

IMPROVING COPING, EMOTIONAL LITERACY AND ACADEMIC BEHAVIORS: THE MENTAL HEALTH PROMOTION PROGRAM

“**PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE**”

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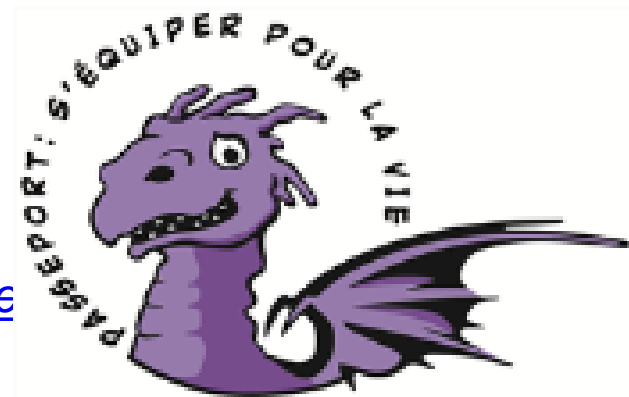
Zippy's Friends & Passport: Skills for Life

www.passeportsequiperpouurlavie.ca/language/en/homepage

Université du Québec à Montréal

October 20, 2017

**22nd Annual Conference on
Advancing School Mental Health**
Washington, D.C.



UQÀM

CR/ISE
Centre de recherche et d'intervention
sur le suicide et l'euthanasie
Centre for Research and Intervention
on Suicide and Euthanasia

Mental health promotion programmes

- Meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions programmes (213 studies – 270,034 students)
 - Successful programmes were comprised of the following skills training characteristics:
 - Sequenced
 - Active
 - Focused
 - Explicit



Zippy's Friends and Passport: Skills for life

Have all four recommended factors for developing social and emotional skills with elementary school children

Adolescents and Young Adults who Attempted Suicide (Spirito and others)

- Can imagine fewer ways to cope with problem situations.
- Use fewer and less helpful ways of coping when faced with problematic situations.
- **Hypothesis:** If we can increase coping skills at an early age, children will cope better throughout their lives, and better avoid severe stressful situations associated with suicide as well as seeking and accepting help when experiencing great difficulties.

Common objectives

- Mental health promotion
- Improve children's coping skills by increasing their repertory of useful coping strategies

Common concepts and main guidelines

- Theoretical perspective:
 - Lazarus and Folkman.
 - Coping strategies:
 - Emotion-focused (change how we feel – make us feel better)
 - Behaviour-focused (actions to improve the situation)
- Situations
 - Changeable (ex.: a dispute)
 - Non modifiable (ex.: a death, changing schools, divorce)

What are copings strategies?

What we do to improve a situation or to make us feel better about a difficult circumstance



Play board games with my family

Spend some time with other friends

Write a song about my friend

Create a photo album

Read a book

Open a Skype account

Plan a summer trip to my friend's house

Play a video game

Invite a new friend over to watch a movie with me



Coping strategies should....

**Improve the situation or help me feel
better – or both**

and

Not harm me nor others

Important.....

There are no good or bad strategies, only strategies that help a person in a specific situation or not, without harming others. Children learn to find their own solutions and assess their usefulness and not harming anyone.

Main guidelines



- The programmes are delivered in their entirety
- Positive skills are reinforced
- There are no right or wrong coping strategies - only:
 - useful and ineffective strategies
 - strategies that harm and do not harm anyone

Main guidelines



- Focus on solutions, not the person
- Children need repetition and continuity to learn successfully
(we have been using repetition already in this presentation!)
- Children practice their skills in different settings
- Children learn from each other
- Children help each other rather than compete
- Children evaluate their own successes



Zippy's friends

Origin, content and evaluations



Origin

Partnership for *Children*



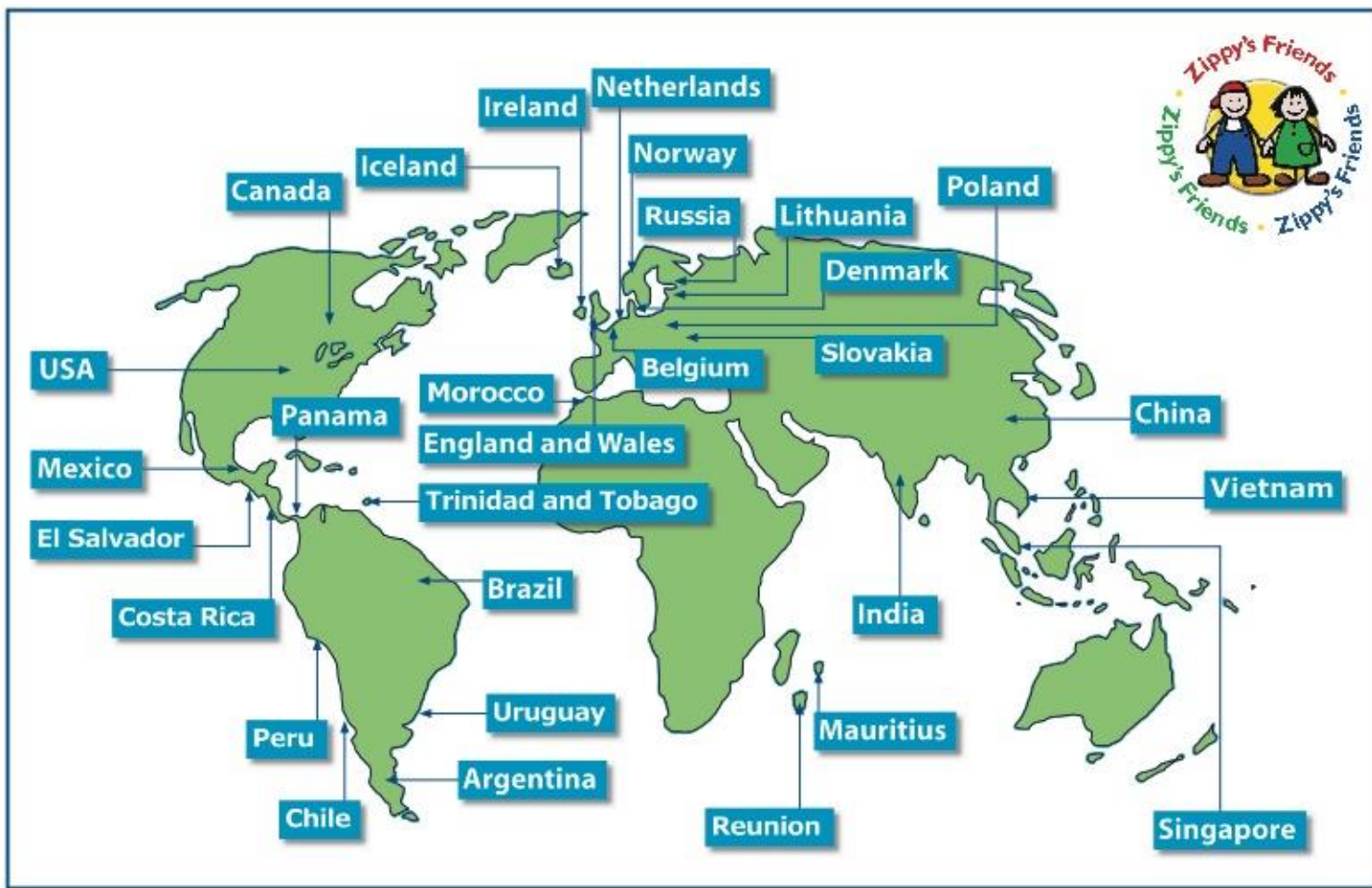
«Helping children and young people throughout the world develop skills which will enhance their present and future emotional wellbeing.»

What is the Zippy's Friends?

