

# Bounce Back & Thrive!

## Summary – Ongoing Evaluation Study #3 (Winter 2015 - Spring 2016)



**Bounce Back & Thrive! (BBT)** has been a continuously evolving evidence-based resiliency skills training program since the first pilot groups in 2011.

This 10-session program is based on the **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT Resiliency Skills Training** for service providers working with young children and their families.

BBT helps parents help their children build the resilience necessary to handle life's inevitable bumps in the road. It focuses on families with children under 8 years old.

### Initial Pilot study

In a 3-year pilot project beginning in 2010, **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** partnered with many family-serving organizations. One hundred-sixty-one parents were recruited (119 completed the full evaluation) for 18 groups in 16 diverse communities in Ontario, Canada.

**Parents attended because they were experiencing significant challenges** such as poverty, low literacy, family violence, teen parenting, children with special needs or were living in communities experiencing violence or in First Nations or remote areas.

**Parents in the BBT pilot groups rated the skills training program very highly and experienced a statistically significant positive change in attitudes associated with resilience. They reported:**

- Using the resiliency skills regularly and modeling them with their children
- Experiencing a greater sense of calmness and control in their lives
- Being more positive about their children and hopeful about life
- Seeing their children calmer as well as more patient, confident and perseverant.

### Ongoing evaluation: Studies 1 & 2

**Two ongoing evaluation studies preceded this study.** Study #1 reported on 18 parent groups from Fall 2012 to Spring 2013, and Study #2 on 27 groups from Fall 2013 to Fall 2014. **The findings from these two studies confirmed the results found in the initial pilot study** (see [www.reachinginreachingout.com/effectiveness-bb&t.htm](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/effectiveness-bb&t.htm)).

### Study # 3

This summary report covers the **formal evaluation study** of parents attending BBT groups from Winter 2015 to Spring 2016 (facilitated by new BBT Trainers).

### Participants

261 parents experiencing challenges attended **21** groups offered by 20 partnering organizations in diverse Canadian settings. 170 parents completed the full evaluation. [Demographics: 90% females, 10% males; median age = 30.2 years; 8% less than Grade 12, 29% high school grad/some college, 63% college grads; 21% single parents; 490 children (median 2.2 children/ family); all families had children under 8 years, 37% with 0-2 years, 40% with 3-6 years & 24% with 7 years and older]

### Measures

Parents completed **four measures** that examined the **impact** of the BBT resiliency skills training groups on themselves and their children.



To measure change in parental attitudes, depression and stress, three subscales were administered at the **beginning** and **end** of the skills training.

The **"Bounce Back Subscale" (BBSS)** (included in the original pilot project) is a 15-item Likert-type self-report measure with ratings on a 5-point scale. It was developed to look at parents' beliefs and attitudes affecting their own resilience and parenting. Four factors emerged for the original 14 items: 1) optimism-pessimism; 2) attitudes about their children and parenting; 3) attitudes related to self-efficacy and self-regulation; and 4) attitudes about set-backs and challenges. The 15<sup>th</sup> item is the one used to measure 'resilience' in the *2009 European Social Survey (ESS)*, i.e., *"When things go wrong in my life it generally takes me a long time to get back to normal."*

Also administered were the **"Depression Subscale" (DASS-D)** and **"Stress Subscale" (DASS-S)** from the 21-item version of the *Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21)*; S. H. Lovibond & P. F. Lovibond, 1995). The DASS-21 subscales are self-report measures each containing seven items and rated on a 4-point scale.

At the end of the program, parents completed a revised version of the **“Post-Training Survey,”** a parent self-report measure (used in the two previous ongoing evaluation studies and pilot). It was designed to gather information about knowledge gain, use of the resiliency skills, impact on parent and child behaviour as well as overall parent satisfaction.

As part of the process evaluation, parents completed “Parent Feedback Forms” each session rating the usefulness of the content and effectiveness of the delivery (results presented here). They also were asked about content they found most important, their success in using it, as well as suggestions to improve BBT.

