

# Parenting and psychiatric rehabilitation:

## Can parents with severe mental illness benefit from a new approach?

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# Two examples

**Carla** is a single mother of 35 with borderline problems.

She has been admitted to a psychiatric clinic during half a year.

The children (6 and 8) were in the care of her mother.

Her wish now is to regain responsibility for her children. For her it is important that both her mother, her counselors and she herself regain trust in her own capabilities to deal with the demands of parenthood.

# Two examples

**Jan** is a 40 year old man with a long-term depression

He is divorced and now lives alone in a supported housing facility

His wish is to find ways to make the visits from his daughter (14) satisfying and enjoyable the both of them.

# Balance



Own life  
with higher  
vulnerability

Parenting

# Parenting with SMI: studies

1. Prevalence study
2. Pilot study on the effects of a rehabilitation program to support parents with SMI (PARSS)
3. A qualitative study on the impact of parenthood and the strategies of parents with SMI

# Epidemiological data

# Parents with SMI

NL: prevalence 0,9% parents with SMI (Van der Ende et al 2011)

\* 48% of people with SMI have children

\* In US & Australia (Hearle et al 1999): 60% of people with SMI loses custody

In UK (Seeman et al , 2012): 68% of women suffering schizophrenia loses custody

## Children out of custody of all children

NL: 102 children per 10.000

US: 66 children per 10.000

A new  
Program...  
'Parenting  
with Success  
and  
Satisfaction'  
(ParSS)

Marrie Venderink &  
Peter van der Ende





# Characteristics PARSS

- Based on Psychiatric Rehabilitation
- Boston- Approach: Choose- Get - Keep
- Individual meetings with worker or in group
- One year: first two month one session per week, later once per fortnight
- Workbooks with 'home work'



# Three Workbooks

# I. “Assessing the actual functioning in the parent role”

- Who am I and who is my child?
- Division between time to spend and attention for the child
- Support, self confidence and expectations

# Ila. “Strengthen the parent role”

- Who put demands on this parent?
- What asks the parent role from this parent?
- Who gives support?
- Tune with environment

# IIb “ Take back the parent role”

- Parents’ needs
- Possible activities
- Who have demands and what kind
- Who supports
- Tune with environment

# Evaluation of ParSS Quasi experimental study

(Van der Ende et al, 2014)

- Quasi experimental study
- *What are the effects on parenting in terms of success, satisfaction, empowerment and quality of life?*
- Two groups:
  - Experimental group 12 parents
  - Control group of 15 parents
- Two waves over one-year period

# Instruments

- Parenting self efficacy with subscales:  
Affection, Play, Empathy, Routines, Control, Boundaries, Pressures, Acceptance, Learning, Balance and organizing (Kendall/Bloomfield, 2004 )
- Psychological Empowerment Scale (Akey,et al, 2000)
- Quality of life WHOQOL-BREF (WHOQOL group. 1998)

# Results: parents

- **Satisfaction in parenting** higher after one year in the experimental group with no change in the control group.
- **Quality of life** stays stable over a year in both groups



# Results: workers and next of kin

- The **success in parenting** expressed by providers and next-of-kin doesn't confirm the tendencies of the self-report by parents. In both groups it stays the same on average.
- Empowerment: the experimental group falls back while the control group improves a little.

# Strategies for parenting

Qualitative study with  
19 mothers and 8 fathers with SMI

# Challenges

- Strong feelings of inadequacy
- Fear of transference of problems to a new generation
- Delicate balance between raising children and time for oneself
- Ambiguity around requesting help:
  - Informal help is important source of practical support, worries are (sometimes) shared with professionals
  - Stigma and fear of losing custody

# Positive Strategies for parenting

- Full dedication to also enrich ones life and contribute to a sense of regular life.
- It can also provide entrance to new networks.
- Some parents feel that they understand their children better because of their own experiences
- .... Road to recovery?

# Fathers

- Challenges are extra fierce, especially for fathers 'at a distance'.
- Some fathers found opportunities to play a bigger role in the lives of their children.
- *“Yes, during that parenting course in the clinic my strong capacities as a father were emphasized. This gave me self-confidence as a father”.*

# Discussion

- Stigma and fear of losing custody are important barriers for adequate help.
- More research on PARSS program is needed.
- As a guided self-help intervention, the program can fill an important gap in available psychiatric rehabilitation resources for parents and practitioners.

# Advice

- Put effort in implementation of program, install a coordinator on parenting and provide for co-counseling around the interaction with parents
- Explicit attention to children in day to day practice and in files!
- Destigmatize parenting tasks in interaction with parents!

- Email

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- Websites:

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