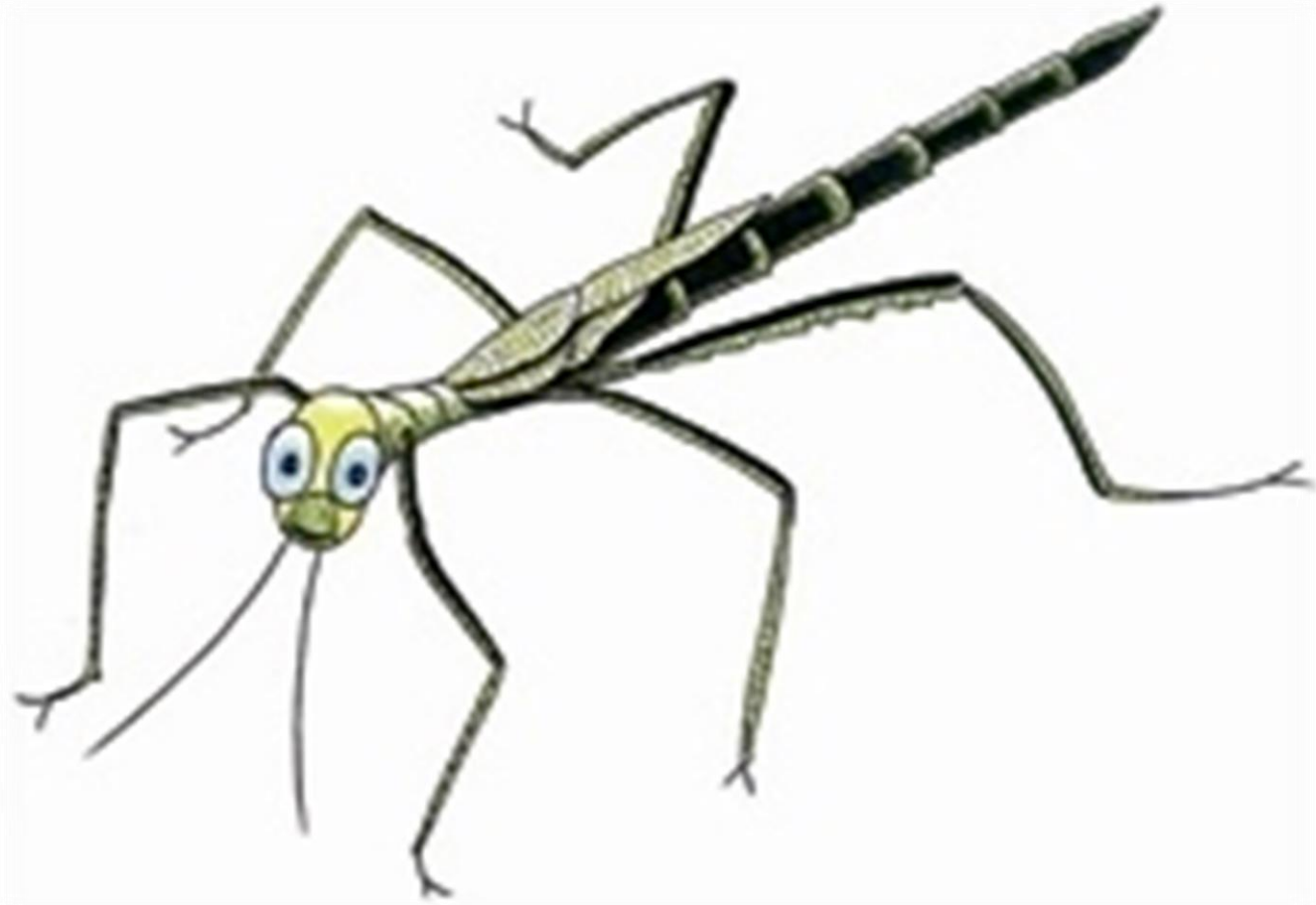


Zippy's Friends

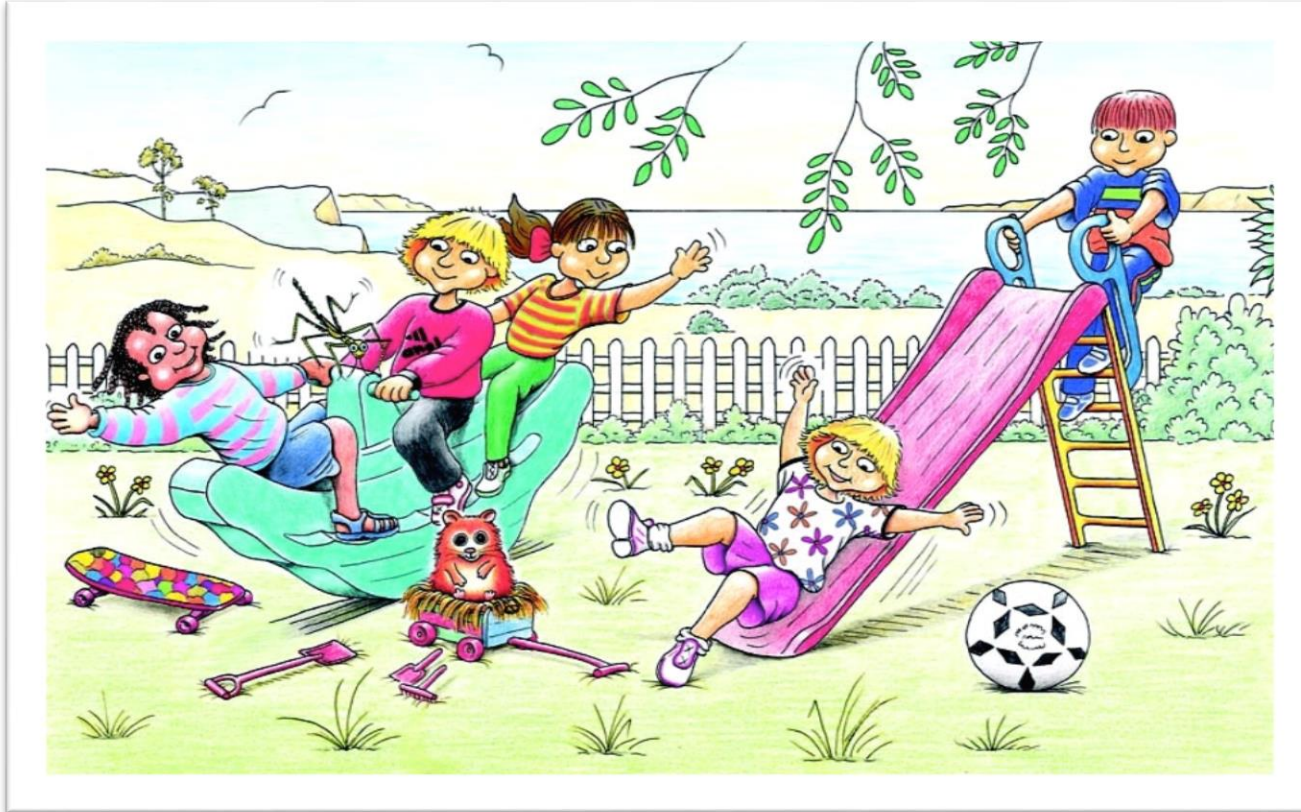
- For children 6 and 7 years old
- 24 sessions approximately 45 minutes/one per week
- Provided by specially trained teachers
- 6 illustrated stories about Zippy and his friends
- Activities: Group discussions, drawings, role plays, etc.
- **Over 1.3 million children in 30 countries**



