

Compassionate Parenting

Effects of Cognitively-Based Compassion Training (CBCT) for Parents of Infants and Young Children

JULIE POEHLMANN-TYNAN, PH.D.

DOROTHY A. O'BRIEN PROFESSOR OF HUMAN ECOLOGY

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT & FAMILY STUDIES

DIRECTOR, CENTER FOR CHILD & FAMILY WELL-BEING

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON

JULIE.POEHLMANNTYNAN@WISC.EDU



Promoting Child & Family Resilience

Parenting stress is ubiquitous; high levels decrease parental sensitivity

Secure attachment provides basis for child coping with stress

Child temperament, goodness of fit

Compassion for others (including child) and self



CBCT

Developed by Dr. Geshe Lobsang Tenzin Negi at Emory University

CBCT is typically administered as an 8-week intervention that meets for 2 hours per week plus a mini-retreat (20 hours total)

Each session contains

- pedagogical material presented by instructors
- a guided meditation of 20-30 minutes
- group discussion, with subjects being asked to meditate daily using guided meditation recordings



Design and Participants

Pilot RCT study with 38 parents of infants and young children

- n=25 intervention
- n=13 wait list control

Assessments at pre- and post-intervention; 8% attrition

Study participants were recruited from university-affiliated ECE centers

- Children ranged from 9 months to 5 years, mean of 3 years
- 20 boys and 18 girls
- Children's race/ethnicities: 79% white and 21% of color (3 Asian, 1 Latino, 4 biracial)
- 33 parents were moms and 5 were dads; most parents had a college degree and were married
- 11% used public assistance

CBCT for Parents with Infants and Young Children

CBCT curriculum used; **examples** adapted to focus on children and parenting issues

Prior to first CBCT session, temperament questionnaire and profile

2 cohorts, each received 20 hours of instruction

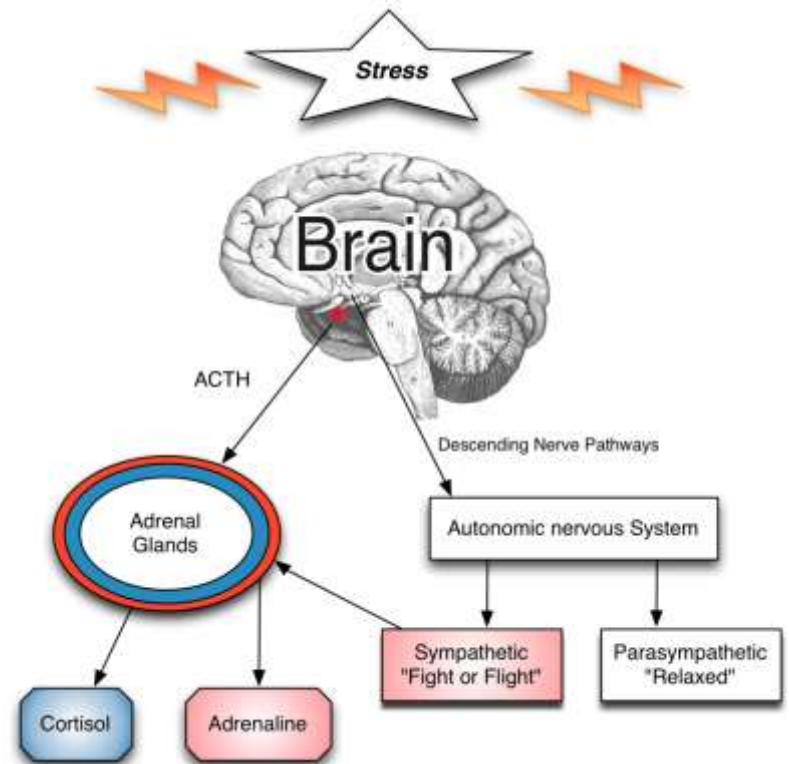
- Cohort 1 met for 10 weeks for 2 hour sessions
- Cohort 2 met for 8 weeks for 2 sessions plus a 4-hour mini-retreat

Measures

Perceived stress (CSOSI, PDH)

Physiological stress (HCC)

Parent-child interaction (PCERA)

