

USING CBPR TO DEVELOP PROGRAMMING TO REDUCE RELATIONAL AGGRESSION: LESSONS LEARNED

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 - **NIH R01MH075787**
 - **NIH R01HD094833**

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CENTER FOR VIOLENCE PREVENTION: WHAT WE DO

Vision

Be a *national leader* and *innovator* in violence prevention programming and research, supporting communities in which children, teens, and families can be safe and thrive.

Mission

- Reduce **exposure to & impact** of violence for youth & families
- Implement, disseminate & sustain **community-focused research and evidence-based programs**
 - Clinical, school & community settings
 - Rooted in social & racial justice, trauma-informed care

OVERVIEW OF CVP PILLARS: TEAM LEADERS



HOW IS CVP UNIQUE?

Research:

- Translational
- Integrated with programming



Compared to other Violence Prevention Centers:

- Pediatric focused center = prevention
- Partner with teachers, community orgs, families
- Emphasis on social justice & racial equity

OVERVIEW

- An Icebreaker
- Use of a CBPR Approach
- Rationale for the Development of Friend to Friend (F2F) Program
- Iterative Development through CBPR
- Systematizing Program & Initial Trials
- Recommendations for Youth, Parents, Teachers, and Counselors
- Top 10 Lessons Learned

ICEBREAKER

- **Do You Believe in Miracles?**
- **How about a Miracle that makes conducting research and programming in the schools easy, simple, and meaningful.....**

COMMUNITY-BASED PARTICIPATORY RESEARCH (CBPR):

- **What is CBPR:**
 - Combination of strong psychological theory and prior empirical research with feedback from key stakeholders
 - Ensures that resulting program is scientifically-grounded and responsive to the culture and needs of the school, community, or hospital setting....
- **Roots in applied anthropology & influenced by Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Approach**

KEY FEATURES OF CBPR

- **Partnership drives the project**
 - Non-hierarchical trusting relationships
 - Full involvement of community partners
 - Education of researcher and community partners
- **More broad goals than specific research**
 - Social change: Researcher only part of process
 - Links research to practice

KEY DIFFERENCES

Traditional Research

- Hypothesis-driven
- Researcher = Expert
- What drives the research?
 - Research question
 - Hypotheses
 - Researcher expertise

CBPR

- Hypothesis development
 - Collaborative hypotheses – relevant to the community
- Community Partner = expert of resources, culture & needs
 - Researcher = New learner, methods expert
- What drives the research?
 - Theory
 - Past research
 - Being responsive to partners & setting

ADVANTAGES OF USING CBPR

- **Ensure that programs are:**
 - Empirically-supported and grounded
 - Culturally sensitive
 - Developmentally appropriate
 - Sustainable
- **Ensure that communities:**
 - Properly respected for their strengths
 - Better understand the value of research
- **Ensure that researchers:**
 - Understand the impact of research
 - Respect the process of collaborative research

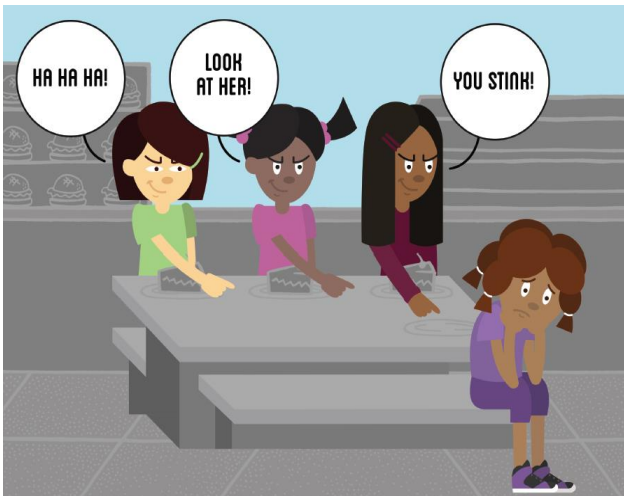
CHALLENGES WITH A CBPR APPROACH

- **Developing trusting relationships**
 - Community's past experiences with research
 - Recognizing immediate & sustainable needs
 - Demonstrating commitment and consistency
- **Time and energy**
- **Balancing academic demands (e.g., rigorous designs) with concrete deliverables**

AGGRESSION/BULLYING (IN LATE 1990S)

- 20-30% of students involved; 70-80% are bystanders (witnesses)
- Takes 3 main forms:

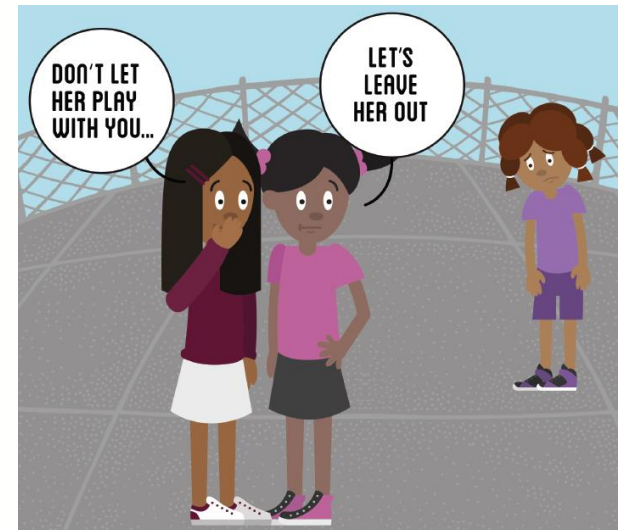
Verbal



Physical



Relational



OUTCOMES FOR AGGRESSORS/BULLIES

Physical Aggression

Serious Violence

Trouble Controlling Emotions

Problem-Solving Deficits

Academic Deficits

Peer Rejection

Relational/Social Aggression

Peer Rejection

Problem-Solving Deficits

Internalizing Difficulties

Many are also Physically Aggressive

Later Relationship Difficulties

Important Not to Overlook: Many relational aggressors are also quite popular & socially influential within the peer group

IMPORTANCE OF WORKING WITH STUDENTS FROM URBAN COMMUNITIES

- Lack of resources
- Accumulation of stressful events
- ↑ risk for emotional & behavioral problems
- Research on best practices in school-based aggression prevention (Leff et al., 2001) suggests the need to:
 - Define aggression broadly
 - Focus on prevention and early intervention
 - Develop & use culturally sensitive interventions
 - Design programs targeting unstructured school settings
 - Develop aggression prevention programs for girls

BUILDING SKILLS FOR AT-RISK GIRLS: DEVELOPMENT OF FRIEND TO FRIEND (F2F)

- **Prior Research**

- Based upon best practice
 - Anger Coping Program (Lochman, 1992)
 - Brain Power Program (Hudley & Graham, 1993)
- Why these programs?
 - Social-cognitive emphasis
 - School-based
 - Positive effects with urban African American physically aggressive boys
 - Highly promising programs (Leff et al., 2001)

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FRIEND TO FRIEND (F2F) PROGRAM



FRIEND TO FRIEND (F2F)

Designed for
relationally
aggressive girls in
urban schools

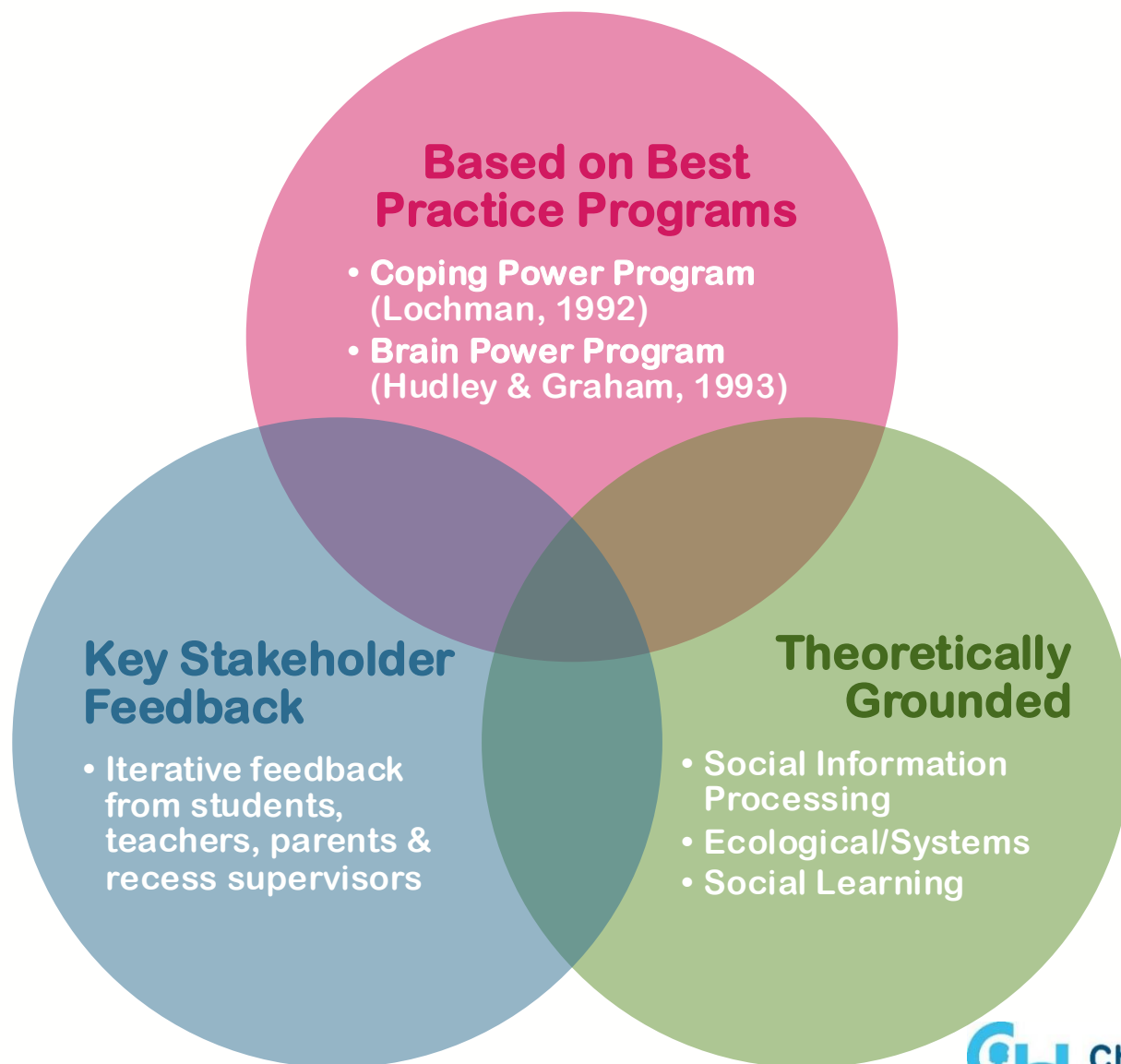
Appreciates that
aggression is
broad and
programs should
include relational