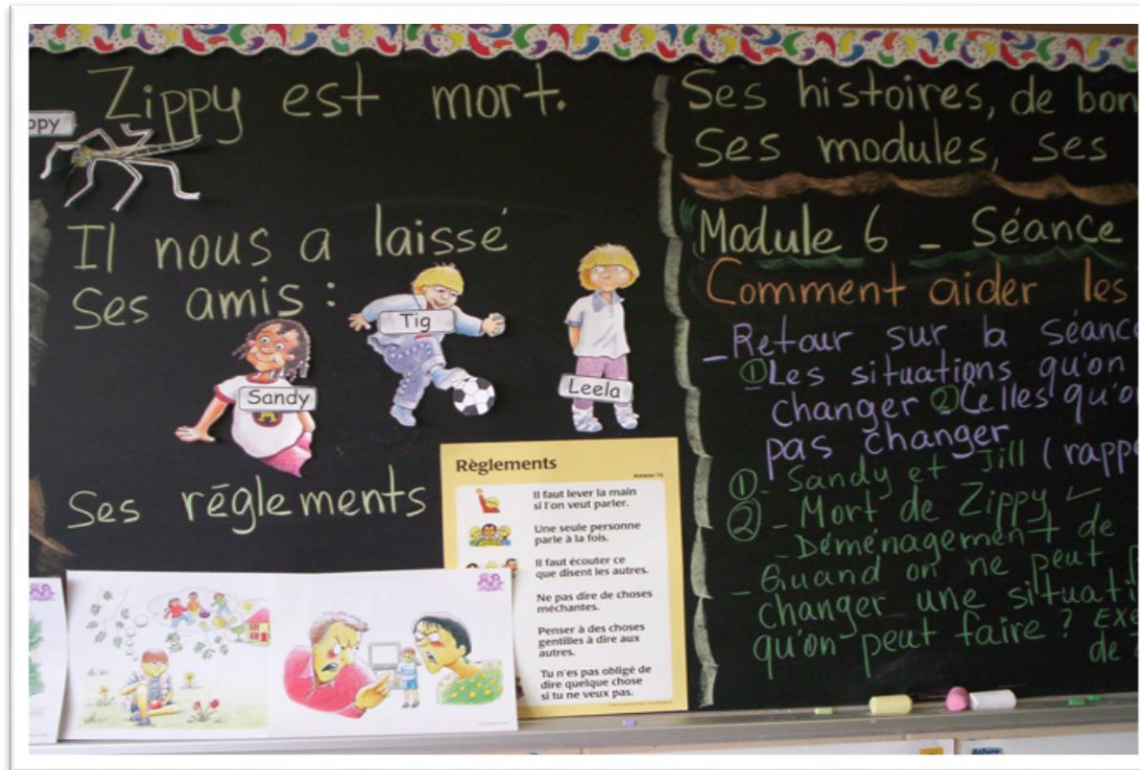
Zippy



and his friends



Programme content



1. Feelings

- Session 1 : Feeling sad – feeling happy
- Session 2 : Feeling angry or annoyed
- Session 3 : Feeling jealous
- Session 4 : Feeling nervous



2. Communications

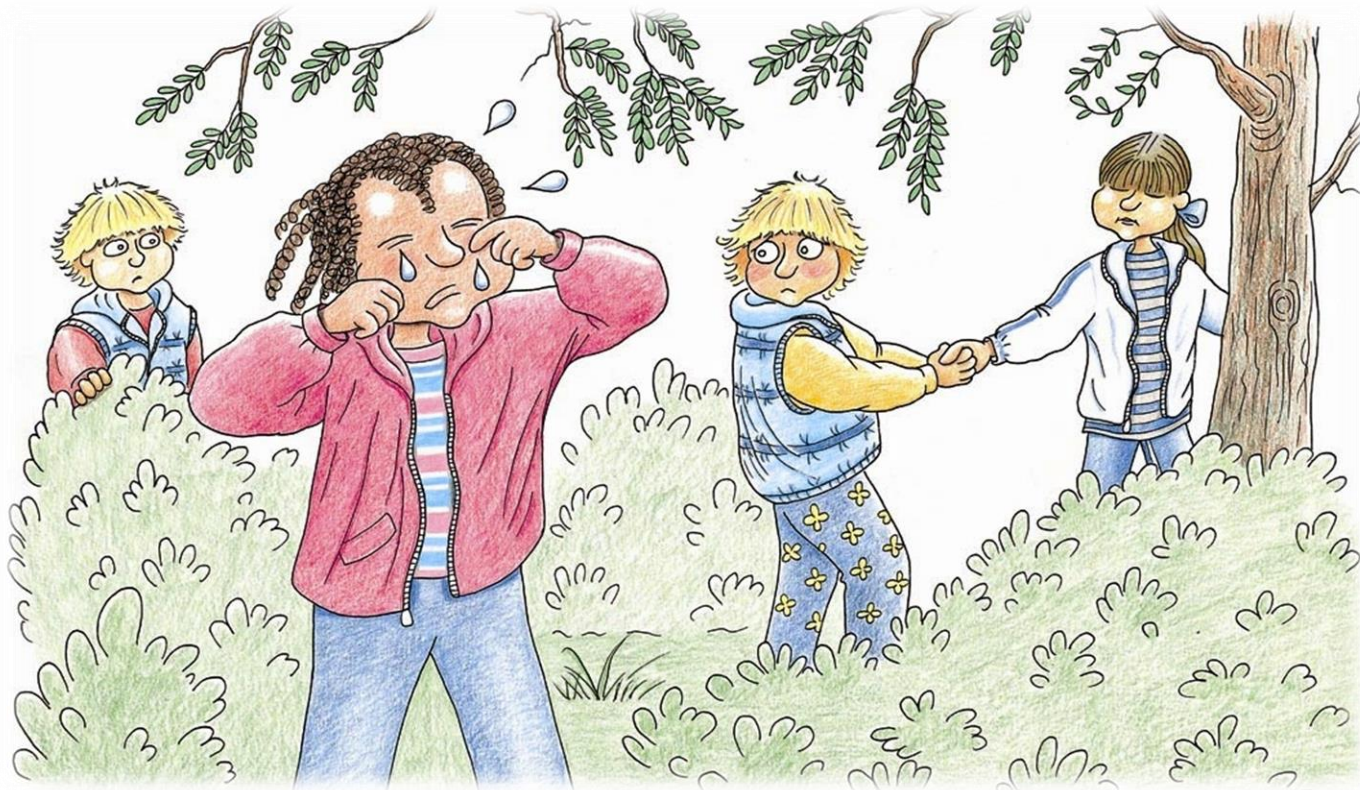
- Session 1 : Improving communication
- Session 2 : Listening
- Session 3 : Who can help us?
- Session 4 : Saying what you want to s



3. Making & breaking relationships

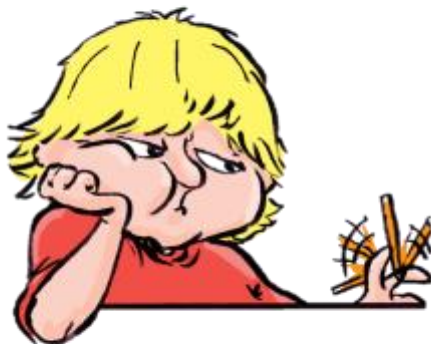
- Session 1 : How to keep a friend
- Session 2 : Dealing with loneliness & rejection
- Session 3 : How to resolve conflicts with friends
- Session 4 : How to make friends





4. Conflict resolution

- Session 1 : How to recognise good solutions
- Session 2 : Bullying
- Session 3 : Solving problems
- Session 4 : Helping others resolve conflicts



5. Dealing with change and loss

- Session 1 : Change and loss are part of life
- Session 2 : Coping with death
- Session 3: Visit to the graveyard
- Session 4 : Learning from change and loss





6. We cope

- Session 1: Different ways to cope
- Session 2: How to help others
- Session 3 : Adapting to new situation
- Session 4 : Celebrating together



Zippy's Friends evaluation



Holen, S., Waaktaar, T., Lervåg, A. & Ystgaard, M., (2012). The effectiveness of a universal school-based programme on coping and mental health: a randomised, controlled study of Zippy's Friends. *Educational psychology* 32(5),657-677

Dufours, S., Denoncourt, J., Mishara, BL, (2011). Improving children's adaptation: New evidence regarding the effectiveness of Zippy's friends, a school mental health program. *Advances In School Mental Health Promotion*, 4(3), 18-28

Clarke, M.E. and Barry, M.M., (2010) An evaluation of the Zippy's friends emotional wellbeing programme for primary schools in Ireland

Bale, C., and Wong, M. A, (2007). Using Zippy's friends to promote the mental health of young children.

Mishara, B., & Ystgaard, M. (2006). Effectiveness of a mental health promotion program to improve coping skills in young children: Zippy's Friends. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21(1), 110-123.