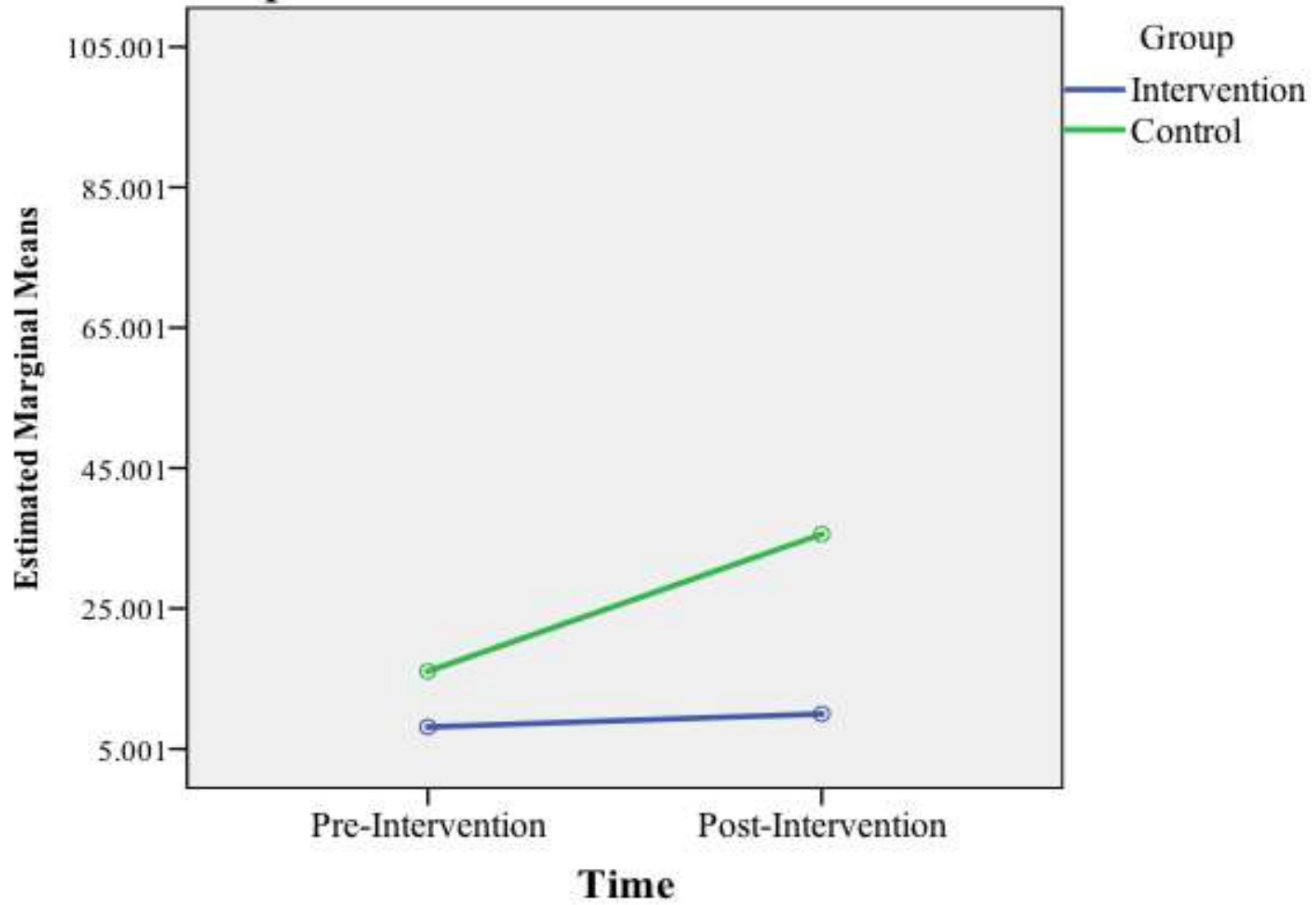


Findings (repeated measures MANCOVA, group X time interactions)

