A Review of “Promoting Positive Parenting: An Attachment-Based Intervention”

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Book Review


*Promoting Positive Parenting: An Attachment-Based Intervention*, written and edited by Femmie Juffer, Marian J. Bakermans-Kranenburg, and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, is an excellent resource for researchers and practitioners interested in evidenced-based parenting programs. This volume is impressive; it represents over 20 years of research on enhancing sensitivity among parents of young children. The authors present a comprehensive overview of the Video-feedback Intervention to Promote Positive Parenting (VIPP), an attachment-based intervention program. In doing so, they present an explanation of the critical components of the program, a discussion of the theory behind the program, an illustration of the underlying mechanisms through a narrative summary and case examples, and a review of meta-analytic evidence of its effectiveness. Effective versions of the VIPP used among varied clinical and nonclinical populations are also presented. In addition to the volume’s relevance to a broad audience of researchers, clinicians, and professionals who are focused on promoting healthy parent-child relationships, this book will appeal to experts, young professionals, and students.

In addition to their overview of the VIPP, Juffer and her colleagues emphasize the need for strong research designs when determining effectiveness. For example, they discuss the importance of randomized controlled trials, as effect sizes of the VIPP differed in randomized ($d = .33$) versus nonrandomized ($d = .61$) trials. They also discuss the importance of closely examining the control group in randomized clinical trials, as not doing so can bias the results. This is informative for researchers, clinicians, and consumers of intervention programs; weaker research design could be misleading and in turn have problematic implications for dissemination efforts.

This volume is a representation of the contemporary issues of the empirically supported treatment movement. Research on the VIPP moves beyond asking whether their treatment “works” and explores “under what conditions” and “for whom” treatments work in a sophisticated manner. Through these efforts, the authors provide compelling evidence for the gold standard when intervening to change parental sensitivity. Their meta-analytic evidence
suggests that short-term interventions (16 sessions or fewer) are more effective than long-term programs, targeted interventions are more effective than unfocused or more global intervention programs, and treatments focused on parental sensitivity are more effective for parents of young children at least 6 months of age. Interestingly, the effectiveness of the VIPP did not vary between high-risk, low-risk, clinical, or nonclinical populations.

The authors are also to be commended for their dedication to understanding the underlying mechanisms of change. This is a critical step in assessing the effectiveness of intervention programs, as it not only improves the design of the study and informs the field of the best practices in intervening with parents and children but also helps to refine the theories that set the stage for such programs. Their work is an excellent example of using research to inform theory and practice. Their finesse is illustrated in their presentation of meta-analyses of intervention programs that specifically target disorganized behavior. Although parental sensitivity is generally associated with secure versus insecure attachment organization, meta-analytic evidence suggests that programs focused on changing sensitivity were more effective in reducing the rate of disorganization ($d = .26$) than interventions that specifically targeted disorganized behavior ($d = .08$).

*Promoting Positive Parenting: An Attachment-Based Intervention* is an important contribution to the field of early intervention and prevention. It not only serves as a guide for effective intervention with parents and children but also increases awareness of a versatile program available for a variety of professionals and clients. Importantly, this volume not only presents what we do know with regard to promoting positive parenting but also highlights what we have yet to learn. For example, the VIPP is effective in increasing parental sensitivity but less effective in changing attachment security. Only through ongoing research efforts, as modeled by Juffer and her colleagues, can we even attempt to understand factors that explain this relation.

In conclusion, *Promoting Positive Parenting: An Attachment-Based Intervention* masterfully introduces an empirically supported intervention for varied populations and leaves readers with an understanding of both the progress made and the road ahead in the field of early intervention. Regardless of level of expertise or area of specialization, *Promoting Positive Parenting* is an essential read for professionals dedicated to improving the lives of children and families.

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