Monkeviciene, O., Mishara, B., & Dufour, S. (2006). Effects of the Zippy's Friends programme on children's coping abilities during the transition from kindergarten to elementary school. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 34(1), 53-60.

Bale, C., Mishara BL (2004). Developing an International Mental Health Promotion Programme for Young Children. *International Journal of Mental Health Promotion*, 6 (2), 12-16.



General findings

Implementation of Zippy's Friends

- Programme 'very much' attained goals
- Teacher training was 'very adequate'
- Children liked the sessions, 'teachers thought they were very useful'
- Overall average participation per session 'High'

General findings:

Significant Effects

(Pre-post comparisons with control groups)

Improvement in all four key social skills

- Cooperation
- Self Control
- Assertion
- Empathy





General findings: Significant Effets

- ↑ Positive coping strategies (ex.: saying sorry, telling the truth)
- ↑ Emotional literacy
- ↑ Class climate
- ↓ Negative strategies (ex.: screaming, biting their own nails)
- ↓ Bullying
- ↑ Improved school performance



General findings:

Problem behaviors

- ↓ Externalizing
- ↓ Hyperactivity
- *Both decreased in Experimental Group compared to increased in Control Group*



Passport: Skills for life

Development, implementation and evaluation

- Financed by the Public Health Agency of Canada as part of a competition on « innovation strategies »:
 - To develop a mental health promotion programme for older primary school children;
 - that can be used in diverse sites and environments,
 - with scientific evaluation of the implementation and effects.

Stages in the Development of the Programme

➤ Phase 1- pilot : 2009 – 2010

- Needs assessment – focus groups and consultations with stakeholders (planners, administrators, teachers, parents, children)
- Creation of short 4 session pilot programme;
- Implementation and evaluation of pilot programme.

➤ Phase 2 - version 1 : 2011-2012 school year

- Creation of all activities
- Test activities in summer camps, then revisions;
- Implemented in schools
- Evaluation, including comparaisons with control groups (pretest & posttest).

Stages in the Development of the Programme

➤ Phase 2 – version 2: 2012-2014

- Revisions of version 1, ajustements & validation of new activities in summer camps;
- Implementation of version 2 in schools;
- Evaluation, including comparaisons with control groups (pretest, posttest, 1 year follow-up).

➤ Phase 2 – final version: 2014-2015

- Revision et ajustements of activities;
- Linguistic corrections for international French and translation to English;
- Printing of English and French versions of all material

Stages in the Development of the Programme

- **Dissemination begins 2015-2016**
 - Development of web site for teachers, parents, children, general public, decision makers (available in French April 2016, in English July 2016);
 - Development of « motion comics » electronic version of comic strips;
 - Promotion and distribution of the programme in English and French in Canada
 - Pilot test in Brazil of programme in Portuguese
 - Presentations of evaluation results at international conferences
 - Collaborations with Partnership for Children to test programme in other countries (and languages?)

PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Universal programme for all 9 to 11 year olds
- 17 sessions, approximately 55 minutes/one per week
- Conducted by specially trained teachers (1 day prior training and half day mid-programme training)
- Comics distributed to children each week, about Olya, Milo, Elly and their friends dealing with everyday challenges
- Varied activities: Group discussions, role plays, giant board game, etc.
- Parent information sheets and at-home (optional) activities that are fun and well appreciated
- All material provided to teachers – turnkey approach
- Plans for electronic version, seeking funding for programming (but “motion comics” near completion)



The Meeting





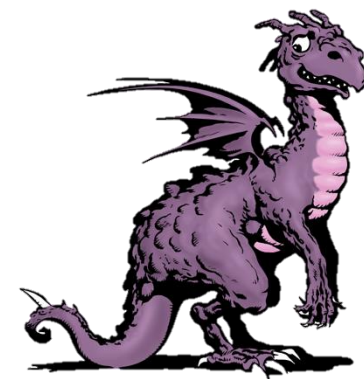


WHOOOOSH



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Intro session
 - The meeting



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 1 Emotions
 - Session 1- Strange creature: Valuing our differences and similarities
 - Session 2 - A Dinner with dragons: Understanding and expressing our emotions
 - Session 3 - The sculptors: Recognizing other people's feelings



HAPPY



DISCOURAGED



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 2 Relationships and Helping Each Other
 - Session 1: Life in the village: Helping each other and coping skills
 - Session 2: Friendships
 - Session 3: Highs and lows: Challenges in friendships

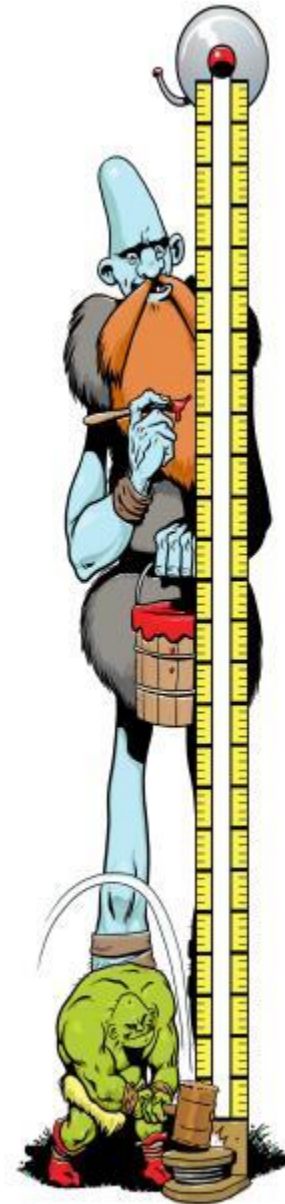


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- Module 3 Difficult situations
 - Session 1 - Things are heating up: Dealing with frustration
 - Session 2 - The heat is on: Dealing with stress
 - Session 3 - Quarrels in the village: Dealing with conflict



Help Thermometer



PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 4 Fairness, justice and what is right
 - Session 1 - Not fair: Unfair situations around me
 - Session 2 - Not funny: Dealing with bullying
 - Session 3 - An imperfect world: Dealing with unfair and unjust situations



Not Fair









PASSPORT: SKILLS FOR LIFE

- Module 5 Changes and loss
 - Session 1 - Big news: Coping skills for dealing with change
 - Session 2 - The balancing act: Dealing with loss
 - Session 3 - Entire village: Helping each other in difficult situations
- Final session
 - The coping kit - Let's review
- Party session
 - Let's celebrate!



Parent involvement



In order to bridge the gap between home life and school, the programme provides:

- Parent-child home activities
- A parent workshop

Evaluation

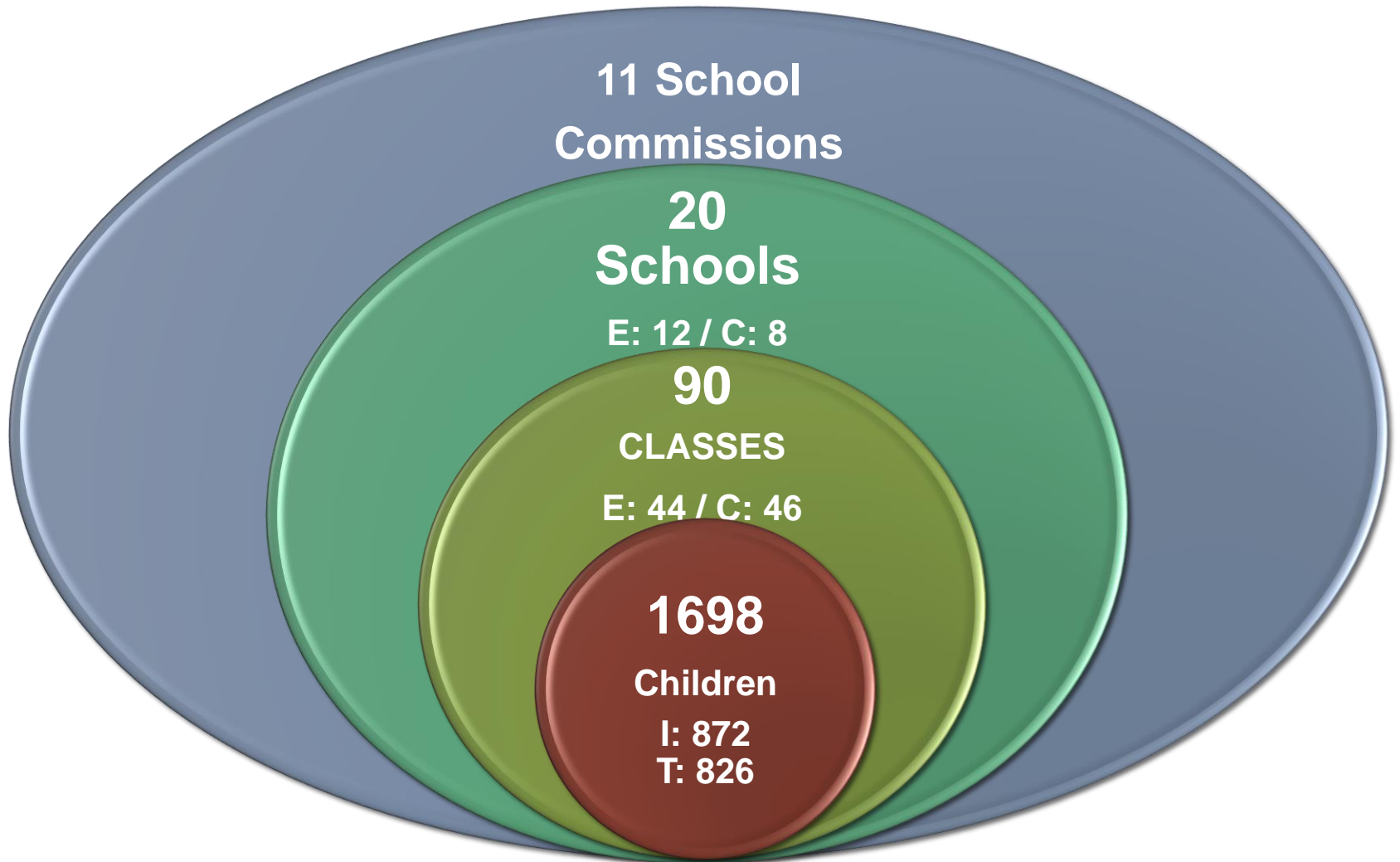
Two Questions

- Was the programme implemented successfully?
- Did it have any effects on the children and, if so, what were those effects?

Design

- Stratified random assignment to experimental and control groups
- Pre-test; post-test; one year follow-up

Participants



SOME RESULTS OF THE IMPLEMENTATION

Instruments

Appreciation forms

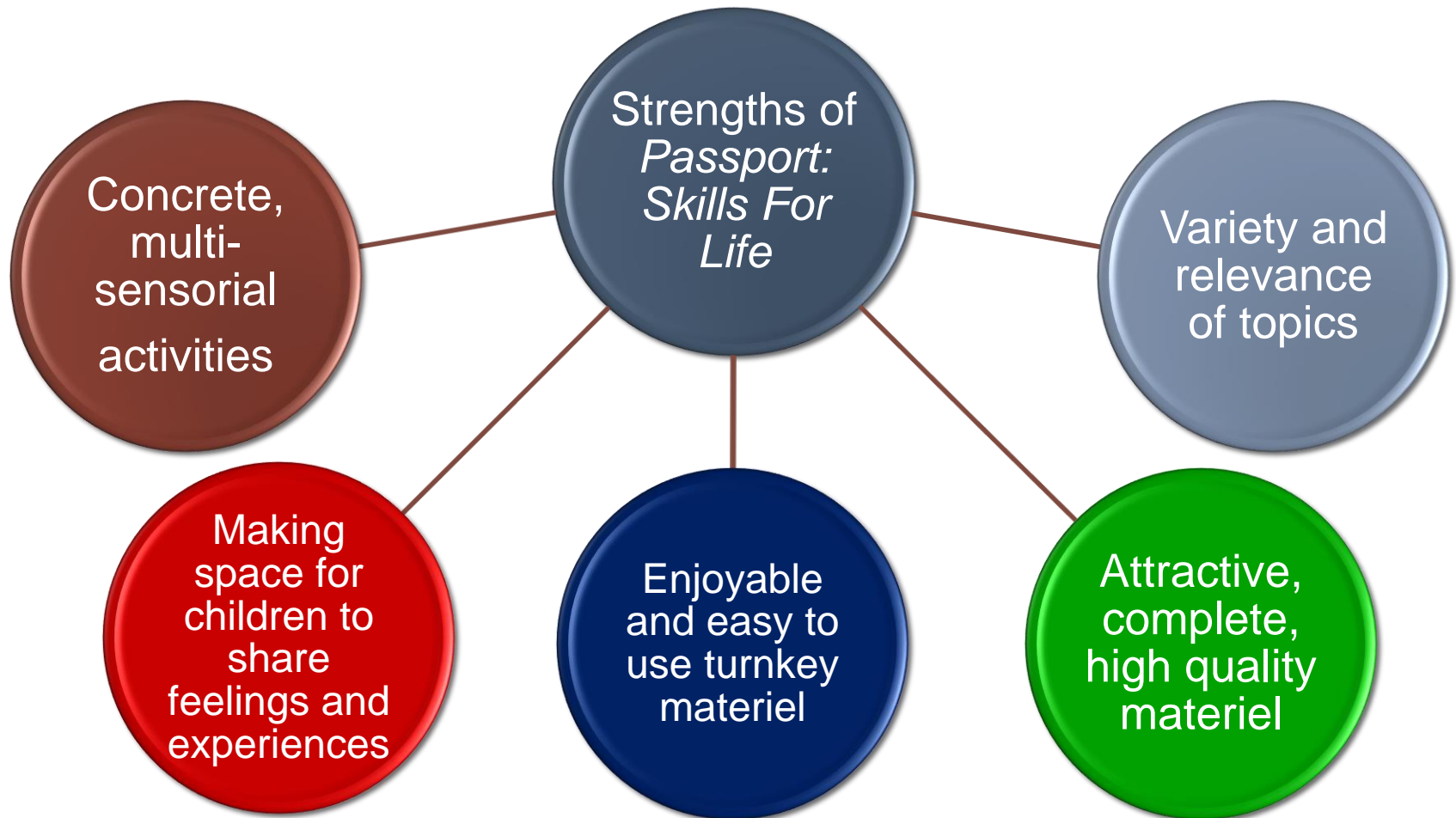
- teachers (n=756)
- children (n=14,364)
- parents (n=1,078)

Observations in classes (n=89)

