescent children of divorce</p> <p>Acquire knowledge and skills to deal with challenges commonly experienced by adolescent children of divorce</p>

	Establish the importance of effective listening	responsibilities Practice and role play of effective listening skills (reflection, sending I-messages)	Become skilled in active listening
Session 3: Parenting styles and conflict resolution	Explain different parenting styles and the effects thereof on adolescents Demonstrate conflict resolution and effective communication	Questionnaire to identify own parenting style Role play of conflict resolution and effective communication skills	Understand the effects of different parenting styles Develop effective conflict resolution and communication skills
Session 4: The co-parental relationship	Explain the importance of healthy co-parenting	Discussion of strategies to build a good co-parenting relationship Strategies to avoid and resolve conflict with the former spouse	Establish and maintain a good co-parenting relationship Resolve conflict in a constructive manner
Session 5: Parental dating, step-families, finding meaning in the divorce and termination	Provide information on the effect on adolescents of parental dating and remarriage Find meaning in the divorce event Prepare parents for the termination of the group	Explanation of and guidelines for parental dating, remarriage and stepfamilies Exercise to encourage parents to find meaning and positive outcomes after the divorce Discuss the path forward without the group support	Understand the complexities of how adolescents experience parental dating, remarriage and stepfamilies Explore and appreciate the positive aspects that have resulted from the divorce Develop enriched parenting skills

A brief description of the content of the programme follows:

Session 1: Education focus

The main focus of the first session is to educate parents about the typical behaviours of adolescents, including the developmental tasks according to Erikson (1982). Parents are informed about what to expect, what normal and acceptable behaviour is and how to deal with developmental issues as they arise. This is followed by an explanation of the manner in which adolescents experience parental divorce, and the unique challenges and feelings with which they have to deal.

Session 2: Psychological coping

Key aspects of session 2 include preparing parents to support their children in dealing with the developmental tasks of adolescent children of divorce (Wallerstein, Lewis and Blakeslee, 2000). These tasks include: acknowledging the reality of the divorce, disengaging from parental conflict, resolution of loss, resolving anger and self-blame, accepting the permanence of the divorce and achieving realistic hopes for future relationships.

Session 3: Parenting styles and conflict resolution

Good parent-adolescent communication leads to a sense of independence in adolescents and, at the same time, increases bonds of affection and closeness between parent and child. Communication is a critical aspect of family life that affects the quality of the relationship between the parents and the children and the healthy functioning of both individual family members and the family as a whole. Parents are made aware of the relationship between criticism and self-esteem. Conflict resolution skills are explained, discussed and practised.

Session 4: The co-parental relationship

Conflict between ex-spouses is one of the most common problems parents experience after divorce. The intense emotions of divorce often cloud parents' views and rationality. Parents are assured that these reactions are natural, but the devastating consequences of parental conflict for the children are highlighted and discussed. Parents can be taught to find constructive ways of handling their inevitable disagreements and disputes following divorce. By becoming aware of the factors that relate to divorce and children's coping

and adjustment, parents can be empowered to do their best to prevent, or at least minimise, negative implications of divorce for their children.

Session 5: Parental dating and stepfamilies

Many adolescents believe it is wrong for their parents to enter into new romantic relationships. It is unusual for parent and child to be on the same footing, in the same phase, doing the same things for the same reasons. Children derive a sense of security from knowing that their parents have already experienced the things they are currently experiencing. Guidelines are given on how to handle the complex roles of dating, remarriage and stepfamilies. Finally, parents are encouraged to find potential meaning in the divorce for the sake of their children and their relationship with their children.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The general aim of this research was to evaluate and explore the perceived value of the “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children” enrichment programme for divorced parents who attended the programme.

Objectives were:

- To obtain in-depth information about the meanings and subjective experiences of parents who attended the programme.
- To determine the perceived value of the programme to the participants.

RESEARCH METHODS

A qualitative approach with thematic content analysis was followed, in an effort to understand participants’ perspectives on how they experienced the programme. Thematic content analysis is a descriptive presentation of qualitative data. Qualitative data may take the form of interview transcripts collected from research participants, or other identified texts that reflect experientially on the topic of study. In essence, thematic content analysis is about discovering themes and concepts embedded in interviews (Babbie and Mouton, 2010).

Participants

An invitation was placed in the local newspaper explaining the nature of the study, inviting divorced, custodial parents with adolescent children to attend

the “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit their Adolescent Children” enrichment programme. A total of twelve divorced, custodial mothers, aged between 36 and 44 years, with adolescent children (aged between 13 and 18 years) responded and they all met the inclusion criteria. The participants had been divorced between six months and three years. All participants attended and completed the programme presented by the researcher.