In the CBCT intervention

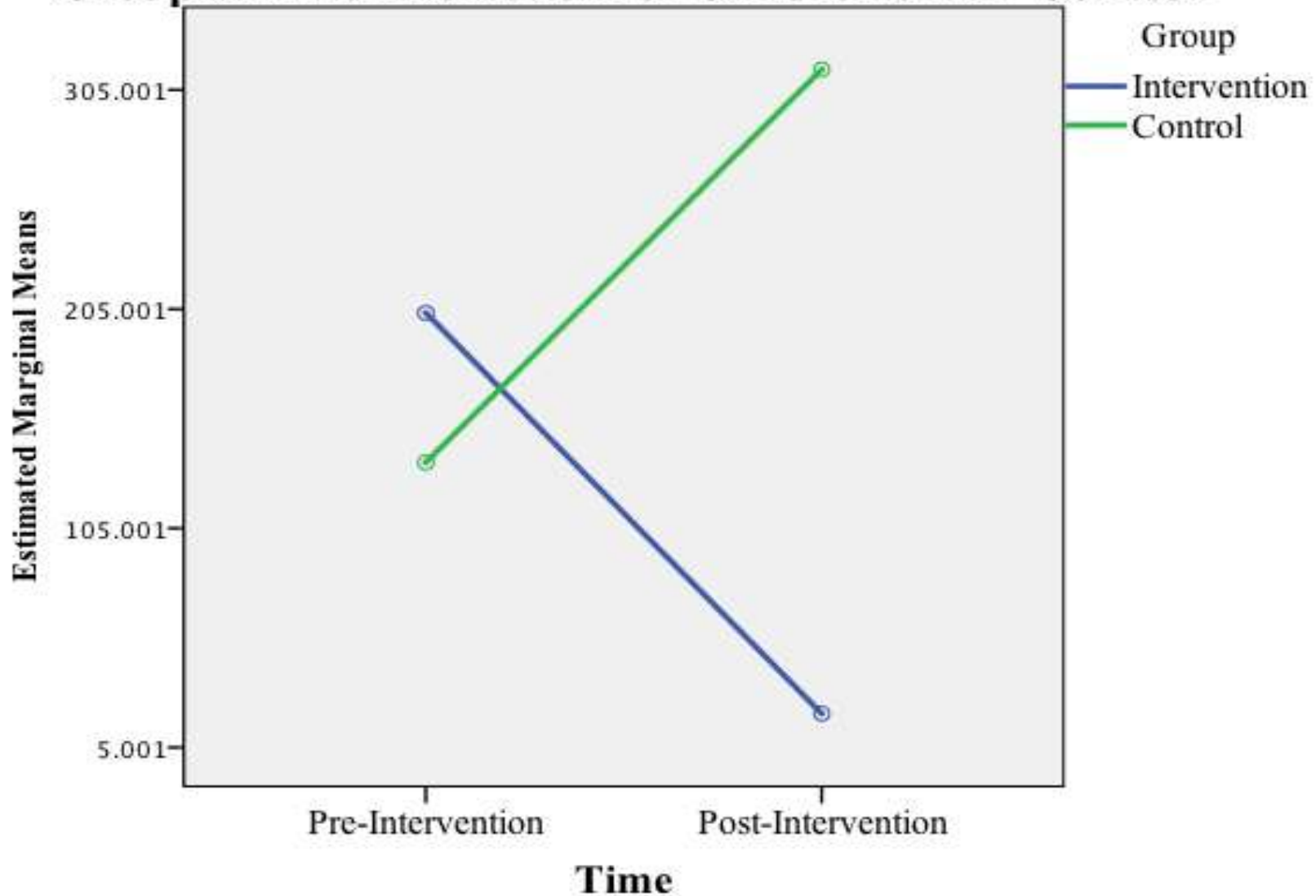
- Parents experienced **decreases in physical symptoms of depression** and **cognitive dysfunction** at post-intervention (while control parents' stayed the same)
 - .04 (small effect)
- **Parents' hair cortisol concentration** stayed the same (while control parents' cortisol increased)
 - .04 (small effect)

Group X Time Interaction for Parent's Hair Cortisol



Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Pretest PDH Life Hassles Frequency Total = 30.0968, Pretest SCS Common Humanity Subscale = 3.5161

Group X Time Interaction for Children's Hair Cortisol



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Parental Reflections and Satisfaction