Discussion groups

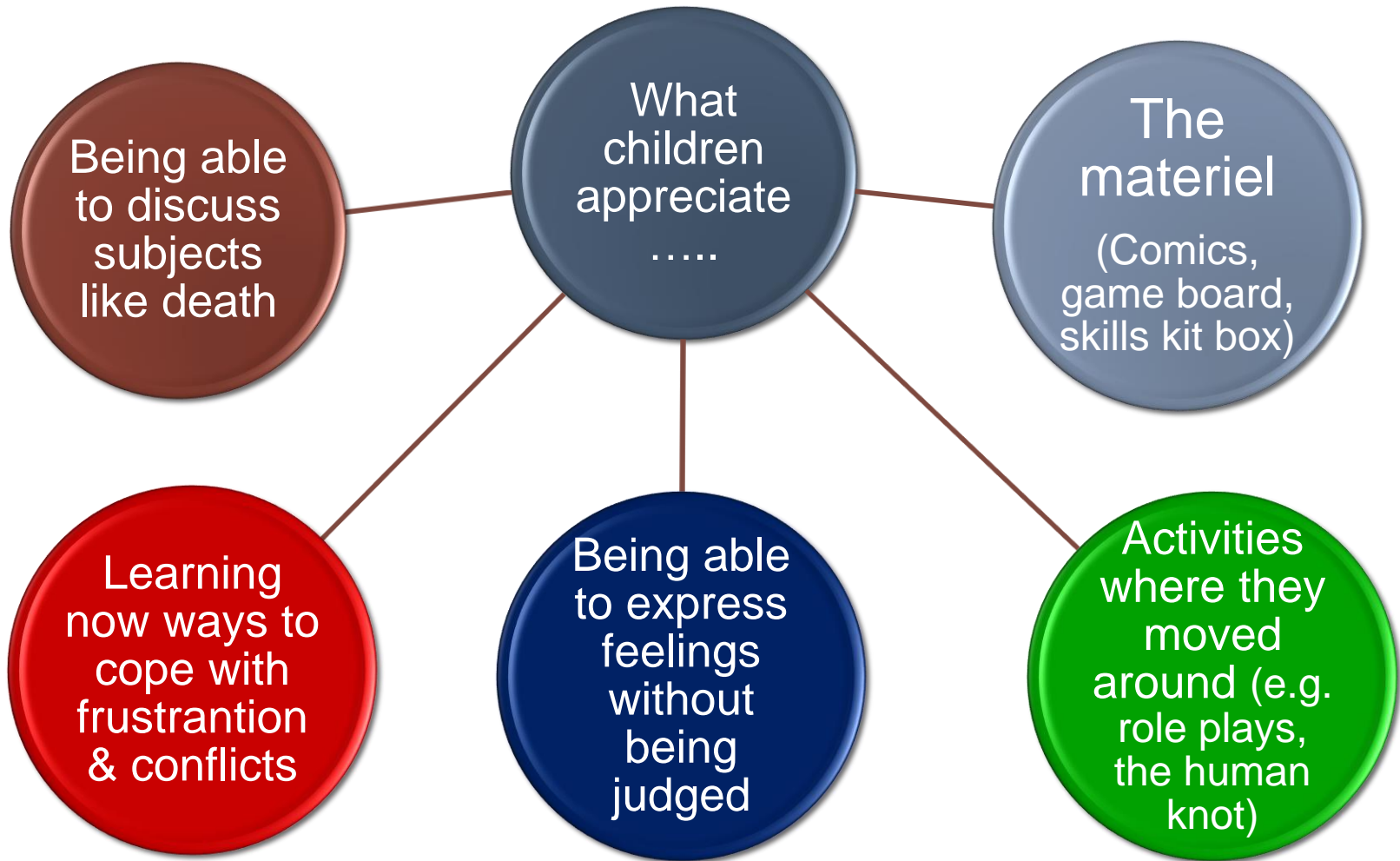
- teachers (14 groups, 53 participants)
- children (7 groups, 61 participants)
- parents (2 groups, 8 participants)

Strengths according to teachers



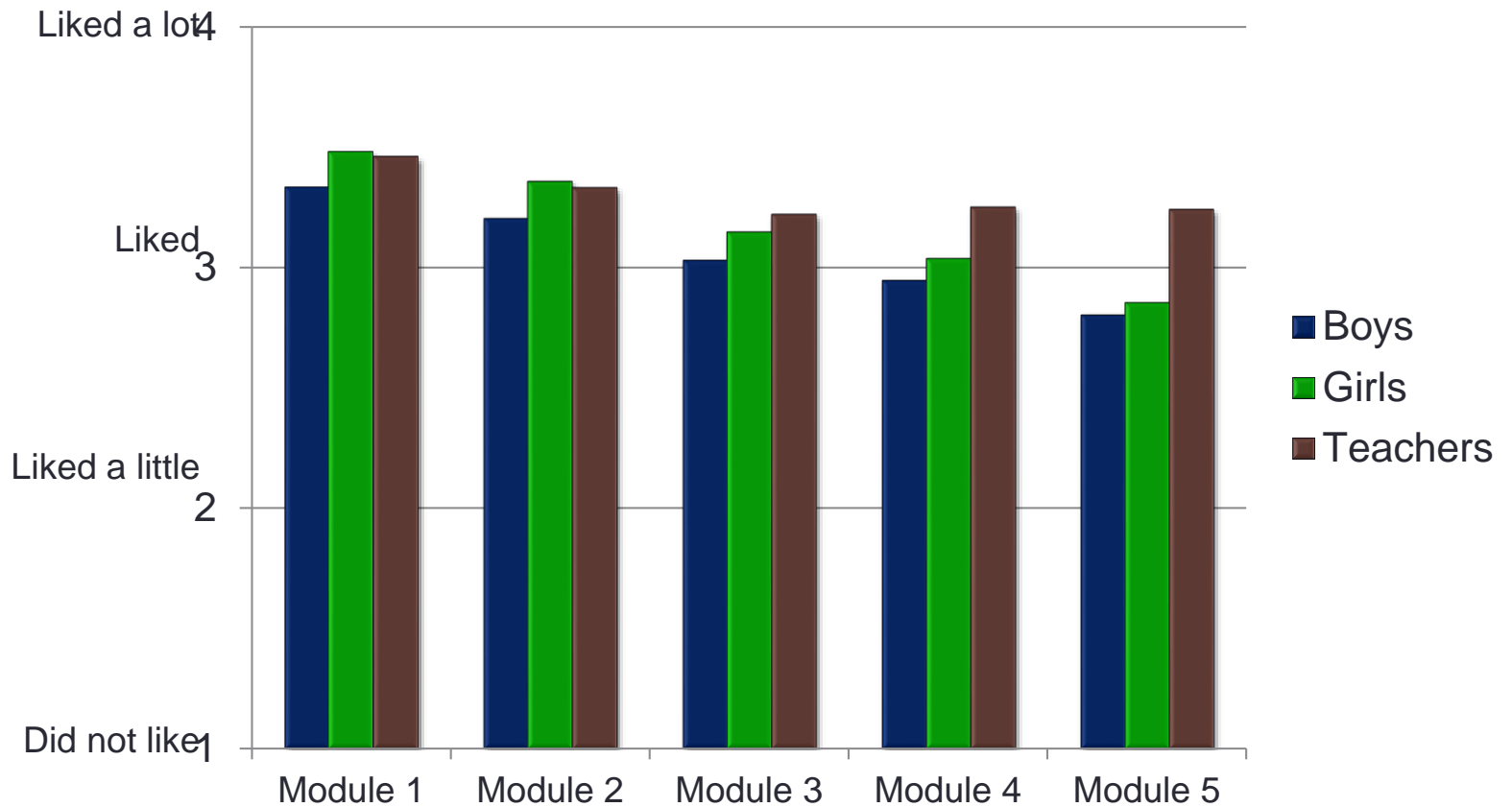
(Based upon: Focus Groups and Appreciation Forms)