Data collection

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted individually with participants two weeks after completion of the four-week programme. The general research question addressed to participants was:

“I want you to share your personal experience of the group programme and the meanings and value you derived from it. Feel free to share your thoughts and emotions, both positive and negative aspects”.

Each interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes and was audio-recorded with the written consent of participants.

The researcher paid attention to the different elements of an interviewing process (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006; Whitley, 2001). Rapport between the researcher and the participants was well established during the four weeks of programme attendance and participants felt at ease sharing their experiences and perceptions during the interviews; Respondents were motivated to speak openly by emphasising the importance of the interview and the importance of honesty in the process; The researcher listened analytically and identified inadequate, incomplete and irrelevant responses and, where needed, probed for elaboration and clarification; To increase the reliability of the study, the researcher attempted to influence the participants as little as possible.

Data analysis

The transcribed data were analysed through thematic content analysis. A theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data. In the context of this study, the thematic content analysis rests on the assumption that the participants have beliefs and opinions about their experience of attending the enrichment programme. The researcher followed the steps of analysis as suggested by Geertz (as cited in Blanche, Durheim and Painter, 2006). The steps include familiarisation with and immersion in the data; inducting themes by coding of the data; and

elaboration and interpretation of the data by using final thematic categories as sub-headings.

To ensure the validity of the research, every effort was made to ensure that the participants' viewpoints, thoughts, intentions and experiences were accurately understood and reported (Struwig and Stead, 2007). Emphasis was placed on the participants' perspective and language rather than on the researchers' interpretations and terminology. Thus, the investigation was transparent and explicit (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Credibility and trustworthiness of the study was established by triangulating the researcher's interpretations with those of the participants (Babbie and Mouton, 2010). An independent evaluator also examined the data to confirm results.

Ethical considerations

The study protocol was approved by the Research and Ethics Committee of the University of Limpopo. All participants agreed, in writing, that they clearly understood the nature of the research, its benefits and disadvantages. Participants were assured that no names would be communicated that could link any individual to the data once the results had been reported. Therapeutic counselling for participants was available where a need was expressed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following themes emerged from the analysis: Positive group experience; Co-parenting challenges; Feelings of guilt and self-blame; Parent's own personal needs not met; Positive post-divorce and programme outcomes.

Positive group experience

The most significant function of intervention groups is that they provide emotional and social support that evolves within the context of shared problems. Group cohesiveness provides a sense of belonging and reduces feelings of isolation. It provides a space where participants can compare, mirror and model experiences and behaviour (Yalom and Lesz, 2005). Once the group has worked through the initial stages, members share their own personal concerns and the group activity becomes stronger, incorporating more interaction, feedback and modelling of behaviour. Yalom (1995:12) describes one of the most powerful elements of the therapy group as "receiving through giving".

Participants in the programme confirmed the value of groups as described in the literature. Many parents mentioned that it was comforting to know that other parents also experience the same challenges and commented that they valued the support from other group members. The group normalised their situation and behaviour, as expressed by one participant, a recently divorced mother:

“We all have so much in common and supported each other” and “It seems as if we all experience the same things”.

Although group members did not always share exactly the same situation, similar responses and experiences were observed. Participants said they experienced decreased vulnerability, a psychological sense of comfort and a sense that information from other parents provided knowledge, advice and feedback. Many mothers commented on the fact that it was comforting to realise that most children behaved the same after parental divorce, and that their children were no exception. One mother of a 15-year-old girl, commented:

“At first I was scared to share my self-doubts about the way I handle my child but was soon able to raise many concerns without the fear of being rejected or frowned upon by others. People not in the same situation judge the way divorced people try the best for their children whilst they have no idea of our uncertainties and fears if we are doing the right thing”.

Participants further shared the feeling that they received support and advice from other group members, confirming Yalom’s (1995:12) statement about “receiving through giving.” For Yalom, clients’ helping, supporting and commenting on their fellow group members is a healing experience, because they have moved beyond themselves and engaged themselves in other people’s experiences of life. As one mother indicated:

“In this group for the first time I found understanding and support and the realisation that what I am doing for my child is okay”.

It is not so much the direct advice that was valuable but the indirect implication of sharing and caring between group members that allowed for healing. They accepted others in a non-judgemental way. New coping methods were explored in a safe environment.

At the end of the programme participants expressed a sense of cohesiveness and they exchanged contact details with the aim of continuous support.

Co-parenting challenges

Continued access to both parents is generally viewed as a desirable post-divorce outcome, except when parents remain in chronic conflict with each other (Crawford et al., 2014; Brown, 2008). Studies further indicate that the relationship of the non-custodial parent with both the former spouse and the child is a critical factor in the child's adjustment and self-esteem (Velez, Wolchik and Sandler, 2011). An overwhelming amount of research reports on the challenges of co-parenting and the difficulties arising from continuous conflict with former spouses, even after intervention where parents were educated on the harm in inter-parental conflict. Many studies report negative findings regarding pre- and post-intervention of co-parenting (Sigal et al., 2011; Basson, Pretorius and Arndt, 2008; Cookston, Braver, Griffin, Deluse and Miles, 2007).