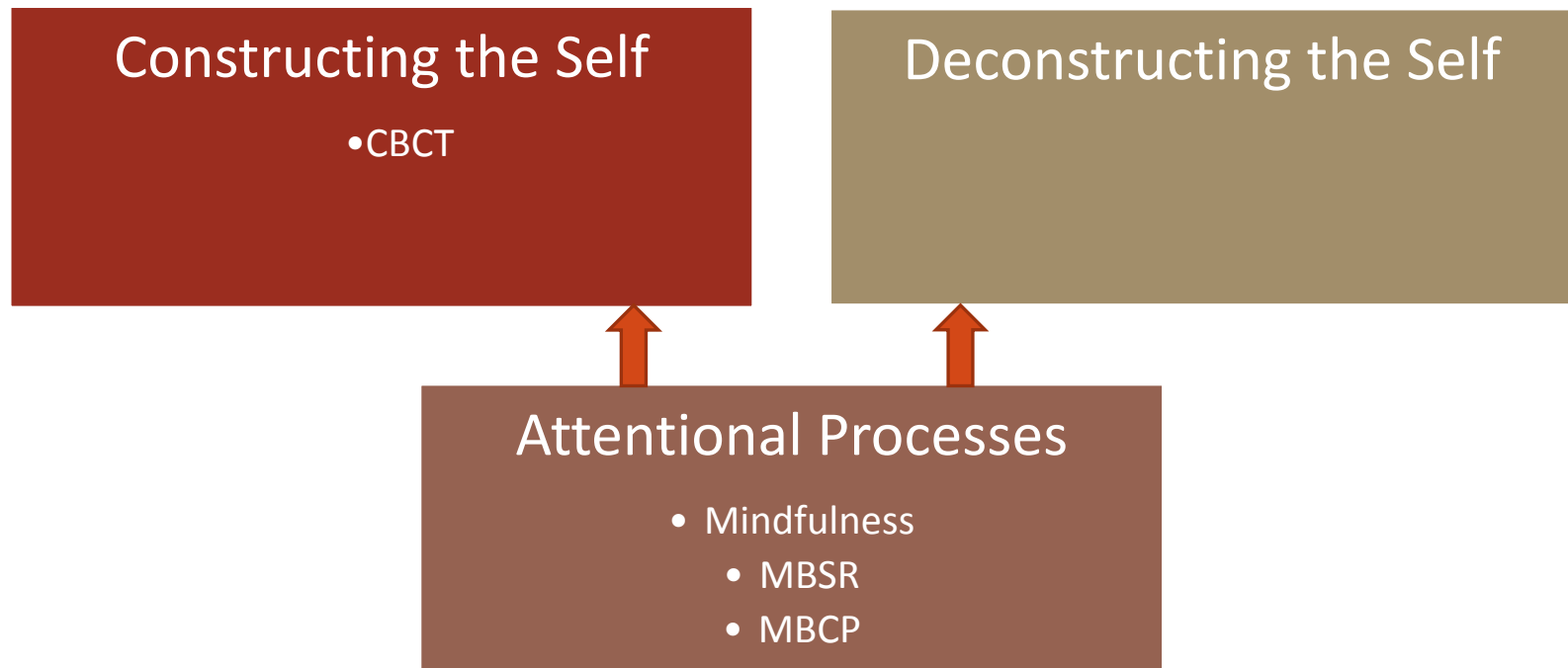
Most parents reported that participating in CBCT was a positive, even life-changing, experience

Many parents had a difficult time meditating for 20 minutes daily

- Yet they found ways of incorporating the content into their thoughts and behaviors



Families of Meditation Practice: Modifying Self-Narratives can be Transformational



Limitations

Low risk, small sample

- Larger, higher risk samples needed

Attrition = 8%; Parents said it was hard to fit in daily meditation

Small to medium effect sizes

No longer-term follow up

Parent-child interaction during play in lab

- Structured task or stressful situation?

Preliminary findings

- CBCT needs more efficacy trials with parents
- How to bring it to scale?



Conclusions

Findings provide preliminary evidence that CBCT may be a new way to intervene with parents of young children

Program encourages families to build empathy and compassion for all

Skills to solve problems and cope with stress



With Gratitude



My Team (staff, students, colleagues)

- Emory-Tibet Partnership
 - Charles Raison, M.D.
 - Leslie Langbert, MSW
 - Jennifer Knox
- Emily Gerstein, Ph.D.
- Abra Vigna, Ph.D.
- Carolyn Zahn-Waxler, Ph.D.
- Lindsay Weymouth, Ph.D.
- Cynthia Burnson, Ph.D.
- Jill Riley, Paula Evenson, Jenny Lee
- Ashleigh Grendziak
- Many many undergraduate students!