## Results

### Attitudes related to resilience and parenting, signs of depression and stress

- **Parents showed a significant positive change in attitudes** associated with greater resilience as well as more positive attitudes about their children and parenting (*mean change BBSS = 5.47, t = 8.4, p < .001*).
- **Parents with the least ‘resilient’ attitudes to start** (lowest BBSS scores) **showed the greatest positive change** in attitudes related to resilience and parenting by the end of the program (*BBSS, Pearson’s r = -.47, p < .001*).
- **Parents showed significant positive change in ratings of their ability to “return to normal after things go wrong”** (i.e., capacity for resilience) (*mean change on ESS resilience item = .36, t = 4.3, p < .001*).
- **Parents showed an improvement in depression scores over time** (*Mean change DASS-D = -1.68, t = -6.4, p < .001*).
- **Parents who scored most poorly on the Depression Subscale to start showed the greatest improvement** (*DASS-D, Pearson’s r = -.60, p < .001*).
- **Parents reported a decrease in stress-related indicators over time** (*Mean change DASS-S = -1.75, t = -5.8, p < .001*).
- **Parents who reported the most stress-related indicators to start showed the greatest improvement** (*DASS-S, Pearson’s r = -.68, p < .001*).



### Use and impact of the skills training

Some of the highlights of findings from the “Post-Training Survey” include:

- Parents rated **their knowledge** about supporting resilience in themselves and their children as being **significantly higher** at the end of the program as compared to the beginning (*based on a 5-point scale; parent resilience – mean difference = 2.28, t = 30.0, p < .001; child resilience – mean difference = 2.34, t = 32.3, p < .001*).
- **99% parents said they use the BBT content** with their children.

Parents’ attitudes became more ‘resilient’ and positive toward their children and parenting. Those with the least ‘resilient’ attitudes to start gained the most by the end.

- **95% parents reported using the content** they learned **at least once a week (58% use it every day) with their children.** Here are some of the main ways they are using the training:
  - 96% model the resiliency skills with their children (excludes parents whose children are too young)
  - 94% help their children practice calming strategies
  - 93% help their children look for positive things (excludes parents whose children are too young)
  - 93% gently challenge their children’s thinking, e.g., ‘I always have to’/ ‘I never get to’ and ‘I can’t do it’ (excludes parents whose children are too young)
- **Ways the program specifically helped parents personally comparing ratings before and after BBT** (*ratings based on a 5-point scale*):
  - Improving their ability to “respond” instead of “react” to challenges (*mean change = 2.01, t = 26.8, p < .001*)
  - Understanding the link between their thoughts and reactions (*mean change = 1.96, t = 25.4, p < .001*)
  - Handling and reducing stress (e.g., deep breathing, etc.) (*mean change = 1.84, t = 22.8, p < .001*)
  - Being confident about the ability to bounce back (*mean change = 1.72, t = 20.3, p < .001*)
  - Finding positive things to appreciate in their daily lives (*mean change = 1.44, t = 18.4, p < .001*)
  - Feeling hopeful & optimistic about future (*mean change = 1.27, t = 15.3, p < .001*)
- **Top strength areas parents developed,** comparing their ratings before and after BBT, were (on a 5-point scale):
  - Handling their emotions (*mean change = 1.61 points; t = 21.4, p < .001*)
  - Controlling impulses (*mean change = 1.60 points; t = 20.8, p < .001*)

- Solving problems (using thinking skills)  
(mean change = 1.33 points; t = 17.4, p<.001)
- Believing in themselves & abilities  
(mean change = 1.21 points; t = 14.9, p<.001)
- Being a 'realistic' optimist  
(mean change = 1.18 points; t = 14.8, p<.001)
- Using empathy with others  
(mean change = 1.10 points; t = 14.1, p<.001)

- **Top rated ways the program helped parents with their children** (mean rating = 4.5 for all on 5-point scale):
  - Being calm and more patient with their children.
  - Better understanding their children's emotional needs
  - Looking more for the strengths and positive things to appreciate in their children
  - Improving their relationship with their child(ren)

Parents said their children were calmer, more patient and handled frustrations better. And they were less afraid of making mistakes, so they were more confident and kept on trying instead of giving up. They were also observed using the skills with other children and adults.