Most participants in this study continued to blame and criticise their spouses, even after attending the enrichment programme. Some viewed the other parent as non-caring and irresponsible while the self was seen as essential, responsible and a competent caretaker. It seemed as if the enrichment programme did little to change participants' attitudes, although most of them reported a continued effort and willingness to change the ways in which they interacted with their former spouses around the children. They reported a better understanding and self-knowledge with regard to inter-parental conflict, including self-reports of the conflict behaviour of non-participating former spouses.

The least valuable aspect of the programme was reported to be the section dealing with conflict resolution with the former spouse. The information made intellectual sense to participants, but they seemed to find it difficult, if not impossible, to implement the knowledge gained during the programme. One of the participants shared:

"I had such good intentions of trying to be civil to my ex after we discussed this topic in the group, but the moment I saw him and his new woman I completely shut down and ignored her when he tried to introduce me. At least I managed not to say something rude".

Learning to manage conflict with a former spouse seems to be too emotional an issue to address successfully in the short term and possibly even in the long term, even though the parents were made very aware of the negative consequences of parental conflict for the children. They stated that it was sometimes impossible not to argue and fight in the presence of the children:

“I get so angry at him and sometimes find it impossible not to fight in front of the children”.

They usually blamed the other parent for the conflict and stated that they had to defend themselves even if it was in the presence of the children. Many of the participants continued to vent pent-up feelings of anger and frustration about their former spouses after completion of the programme:

“I want him to know what he is doing to his daughter by rejecting her, financially and emotionally”.

It seems that participants did not identify with the conflict resolution skills taught in this programme. It might have been viewed as too idealistic, unreal and aimed too much at perfection. The reality of the couple’s own painful situation compared to being the perfect divorced couple might have contributed to participants not finding this section valuable. It is further suggested that parents should first resolve their own emotional problems regarding the former spouse in individual therapy before being exposed to conflict resolution skills training.

Feelings of guilt and self-blame

Research findings indicate that many parents experience feelings of parental guilt and self-blame after their divorce, especially if they are the parent who had initiated the divorce (Crawford et al., 2014; Bonach and Sales 2002). They question their parenting skills, as well as doubting their children’s forgiveness, and are concerned about the possible negative impact that the divorce may have had on their children. These feelings of guilt intensify when parents start dating, which suggests that, while they are able and ready to move on with their lives, their children may still be struggling with the consequences of the divorce (Sigal et al., 2011).

Parental dating is especially challenging for adolescents, as it is the period when they have to come to terms with their own sexuality (Wallerstein et al., 2000). It often leads to anxiety, and adolescents may act very protectively towards their parent and may not accept the new partner with whom their parent shares an intimate relationship (Bacon and McKenzie, 2004).

The information session regarding the possible long- and short-term consequence that the divorce may have for their children was both enlightening and disturbing for participants. Blaming themselves for the hurt

and suffering of their children seemed to be one of the major disturbing experiences that they shared. One participant in particular struggled with this:

“After the session where you explained the possible consequences of divorce for children, I was devastated, as I recognised everything you spoke of in my daughter. It was hard to realise that the divorce may affect her for the rest of her life. I think I tried to deny it, to convince myself that it was for the best for both of us. How could I have deprived her of her dad? But I can’t turn back the clock. It was only after the session where we had to find the positive outcomes that I realised some good came out of it as well; that we have to move forward with the new insight and knowledge. I really try very hard to do so”.

Some expressed feelings of guilt about not realising sooner how divorce could potentially affect the children. A mother of 16-year-old twins commented:

“The more I heard about the possible consequences the more guilt I experienced. I would have done so many things differently had I known this earlier. But I was so focused on my own pain during and directly after the divorce. I had to cope with so many adjustments. Looking back I think they were the stronger ones who tried to support me. Sometimes I think they are more mature than me and their dad”.

Another participant, who had started dating, expressed feelings of guilt about exploring new relationships:

“I realise only now that I started to behave like a teenager myself as I started dating, and how it must have embarrassed and confused her. After all, it was her time to fall in love and share with me, not the other way around”.

Parent’s own personal needs not met

Donigian and Malnati (1997) describe the therapy group as a process that follows certain stages. The emotional tone of a group becomes more compassionate and accepting as the group grow in their self-assurance and as trust and respect develop. The group members begin to address their own personal needs and to accommodate the personal needs of other members, and the task at this stage is to share and to allow a sense of bonding. The “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit their Adolescent Children” programme attempts to do away with the sense that participants are unique in their experience and that no one can identify with their feelings, which creates feelings of social isolation. It is clear that during the group process,

the personal needs of participants should be addressed, as this provides a powerful source of relief (Yalom, 1995).