Parents and children who participated

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MIND & LIFE
INSTITUTE

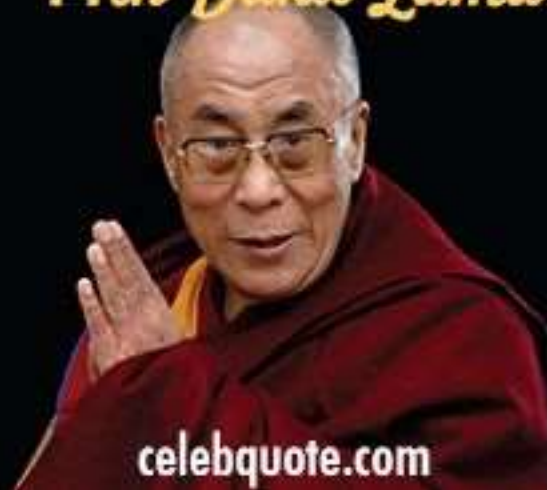


MAI FAMILY
FOUNDATION

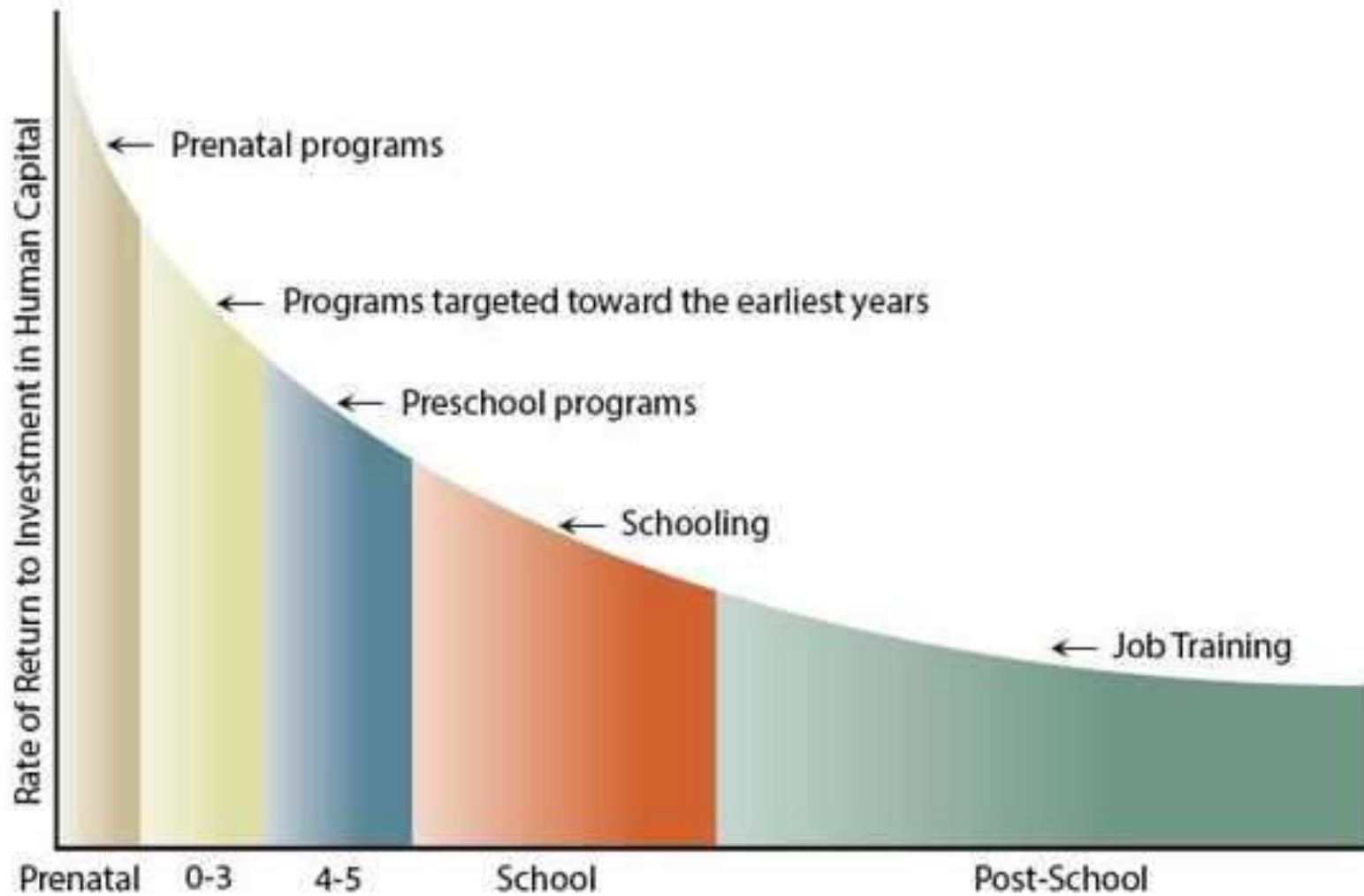


IF YOU WANT OTHERS TO BE **HAPPY**
PRACTICE COMPASSION
IF YOU WANT TO BE HAPPY
PRACTICE COMPASSION

14th Dalai Lama



celebquote.com



Source: Heckman (2008)