Developed for
elementary school
youth

Addresses
aggression at both
individual and
classroom levels

Considers
unstructured
school settings
where aggression
tends to occur

USE OF CBPR TO DESIGN F2F



USE OF CBPR TO DESIGN F2F

Key Stakeholder Feedback

- Iterative feedback from students, teachers, parents & recess supervisors

FRIEND TO FRIEND (F2F)

- For 3rd – 5th grade relationally aggressive girls
- Co-led by CHOP facilitator and teacher

20 small group sessions

- Twice a week during lunch-recess period
- 8-10 girls per group (6-8 aggressive girls, 2 prosocial role models)

10 accompanying classroom sessions

- Teacher-led with help from girls in F2F
- Prosocial leadership opportunity
- Program modalities of cartoons, videos, role plays

F2F STRATEGIES

- **Identify signs of physiological arousal**
- **Calm Yourself Down**
- **Figure out Why Something Happened. Was it Intentional?**
- **Can you Assume it was an Accident/Give others the benefit of the doubt?**

F2F STRATEGIES

- **Think through your Choices for Responding**
- **Can you use a Let it Slide Choice? (Ignore, Not make a big deal about it)**
- **Can you use a Say it Strong Choice (An assertive but not aggressive choice)**

F2F STRATEGIES

- **Identify Rumors**
- **Peer Group Entry**
 - **Use WALL – Wait And Look Listen**
 - **Use TAG – Talk About Game or Activity**