Given the structured nature of the “Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit their Adolescent Children” programme, participants indicated that they experienced a need to explore personal matters of importance further but that the opportunity did not always arise during sessions. Parents often informally continued the discussions after the group meetings, and one parent explained:

“The programme was too full of information and I think it should be more unstructured, or more time should have been allowed for discussions on what problems we experience”.

Parents also shared that they were often exposed to highly emotional post-divorce matters during sessions, which they still had to resolve within themselves. Many of the women were therefore in need of individual intervention afterwards to address unresolved matters from the past, although they came to the group with the intention to help their children.

Positive post-divorce and programme outcomes

The enrichment programme also included a philosophical component in which parents were encouraged to identify positive divorce outcomes. Victor Frankl (1969:11) emphasised the fact that finding meaning in a painful past event can help individuals to move on and that “... in some ways suffering ceases to be suffering at the moment it finds a meaning, such as the meaning of a sacrifice.”

During the post-intervention interviews most participants could share positive divorce and post-programme outcomes, especially regarding the improved relationships with their children. Parents reported that their children were engaging in more open communication with them regarding divorce-related issues and demonstrated improved stress handling, as one participant indicated:

“We communicate better and she shares more personal issues” and “I learnt a lot and do not fall into the trap of participating in conflict with her”.

Most participants mentioned that they were spending more quality time with their children and that their relationship had become closer after the divorce. Many mentioned that they shared a more relaxed atmosphere at home. They also reported that their children became more responsible, mature and independent than before the divorce.

Most parents reported that they could intervene proactively to help their children deal better with emotions and challenges after attending the enrichment programme. They generally felt more positive about their single-parenting skills and expressed the feeling that they had derived hope, inspiration and guidance from other members. All parents indicated that they felt good about the programme in general, regarded it as helpful, and felt that “... *it should be made compulsory*”.

All participants said that their expectations had been met. A mother of twins stated:

“It was an emotional journey and learning experience for me. It gave me so much knowledge and insight into my child. I wish I had attended this immediately after the divorce”.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE PROGRAMME FURTHER

The feedback of the participants resulted in several recommendations to improve the programme:

All participants complained that four weeks was too little time. Even though each session was two hours long, parents were reluctant to leave the group sessions and continued discussions after the sessions had ended. More sessions, of shorter duration, might address this matter.

The programme should provide more opportunities for discussion and the sharing of individual experiences and the needs of parents. Responses to their perceived needs empower parents, and they may feel more optimistic about the possibility of change. To improve future parent programmes, a session to exclusively address the needs of the parents could be included.

The section on inter-parental conflict should be more realistic and practical. Instead of discussing the ideal co-parenting relationships, deliberations should be more realistic and aimed at empowering participants and encouraging them to disengage from the conflict and emotions.

LIMITATIONS

Several factors limit the generalisation of the findings of this study. The sample included a relatively small number of participants. The fact that the researcher presented the programme may have influenced participants to

provide positive evaluations. Subjectivity in the transformation of data could not be totally prevented because the researcher's interpretations of meanings may have been different from what was originally meant by participants. To assess the long-term impact of this research, follow-up studies are needed to determine the extent to which the positive short-term outcome will last.

CONCLUSIONS

The theory-based "Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children" programme is aimed at educating, supporting and sensitising divorced parents to the challenges of their adolescent children. All five domains of human functioning, namely the social, affective, cognitive, behavioural and philosophical domains (Lazarus (1997), were addressed in the programme.

The evaluation of the programme by parents indicated that participants were generally positive and enthusiastic about the programme, and all agreed that the programme had helped them. They indicated that they had subsequently implemented changes in their interaction and communication with their children, but found it hard to follow the recommendations regarding conflict resolution with the former spouse. Many of the themes which emerged from the analysis were about personal unresolved issues, suppressed emotions and fears expressed during sessions. The most valuable aspect of the intervention was identified as the group experience. The sharing of doubts, feelings and fears with other parents in similar situations was regarded as the most valuable aspect of the enrichment programme. The least valuable aspect reported was conflict resolution with former spouse. Even though the parents were made aware of the negative effects of parental conflict on the children, it seems to be too emotional an issue to change in the short term and possibly even in the long term.

It can be concluded that the "Helping Divorced Parents to Benefit Adolescent Children" programme can help to avert later, more serious adjustments of adolescents after parental divorce. Considering that social workers are often involved in matters concerning divorce and its consequences on family members, it is suggested that they would be in an ideal position to present the kind of programme that is evaluated in this study.

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