Analysis

Simple Randomization Strategy

Groups did not differ on demographic characteristics or pre-intervention measures, except

- Common Humanity subscale of the SCS (control group higher at pre-intervention)
- PDH Life Hassles Frequency subscale (control group lower at pre-intervention)

Used as control variables in analyses

Repeated measures MANCOVAs to explore Group X Time interactions

Effect sizes instead of p values (pilot study)

- small (1%), medium (10%), and large (25%) effects (Cohen)
- multivariate effect size = partial eta squared (η_p^2)

Measures: Parent Reports of Perceived Stress

- **Calgary Symptoms of Stress Inventory (CSOSI; Carlson & Thomas, 2007)**
 - Depression
 - Anger
 - Muscle Tension
 - Cardiopulmonary Arousal
 - Sympathetic Arousal
 - Neurological/GI
 - Cognitive Disorganization
 - Upper Respiratory Symptoms
- **Parenting Daily Hassles scale (PDH; Crnic & Greenberg, 1990).**
 - PDH consists of 20 items related to specific parenting tasks that can be trying or challenging for parents.
 - Frequency and intensity

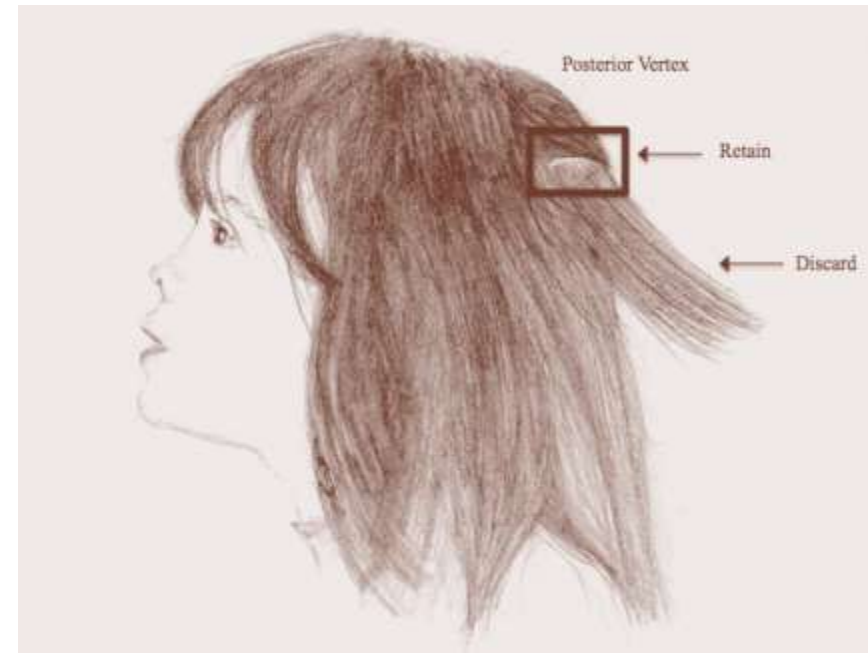
Measures: Hair Cortisol Concentration

What and how?

- 1-3 cm of hair most proximal to scalp
- Analyzed at the Wisconsin National Primate Research Center using a liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry approach

What does it tell us?

- Last 1-3 months of HPA activity



Measures: Parental Self-Compassion

Parents completed the 24-item version of the **Self-Compassion Scale** (SCS; Neff, 2003)

Dr. Kristen Neff: 3 Elements of Self-Compassion

Self-Kindness:

Understanding,
not punishment

Sense of Common Humanity:

Everybody
goes through
this

Mindfulness:

Neither
ignoring nor
exaggerating
feelings of
failure

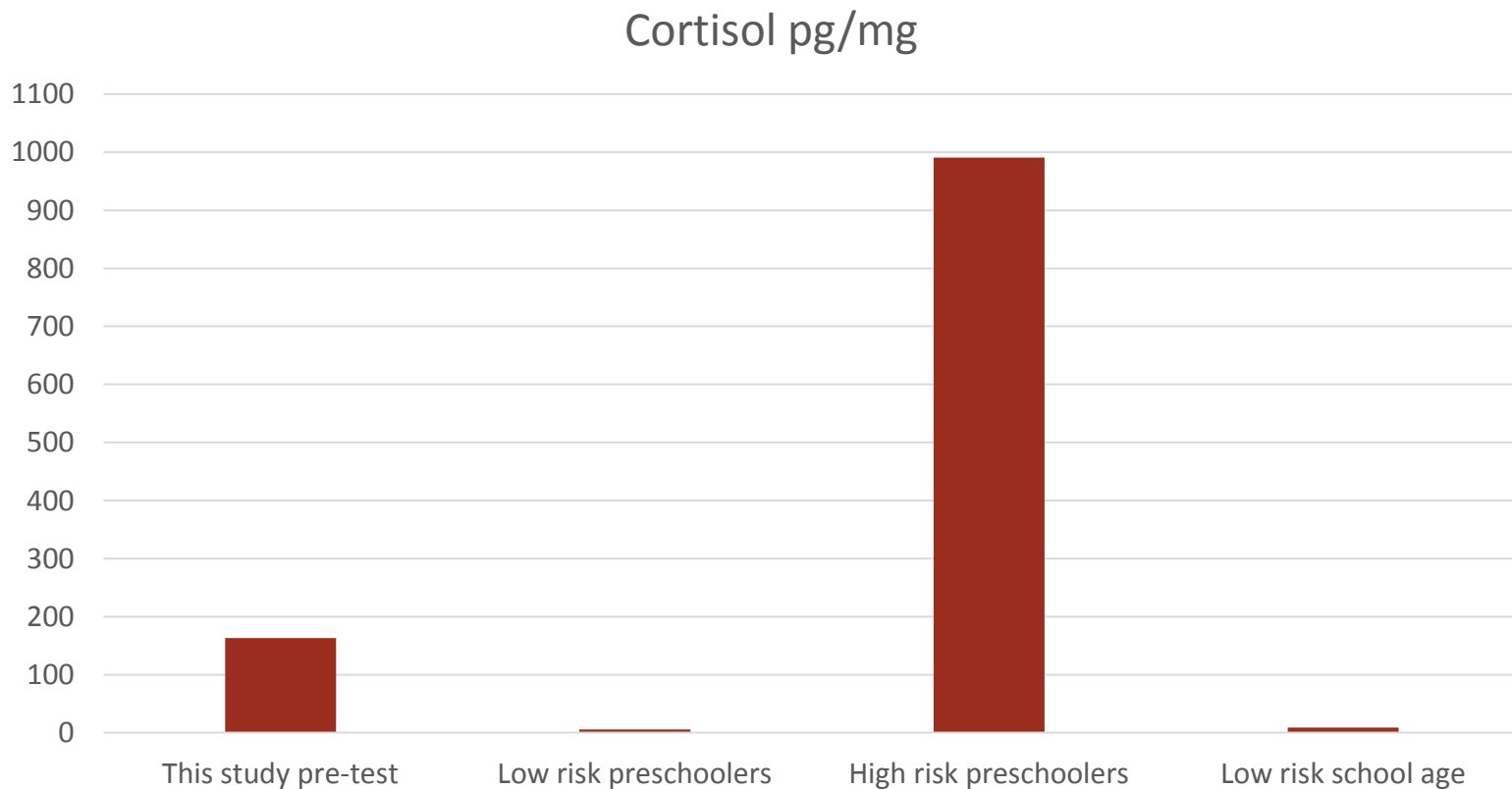
Measures: Parent-Child Interaction

Parent Child Early Relational Assessment (PCERA, Clark 1985, 2015)

- observed dyadic free play and coded with 29 parent variables
 - Parental tone of voice
 - Parental affect and mood
 - Parental attitude toward child
 - Parental affective and behavioral involvement
 - Parental style
- coders were blind to treatment condition
- high interrater reliability established (ICCs = .65 – 1.0))



4 studies with HCC in young children (4 months to 10 years)



Vanaelst, Michels, De Briendt, et al. (2013). Cortisone in hair of elementary school girls and its relationship with childhood stress. *Eur J Pediatr*, 173, 843-846.; Weymouth (2016)