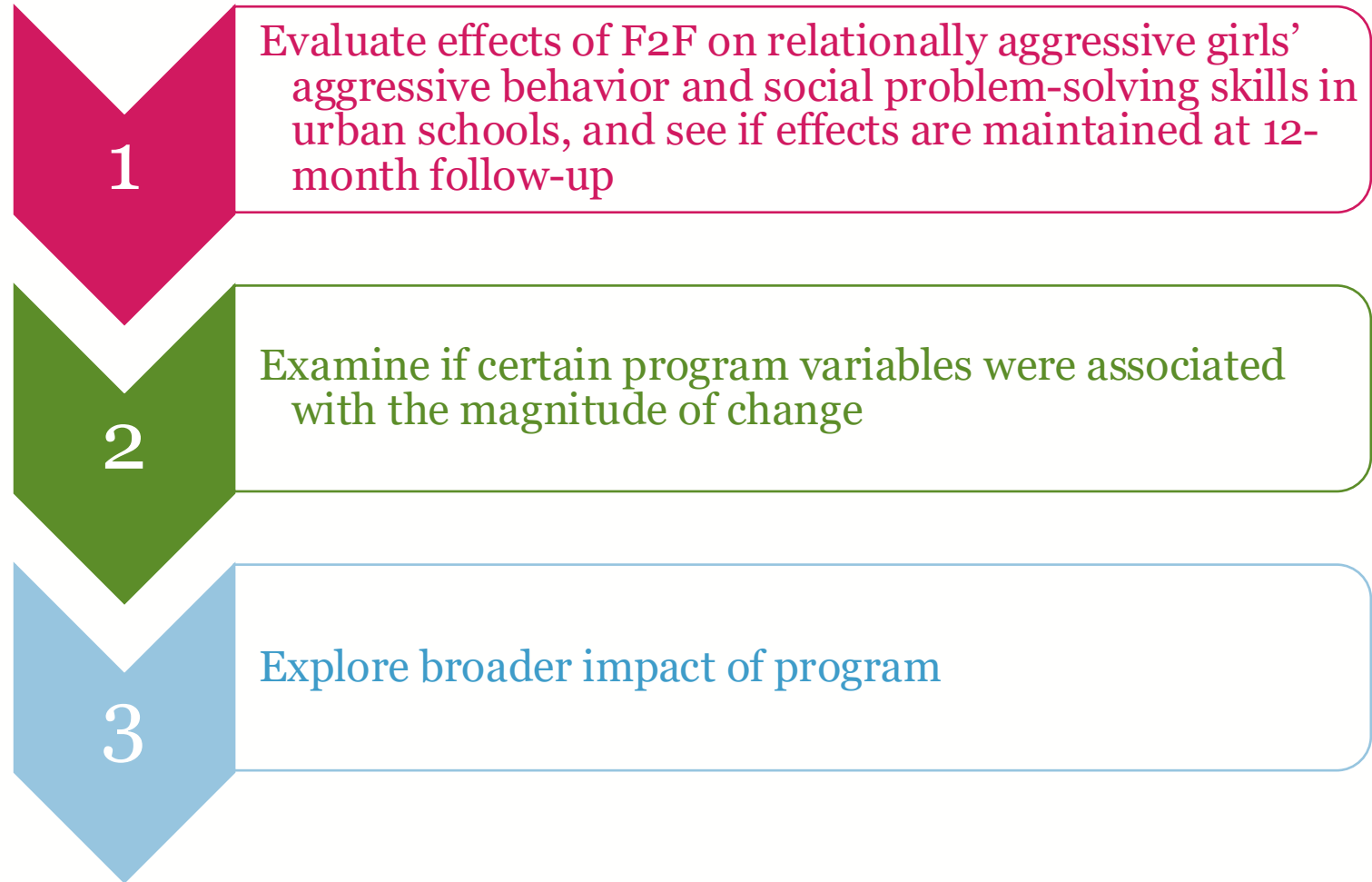
CLINICAL TRIAL OF FRIEND TO FRIEND

- Compares F2F to HSO (Homework, Study Skills, & Organization)
- Conducted across 6 schools
 - Elementary or K-8 school in SW region; >80% African American student body; at least 3 classrooms per grade; does not have other similar programming
- 1,044 3rd-5th grade consented students (73%)
- 144 girls selected for study if relationally aggressive (> 0.50 on peer noms for relational aggression)

Leff, S.S., Paskewich, B.S., Waasdorp, T.E., Waanders, C., Bevans, K.B., & Jawad, A.F.: Friend to Friend: A randomized trial for urban African American Relationally Aggressive Girls. Psychology of Violence, 5(4): 433-443, 2015 Notes: Published online: doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039724>.