- **73% of parents reported they already saw positive changes in their children** (attributed to skills parents demonstrated to their children). Among these parents, the **top reported changes** were:
  - Persevering instead of giving up (79%)
  - Calming down better (78%)
  - Showing more patience (71%)
  - Handling disappointments & frustrations better (69%)
  - Feeling better about making mistakes (67%)
  - Trying new things (65%)
  - Challenging 'always/everything' thinking with help (61%)
  - Being more confident (58%)



- **46% of parents reported observing their children already using resiliency skills** (that parent introduced to child) **with other children as well as adults (53%).**

### Satisfaction with the program

- **Parents rated the overall helpfulness of BBT very highly (both personally and as a parent)** (mean rating = both 4.6 on a 5-point scale).
- **They also rate their satisfaction with BBT very highly** (mean rating = 4.8 on a 5-point scale).
- **They also rated the content and delivery of their sessions very positively** (mean rating = 6.6 and 6.7 respectively on 7-point scale for all sessions combined on Parent Feedback Forms).
- **When asked whether they would recommend BBT skills training to other parents, 99% of the parents said "Yes" (1% "Maybe").**

### What parents said about BBT...

*"It is so good to learn how to challenge our own and our children's thinking. It taught me how to find my children's strengths instead of always feeling bad about their shortcomings."*

*"It is helpful in raising stronger positive families and healthy individuals who can deal with stress in different situations. Greatly recommend because all parents experience stress. Even though sometimes you know what you should do, when you are under stress you 'react' before you think. BBT teaches you how to break down each step – what happened and why you reacted first, and what you can do to help yourself think and calm down. Have seen much improvement in myself and when I can handle my emotions better, I can help my children do the same."*

*"Good life resilience skills allowed me to cope with stresses, not react, and to be a better parent. Helps me separate behaviours from its "my fault" and be more confident about my parenting. I knew about stress techniques but never really thought about applying them to my 4-1/2 year old. And it works for her. I can help calm her."*

Source: "Post-training Survey"

## Summary

Parents' attitudes became more 'resilient' and positive toward their children and parenting. Those with the least 'resilient' attitudes to start gained the most by the end of the program.

After attending BBT, parents reported **less stress and depression-related markers**. And those with the highest levels to start experienced the greatest positive change.

Parents rated the skills training highly and **used the skills regularly in their own lives and modeled them with their children**.

Understanding the 'link between thoughts and reactions' contributed to parents' ability to 'respond' instead of 'react' to challenges.

This was associated with greater **calmness and confidence** and the ability to **recognize more strengths in themselves and their children**.

Parents said their children were **calming down and handling frustrations better**. And this helped them become **more patient and confident** and therefore **more willing to persevere** and try new things.

Nearly half of the parents reported that after role modeling the skills, their children were already **using resiliency skills with other children and adults**.

Finding the **positives** in their own lives as well as their **children's strengths and positives** promoted **closer parent-child relationships**. Not surprisingly, parents reported feeling **more optimistic and hopeful** about the future.

The results of Study #3 of the ongoing evaluation, along with Studies #1 & 2, confirm key findings from the BBT pilot.

These three evaluation studies measured BBT's impact on 447 parents from diverse backgrounds and communities. The results from each study **replicate the key findings from the original pilot study**. In addition to exploring resilience, these studies measured indicators of depression and stress. Positive changes in these areas in Study #1 were replicated in Studies #2 and #3.

## What parents said about BBT...

*"This program offers tools to help me understand my children and myself. I'm able to feel the love for my son again. Thank you."*

*"It is a great reminder of how your actions affect the behaviour in your kids. Parenting is a circle. And how you treat them and help them deal with conflict and issues will impact on how they treat others and themselves."*

*"BBT helped me become more positive in parenting my child and more positive as a person. The program has helped me to live life powerfully and to live a life that I love. It gives me the ability to relax, enjoy life and live a more stress-free life. I feel great and more confident and relaxed."*

*"The group really helped me take a step back and not respond to stressful situations with emotions. It also helped me to centre myself."*

*"It was the best thing happened to me because it somehow open my eyes and help me better understand things around me."*

*"It helped me to be more positive with myself my children and with others around me."*

*"Helps parents become more aware of their own thoughts and actions even those who didn't think they were doing anything in a 'reacting/negative' way."*

Source: "Post-training Survey"



\* The pilot project in which BBT was developed and tested was conducted by **Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO)** and its founding sponsor – the Child & Family Partnership (YMCA of Greater Toronto, Child Development Institute, University of Guelph and George Brown College) – and more than 30 partner organizations across Canada. Three-year project funding (2010-12) was provided by the Social Development Partnerships Program of the Government of Canada. Opinions expressed in this summary are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada. For details about BBT and the pilot project, go to <http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/programs-bb&t.htm>.