

Parenting course adapted for dads benefits the whole family

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Most parenting programs are aimed at mums. This one's aimed at fathers.

Participation in parenting programs has traditionally been more likely to involve women, but new research suggests adapting The University of Queensland's Triple P – Positive Parenting Program can increase fathers'

engagement and benefit the whole family.

Triple P founder and UQ Parenting and Family Support Centre Director Professor Matt Sanders said an adapted program had led to improvements in children's behaviour, in [fathers' parenting practices](#) and in family relationships.

The adapted eight-week program has been trialled in New Zealand by University of Auckland researchers Dr Tenille Frank and Dr Louise Keown, with 42 families with children aged three to eight with behavioural difficulties. Mothers and fathers participated.

Professor Sanders said parenting programs often involved women training other women to be better parents.

"Ninety per cent of those who conduct courses are female, and mothers make up 70 per cent of attendees," he said.

"This study shows that we shouldn't be blaming fathers for not attending parenting programs.

"Rather, we should be extending our knowledge about how best to engage them, as this study has done," Professor Sanders said.

"This can only be a win/win for mothers, fathers and children.

"The more fathers are involved early in children's development the greater likelihood they will continue to maintain that investment over time."

University of Auckland Faculty of Education and Social Work researcher Dr Tenille Frank said at the end of the program parents reported significantly fewer child behaviour problems and increased use

of positive parenting practices.

There was also less conflict between parents about child rearing, the [mothers](#) felt more confident and reported that their partners' parenting practices improved.

"When mum and dad are a team working together, both learning the techniques, both seeing the results, they're more likely to use the strategies in the future," Dr Frank said.

The study is published in *Behavior Therapy*.

More information: "Enhancing Father Engagement and Inter-parental Teamwork in an Evidence-Based Parenting Intervention: A Randomized-Controlled Trial of Outcomes and Processes," *Behavior Therapy*, Available online 11 June 2015, ISSN 0005-7894, [dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2015.05.008](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.beth.2015.05.008)

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