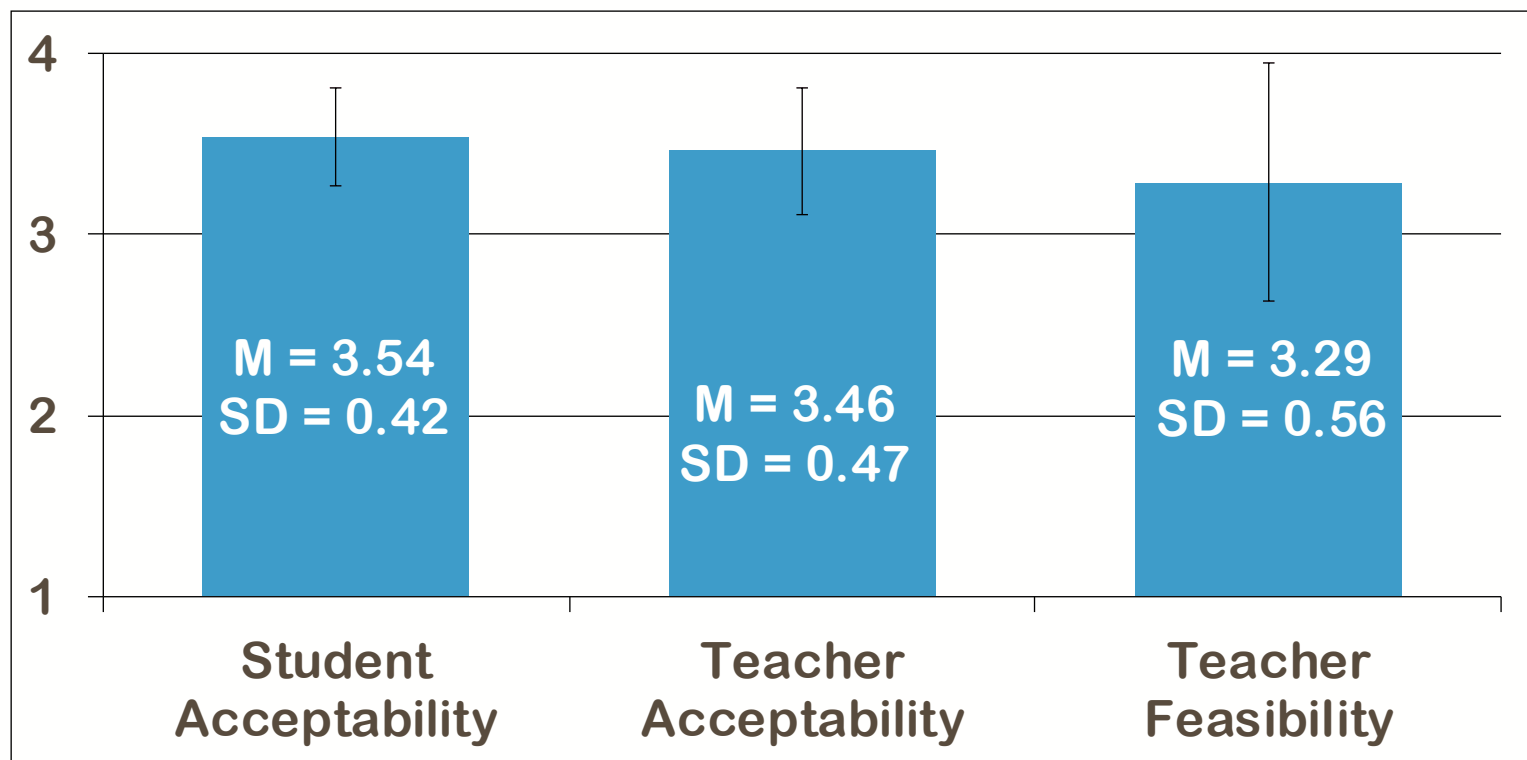
FUNDED BY NIH R01MH075787

AIMS



IMPLEMENTATION FACTORS

- Strong ratings for acceptability & feasibility



- Implementation Integrity
- Procedural integrity – 91%; Process integrity – 88%

PRIMARY FINDINGS OF F2F

(LEFF ET AL., 2015)

- Aggressive girls in F2F vs. HSO showed:
 - Improved problem-solving; **maintained one year later**

Measure	Condition	Pre (Mean, SD)	Post (Mean, SD)	ANCOVA	Effect Size
Problem Solving Knowledge	Intervention (n=71)	6.41 (2.62)	9.53 (2.77)	F = 18.6, p < 0.001	.88
	HSO (n=70)	6.98 (2.75)	7.02 (2.74)		

- Reductions in teacher ratings of aggression over the course of the year; **maintained one year later**

Measure	Condition	Pre (Mean, SD)	Post (Mean, SD)	ANCOVA	Effect Size
Relational Aggression (CSB)	Intervention (n=70)	2.99 (1.18)	2.72 (0.94)	F = 4.46, p < 0.05	-.37
	HSO (n=69)	3.17 (1.08)	3.05 (0.83)		

PRIMARY RESULTS

- Extremely strong student and teacher ratings for acceptability & feasibility
- Very strong ratings for Implementation Integrity
- Aggressive girls showed:
 - ↑ Improved problem-solving
 - ↓ Relational aggression

Both findings maintained one year later!

BROADER IMPACT

- Boys and Girls in F2F Classrooms

↑ positive friendships & being nice (peer report)

↑ teacher closeness (teacher report)

- Boys in F2F Classrooms

↓ ratings of rumor spreading, leaving others out, fighting & disruptive behaviors (peer report)

↓ teacher conflict scores post intervention (teacher report)

- Leff, S.S., Waasdorp, T.E., & Paskewich, B.: The broader impact of Friend to Friend (F2F): Effects on teacher-student relationships, prosocial behaviors, and relationally and physically aggressive behaviors. *Behavior Modification*, 40(4): 589-610, 2016.

AND IN GENERAL WE LEARNED...

Decreases in relational aggression were positively associated with greater engagement of teachers and higher implementation integrity

CONCLUSIONS

1st program to decrease relational aggression for aggressive girls in urban schools, with results maintained at 1 year follow-up

Additional positive impact:

- Teacher-student relationships
- Classroom levels of relational & physical aggression
- Aggressive Girls' Leadership



WHAT WE NOTICED & HOW WE SHIFTED OUR PROGRAMMING BECAUSE OF IT

- Build capacity of urban schools such that programs sustain after grant funding ends
- Research suggests that school-based programs are more effective when run by school staff (teacher, counselor)
- We conducted several pilot studies to implement our programs through a coaching & training model....