Strengths according to the children



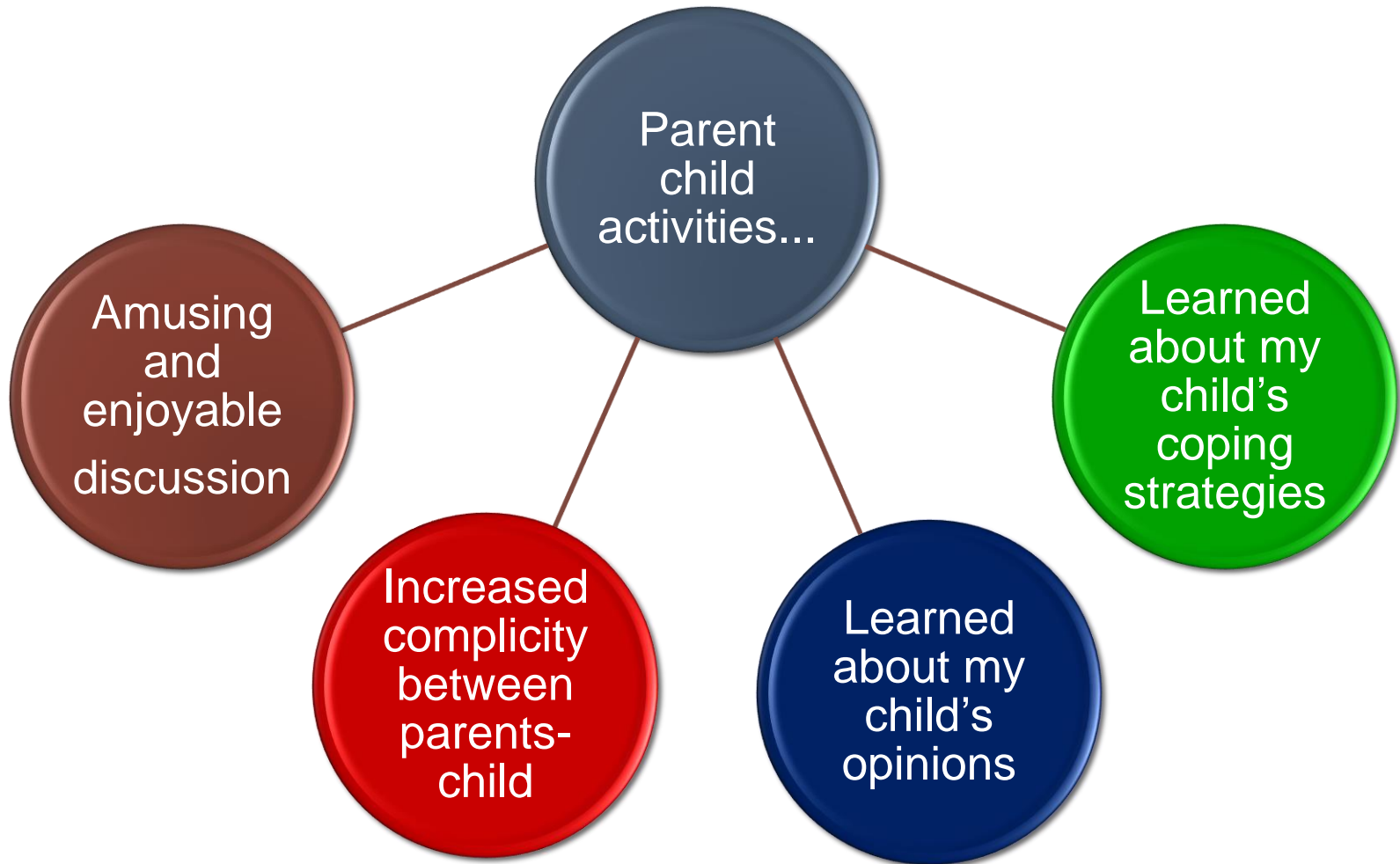
(Based upon: Focus Groups and Appreciation Forms)

Appreciation of modules



(Based upon: Focus Groups and Appreciation Forms)

Parent appreciation



((Based upon: Parent Appreciation Forms)

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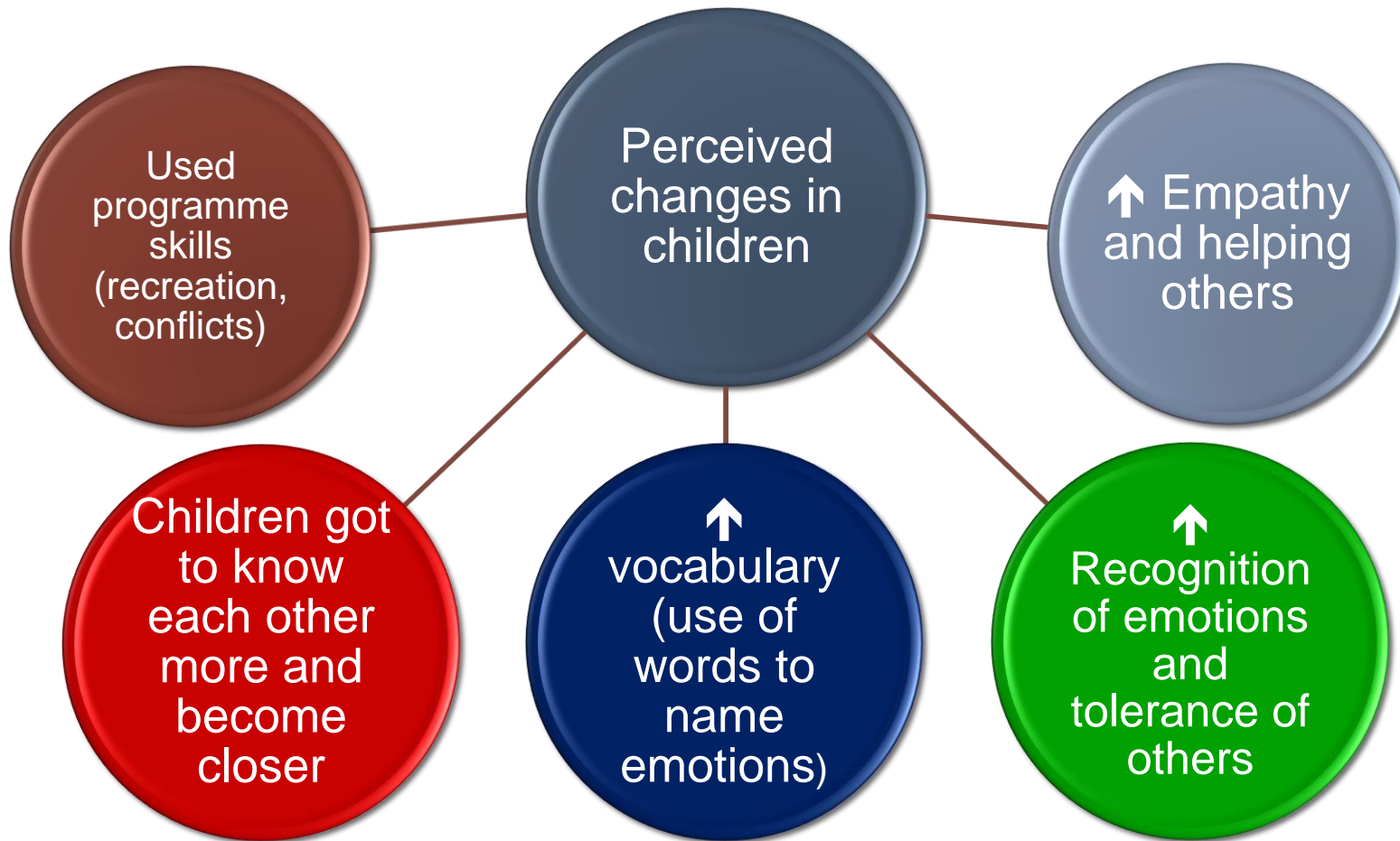
EFFETS

Researchers:

Brian Mishara, Ph.D. Professor, Psychology Department and Director,
Centre for Research and Intervention on Suicide and Euthanasia, UQAM

Sarah Dufour, Ph.D. Professor, School of psycho-education, Université de
Montréal

