

Mom Power: A Therapeutic Intervention for Mothers of Young Children

Mom Power is a therapeutic intervention for high-risk mothers and their children. A 10-week, trauma-informed, parenting and self-care skills group designed for mothers of young children (ages 0-5).

Parenting is hard enough under the best circumstances and when you add risk factors--such as perinatal mental health difficulties, maternal history of adverse childhood experiences, ongoing adversity, financial stressors, etc—it makes parenting that much harder. Mom Power aims to support caregivers as they support children and to empower mothers to consistently and confidently support their child's social and emotional development.

Mom Power Objectives:

- Social support is enhanced by creating shared group experience with opportunities for information and relationship building during shared meal time as well as by inviting mothers to bring a guest.
- The Parenting Education Curriculum emphasizes responsiveness and sensitivity to young children's experiences. Participants are introduced to key topics in parenting and child development, observe video interactions and apply concepts learned, engage in activities designed to develop and practice skills and reflect on interaction with their own children.
- Self-Care/Stress-Reduction addresses the mothers' needs for hands-on strategies for reducing their own levels of stress and to help manage symptoms of mental illness in order to provide balanced parenting and support their children's needs.
- Parent-Child Interactions are supported by a curriculum that emphasizes creating safe, predictable routines; acknowledging "goodbyes" when mothers leave for their class, and observation of and support for reunions when mothers return. Mothers are encouraged to "try something new" and anticipate, observe, and reflect upon these separations and reunions.
- Connecting Families to Care provides a safe and warm transfer of services including individualized referrals to relevant additional community resources, such as mental health treatment and developmental referrals for children.

Outcomes:

- Mothers show reductions in depression and PTSD symptoms, and improved parenting competence after the intervention period.
- Two-thirds of Mom Power graduates are connected with ongoing care within the community.

Mom Power directly addresses structural barriers for participation:

- Transportation (provided if needed and feasible, or gas stipend)
- Childcare issues (mothers bring their children (ages 0-5) with them. Children participate with 1:1 child-team member)
- Poor social support • Financial problems • History of past or ongoing trauma
- Fear of stigmatization or involvement with Department of Children's Services
- Mistrust in providers

Mom Power uses **The Tree** as a metaphor to discuss the child's needs for growing and branching out and for connecting and building roots as prerequisite for healthy and safe child development.

When asked about how the conceptual model of The Tree relates to her experience as mom, one participant said: "I didn't have any roots growing up in foster care and now I see how important they are and that I want connection moments and to build roots with my baby".



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