F2F WITH COACHING & TRAINING

* R01HD094833
(Leff, Waasdorp,
Paskewich)

- **Clinical Trial (NIH) 2019-2025**
 - Randomized, parallel-group, cluster-RCT across 39 schools: F2F vs standard educational practice
 - 14 small group sessions, 8 classroom lessons
 - Led by school-facilitator (with coaching/training)
 - Aggressive girls showed*:
 - Increased Knowledge of problem-solving steps*
 - Decreased Hostile attributional bias
 - Increased Leadership*
 - School Staff showed
 - Increased Self-Efficacy for Intervening

F2F WITH COACHING & TRAINING

* R01HD094833
(Leff, Waasdorp,
Paskewich)

Clinical Trial (NIH) 2019-2025

- Increases in knowledge of social problem solving and, especially leadership emerged as robust and consistent mediators of intervention effects across primary outcomes (Decreased relational aggression & Increased prosocial behavior)
- Waasdorp, T.E., Paskewich, B.S., Fu, & Leff, S.S. Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Coaching-Enhanced Friend-to-Friend Program. Forthcoming.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH, PARENTS, & PROVIDERS

- How can our empirically-based research inform practice?
- How can we best support youth, families and providers?

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH

When Bullying Happens, Involve an Adult

- Get help from teachers, parents, other adults
- Be clear what you need
- Keep trying
- Tell adults about bullying hotspots

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH

Ways to Avoid Bullying

- Surround yourself with support
- Avoid bullying hot-spots at school
- Find someone to share your feelings with

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH

Ways Youth can Manage Bullying

- Stay Calm
 - Count to 10
 - Slow deep breaths
 - Use visual imagery
 - Use positive self talk
- Pretend you don't care
- Share feelings with a safe adult

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH

Remember to Be a Good Friend to Others

- Invite others to join in activities
- Be a Positive Bystander
 - Don't encourage bullying
 - Reach out. Be nice to the victim
 - Tell a trusted adult
 - Don't pass on rumors, mean texts
- Be a Leader

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

- **Identify Warning Signs of Bullying & Victimization**
 - Changes in Eating or Sleeping
 - Headaches and Stomach Aches
 - Avoiding School &/or Declining Grades
 - Complaints about Classmates/Friends
 - Complaints about Lunch/Recess
 - Unexplained Bruises or Injuries

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

- Differentiate Conflicts from Bullying

- Remember – bullying is repeated aggressive behavior in the context of a power imbalance!
- Conflicts are teachable moments
- Bullying requires a more systematic approach

- Be a Positive Role Model

- Take all complaints seriously
- Listen to all sides of a conflict or bullying incident

All About Bullying Educational Fact Sheets

The All About Bullying Educational Fact Sheets were developed by experts at CHOP. Download and distribute them to families, youth, educators, and other groups with a stake in bullying prevention below.

- What Is Bullying?
- Cyberbullying
- Relational Bullying
- Getting Support at School
- Tips For Youth
- LGBTQ+ Youth-Related Bullying
- Weight-Related Bullying
- Bullying Due to Skin/Hair Conditions
- Helping Young Children Build Friendship Skills

[https://violence.chop.edu/
violence-prevention-
tools#fact-sheets](https://violence.chop.edu/violence-prevention-tools#fact-sheets)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

- **Teach Empathy Skills**

- Encourage feeling words in everyday conversations
- Practice good listening & reflecting exercises
- Encourage sharing & compromising
- Emphasize similarities with diverse peers
- Praise empathic comments & behaviors

- **Build Perspective-Taking Skills**

- Identify “teachable moments”
- Ask questions, e.g., “What do you think he/she is thinking?” “What would you be thinking if you were in this situation?”
- Point out the benefits of seeing both sides of a situation (even if you do not agree with both sides!)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

- **Promoting Positive Bystander Behaviors**

- When youth &/or adults ignore bullying, they are sending the message that Bullying Is OK
- Instead, everyone contributes to positive climate by:
 - Being inclusive
 - Demonstrating respect for diverse individuals
 - Develop trusting relationships between youth, parents & teachers
- There are many choices students have, including:
 - Supporting the victim
 - Asking adults for help
 - Encouraging others to support the victim
 - Refusing to laugh or pass on mean notes or texts
- The key is for youth to do something that is positive but also feels safe to them.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ADULTS

- **Promoting Children's Leadership Skills**
 - Find something the child is good at and look for opportunities to help them excel
 - Peer mentor
 - Peer tutor/reader
 - Sports or clubs
 - Reinforce when child demonstrates maturity, leadership, and/or kindness
 - Help children understand the social influence they may have

FOR PROVIDERS: ADDRESSING BULLYING

Take time to ask about students'/patients' experiences with peer aggression and bullying, both as perpetrators and victims

Questions to ask:

- How do you get along with other youth?
- Do you have good friends at school or in your neighborhood?
- Is there a lot of aggression and bullying at your school? Has it happened to you? If so, in what way?
- Are you ever aggressive to other kids at school?
- How long has it been going on?
- How have you handled it so far?
- Who knows about this?