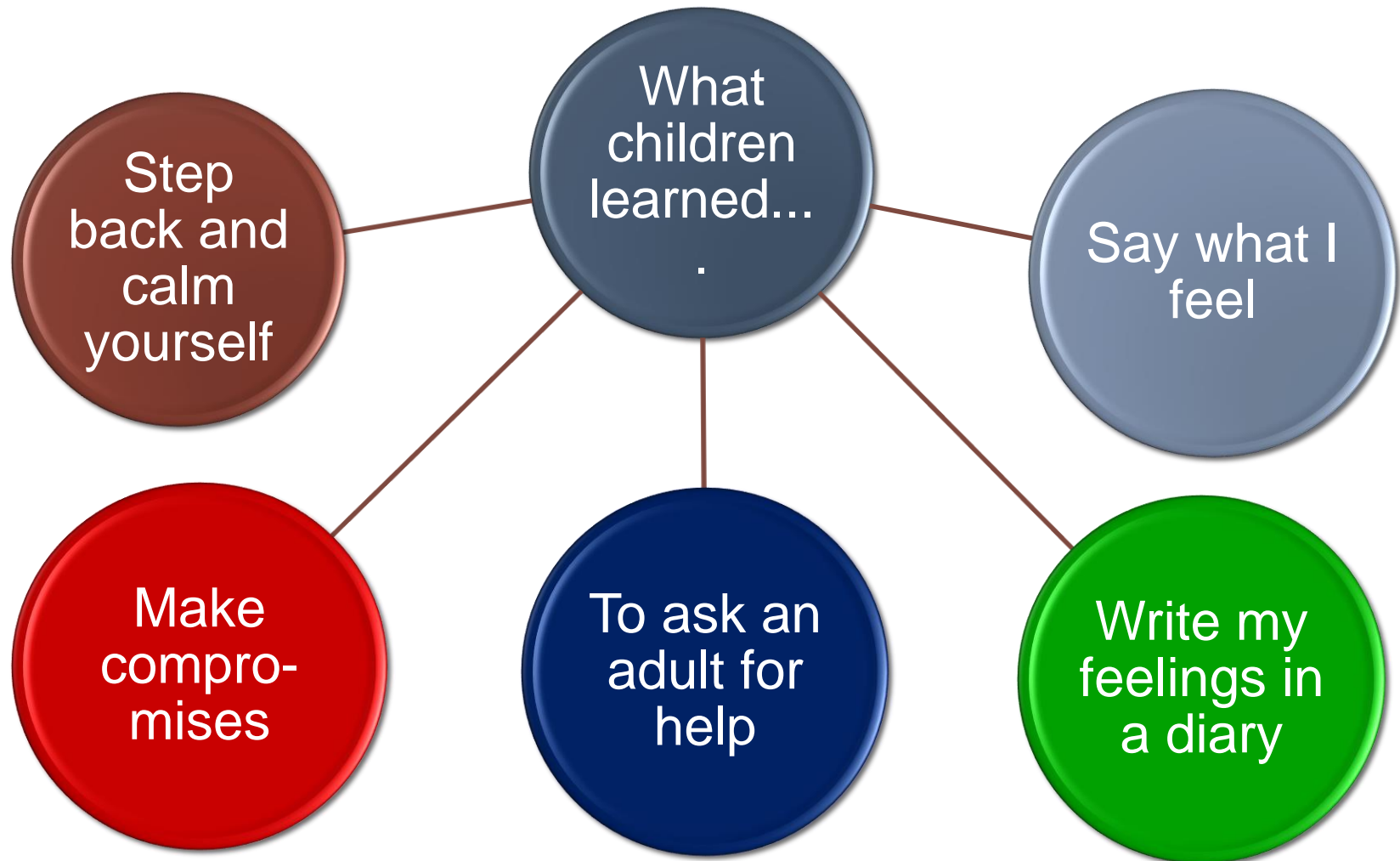
Perceived changes in children according to teachers



Based upon: Focus Groups and Appreciation and Feedback Forms)

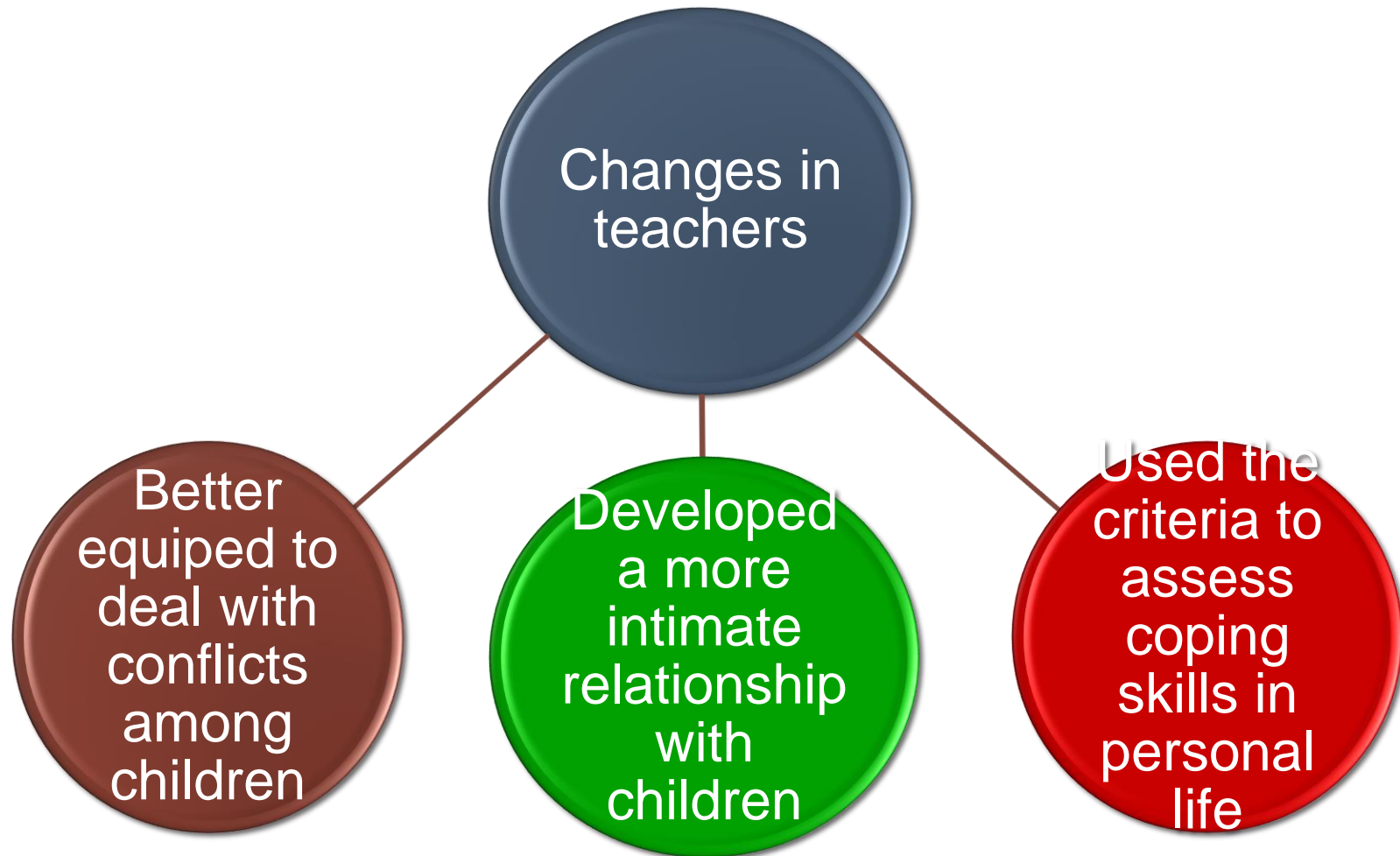
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What coping strategies children said they learned



(Based on: Focus Groups with Children)

How teachers felt that they changed



(Based upon: Focus Groups with Teachers)

Programme Effects (significant results)
Comparisons of Pretest – Post-test X
Experimental vs Coontrol Groups (N= 1492)

INCREASED RECOGNITION OF EMOTIONS
(« EMOTIONAL AWARENESS ») in reactions
to fictional problem situations

Programme Effects (significant results)

Comparisons of Pretest – Post-test X Experimental vs Control Groups (N= 1492)

- Coping Strategies:
 - Coping in Fictitious Situations: Increase in the number of coping strategies.
 - Draw and Write Test: Increase in the number of coping strategies used.
 - Kidcope: Increase in the number of strategies and increase in reported helpfulness of strategies.

Programme Effects (significant results)
Comparisons of Pretest – Post-test X
Experimental vs Coontrol Groups (N= 1492)

Social Skills Rating System:

Increases in « Positive Academic Behaviour » in both:
Teacher Observations (SSRS Teacher)
Student Responses (SSRS Student)

Programme Effects (significant results)

Comparisons of Pretest – Post-test X Experimental vs Coontrol Groups (N= 1492)

- No significant differences between amount of improvements in boys and girls
- Generally, improvements in impoverished school districts and more well off schools

Impact on teachers

- Teachers who conducted the programme significantly used more coping strategies involving Seeking Social Support and Positive Reappraisal after the programme; compared to Control Group teachers, who used fewer of these strategies.

Overall conclusion



Overall conclusions

- The programme is well liked by children, teachers and parents; it can be effectively conducted as planned.
- The programme works best in 4th and 5th Grades (about age 9-11)

Overall conclusions

- Research shows increases in the use of coping skills, increased recognition of feelings (emotional awareness) and improved classroom behaviours in children.
- Teachers report that the programme facilitates their management of the class and they report increases in the use of helpful coping skills in their personal lives.