FOR PROVIDERS: TEACHING PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS FOR ALL YOUTH

- Teach Youth Problem-Solving Skills including:
 - Identify how you are feeling
 - Knowing what your body warning signs are
 - Learning simple cool down strategies
 - Once calm, looking at the situation objectively
 - Give others the benefit of the doubt if at all possible
 - Think through your choices

HOW DO YOU DO THIS?

- **Enhancing Youth Problem-Solving Skills**
 - Slowing youth down and help them consider:
 - How did they feel as situation began?
 - What led to the problem?
 - What did each person contribute to the problem?
 - What were the child's choices in this situation?
 - What are the consequences associated with each choice?
 - Use modeling & role-playing related to staying calm & thinking through challenging situations
 - Reinforce youth's appropriate problem-solving steps

WORK WITH PARENTS ON NEXT STEPS

- Encourage youth/parent to report bullying to the school
- Identify adults who can help ensure the child's safety
- Encourage them to reach out to the teacher, counselor and principal
- Help family decide if the child would benefit from supportive counseling
- Encourage family to engage the child in positive activities and friendships outside of school

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: WHAT TO ASK OF THE SCHOOL

- An investigation!
- A written safety plan, naming one or two adults the child can check in with each day
- Environmental changes/interventions that could stop the bullying
 - Add supervision at bathroom or recess
 - Move seats in the lunchroom
 - Switch classroom for victim or bully
 - Arrange early dismissal to minimize contact
- Avoid holding a meeting between the bully and target of bullying. This cannot be mediated.

RESOURCES FOR REPORTING BULLYING

- Advise parents to gather evidence (e.g., photos, screenshots)
- Put concerns in writing as opposed to a phone call
- Log communication with school personnel (dates, content)
- If principal is not responsive, contact district's supervisor of Student Services or supervisor of Special Education Services, when relevant.
- If school is not taking action, provide parent with district phone numbers or state hotline
- Cyberbullying, Physical assaults, and Harassment based on disability, race, gender or sexual identity can be reported to the police

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

What have we learned from doing CBPR over the past 30 years?

What are the most crucial things to remember?

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

**#10 History is Real & Meaningful
even if it predates you
as an individual**

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#9 Share Power

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#8 Involve Community Partners at all Stages

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#7 Take a positive (as opposed to a deficit-based) approach

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

**#6 Be Transparent about
Expectations, Resources,
Dissemination, Funding
Breakdowns**

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#5: Compensate for Research & Community Expertise

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#4 Link Research to Practice

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#3 Ensure Meaningful Voice for Youth & Caregivers

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

**#2 Researchers need to
Understand the Constraints of
the School or Community**

TOP TEN LESSONS LEARNED

#1 Disseminate Findings in Meaningful Ways with the Community

RESEARCH ON F2F

- Leff SS, et al.: Using a participatory action research model to create a school-based intervention program for relationally aggressive girls: The Friend to Friend Program. *Bullying, Victimization, and Peer Harassment: Handbook of Prevention and Intervention in Peer Harassment, Victimization, and Bullying*. Zins J, Elias M, Maher C (eds.). Haworth Press, New York, Page: 199-218, 2007.
- Leff SS, Gullan RL, Paskewich BS, Abdul-Kabir S, Jawad AF, Grossman M, Munro, MA, Power TJ: An initial evaluation of a culturally-adapted social problem solving and relational aggression prevention program for urban African American relationally aggressive girls. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community* 37: 1-15, 2009.
- Leff, S.S., Paskewich, B.S., Waasdorp, T.E., Waanders, C., Bevans, K.B., & Jawad, A.F.: Friend to Friend: A randomized trial for urban African American Relationally Aggressive Girls. *Psychology of Violence*, 5(4): 433-443, 2015 Notes: Published online: doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0039724>.
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- Leff, S.S., Paskewich, B.S., Waanders, C., & Waasdorp, T.E.: The Friend to Friend Program: A Review of Program Development and Adaptation, Refinement, and Testing. *Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Children with Aggressive Behavior: Applying Coping Power in School and Clinical Settings*. Lochman J., & Bradshaw, C.P. (eds.). Routledge Page: 81-90, 2026.
- Waasdorp, T.E., Paskewich, B.S., Fu, & Leff, S.S. Evaluating the Effectiveness of the Coaching-Enhanced Friend-to-Friend Program. Forthcoming.

USING CBPR TO DEVELOP INTERVENTIONS: OTHER EXAMPLES OF OUR WORK

- Leff SS, Costigan TE, Power TJ: Using participatory-action research to develop a **playground-based prevention program (PLAYS)**. Journal of School Psychology 42: 3-21, 2004.
- Leff SS, et al.; Using community-based participatory research to develop the **PARTNERS youth violence prevention program**. Progress in Community Health Partnerships: Research Education and Action 4: 207-216, 2010.
- Leff SS, Waasdorp TE, Paskewich B, Gullan RL, Jawad A, MacEvoy JP, Feinberg B, Power TJ: The Preventing Relational Aggression in Schools Everyday (**PRAISE**) Program: A preliminary evaluation of acceptability and impact. School Psychology Review 39: 569-587, 2010.
- Leff, S.S., Waasdorp, T.E., Paskewich, B.S., Bevans, K.B., & Winston, F.K.: The **Free2B Multi-Media Bullying Prevention Experience**: An Exemplar of Scientific Edutainment. Frontiers in Psychiatry 11(679): 1-10, July 2020 Notes: doi:10.3389/fpsy.2020.00679.
- Leff, S.S., Fu, R., Brizzolara-Dove, S., Perepezko, A., Thomas, J., Duroseau, N., Varghese, J., Smith, J., & Campbell, K.: The Development of the **Respect4All** Program. Training and Education in Professional Psychology 18(3): 239-247, August 2024.

LINKS

- CVP website:
violence.chop.edu
- CVP Research & Programs, including Friend to Friend, PRAISE, Free2B violence.chop.edu/research-and-programs
- Educational fact sheets on bullying
violence.chop.edu/violence-prevention-tools#fact-sheets
- Bullying prevention resources for families
violence.chop.edu/educational-resources/resources-families/bullying-prevention-resources

ALL ABOUT BULLYING

What is bullying?

It is common for children and teens to experience occasional conflict with their peers. When hurtful behavior happens between children or teens of equal strength, size, and social status, it is considered **aggression**.

However, when aggressive behavior occurs repeatedly and involves a power imbalance (in physical strength or social skills, for example) between the aggressor and the targeted child, it's considered **bullying**. In a typical conflict, any of the children involved can come up with solutions to the problem; however, when a child is being bullied, they generally do not have the power to change the situation.

Bullying can take different forms, in person or online:

- **Physical:** Using physical force to overpower or harm others, including hitting, kicking or pushing.
- **Verbal:** Using words, either in person or digitally (for example, texts or social media posts) to harm others. This can include yelling, insulting, mocking, or sending threats.
- **Relational/Social:** Using social power to hurt someone by damaging their social standing, reputation or relationships. Relational bullying can include starting rumors, purposely ignoring or excluding someone from a group activity, group chat, or group-based video game.
- **Online:** When it occurs on cell phones, on social media, or playing video games online, it's called cyberbullying. Cyberbullying can include mean posts on social media, aggressive texts, or toxic comments in video games.

STRATEGIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD HANDLE BULLYING

Take the bullying concern seriously and be supportive. The most important thing you can offer your child is emotional support! Comfort your child, let them know you believe them, thank them for sharing with you, and tell them their feelings matter. The goal is to ultimately restore your child's sense of safety and well-being, but this will take time.

Stay calm. Focus on the facts and options for support while being sure to manage your own personal feelings. This will help you prioritize your child's needs and show them that they can come to you with any problem. It is important that your child sees that you are working to make the situation better.

Document any evidence of injuries or harm to your child. Take photos of physical injuries. In the case of cyberbullying, help your child block or report aggressive peers, delete accounts and create new ones. Save or screenshot any written evidence. With some software platforms and apps, you need to act quickly before the harmful message or post is no longer available.



Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
Center for Violence Prevention

continued>

SUPPORTING SAFE, STRONG YOUTH

Explore our research and programs.



Bullying Prevention



Intimate Partner
Violence Prevention



Assault Injury
Prevention



Gun Safety



Suicide Prevention



Affiliated Programs

OUR MISSION

The mission of our Center is to reduce the exposure to and impact of violence among children, teens, and families. We conduct community-focused research and design innovative, evidence-based programs that are implemented, disseminated and sustained across clinical, school and neighborhood settings. Our work is trauma-informed and rooted in racial equity and social justice.



For more information, please visit

violence.chop.edu

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