



Peer Assistance Services
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OMNI

OBJECTIVES

- Highlight key accomplishments of Healthy Relationship Programs
- Present Results from Outcome Evaluation Data

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Reached 2,374 individuals across Denver-metro area
 - 1,505 unmarried individuals
 - 249 unmarried or married couples (498 individuals total)
 - 371 parents with young children
- Reached individuals at-risk for relationship instability and distress
- Partnered with several organizations serving metro Denver
- Participants appreciated and learned relationship skills

Impact of the Within My Reach[®] Program on Individual and Relational Outcomes for Singles and Individuals in Relationships

Background

The Healthy Relationships Program partners with community and faith-based agencies in the Denver and surrounding areas to provide relationship education to strengthen low-income families and communities by improving the quality, stability and longevity of relationships. The program helps to strengthen current relationships and promote healthy, committed relationships for couples; provide singles with skills to make good partner choices; provide skill training that enhances relationships in areas predictive of success; and foster healthier relationships which benefit the individual, couples and families. Three curricula were provided as a part of the Healthy Relationships Program: 1) *Within My Reach*[®] targeted unmarried individuals (single or in an unmarried relationship) participating by themselves; 2) *Within Our Reach*[®] targeted unmarried or married couples participating together; and 3) *Caring for My Family*[®] targeted parents of young children. Evaluation findings are reported for participants of the *Within My Reach* curriculum. This curriculum teaches skills and methods developed through rigorous experimental research and studies have found these skills to be effective in improving relationships (Renick, Blumberg, & Markman, 1992; Stanley, Markman, & Whitton, 2002).

Objectives

Objective 1: Describe Key Accomplishments of the Healthy Relationships Program:

The Healthy Relationships Program reached 2,374 individuals across the Denver Metro area:

- 1,505 unmarried individuals were served by the *Within My Reach* curriculum
- 249 unmarried or married couples (498 individuals total) were served by the *Within Our Reach* curriculum
- 371 parents with young children were served by the *Caring for My Family* curriculum

The Healthy Relationships Program reached individuals at-risk for relationship instability and distress:

- 96% did not have a college degree
- 59% were unemployed
- 43% had been convicted of a crime
- 58% received public assistance in the last 12 months

The Healthy Relationships Program successfully partnered with several organizations serving metro Denver residents:

- Substance Abuse Treatment programs
- Self-Sufficiency Service providers
- Faith-based Organizations
- Family Support Services
- Schools and agencies serving youth and their parents

Participants appreciated and learned relationship skills. Sample comments were:

- "It really made me think about my relationship and how I want to make it more healthy."
- "It kept me looking forward to Fridays and it gave me the confidence to feel I can have a healthy relationship."
- "It was very informative and it made me feel confident."
- "It's made my relationship with my significant other a lot stronger"
- "I have changed for the better and so much since taking this class."

Objective 2: Present Evaluation Findings from Within My Reach Participants

Research Questions

Did participants of the *Within My Reach* curriculum show improved outcomes after participating in the program?

- Did participants report improvements in their mental health, relationship skills, and conflict management skills?
- Did single participants increase their beliefs that they would have the skills needed to attain a healthy relationship in the future?
- Did participants in a relationship report increased confidence in and commitment to the relationship?
- Did outcomes differ for men or women?
- For those in a relationship, did outcomes differ as a function of length of the relationship or happiness in the relationship?

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Methodology

Procedures: The follow-up evaluation study was conducted during years 1-3 of the program. Data were collected from participants of the *Within My Reach* curriculum at three points in time: 1) at the beginning of their first class (baseline); 2) at the end of their last class (post); and 3) six months after participation in the program via a phone interview (follow-up).

Participants: Of the 878 *Within My Reach* participants, 618 (70.4%) participated in the pre/post evaluation. Of the 618, 329 (53.2%) completed a follow-up interview.

Evaluation results presented in this poster highlight findings from individuals who

- Participated in all three waves of data collection and
- Did not change their relationship status during the evaluation
 - *In Relationship:* Individuals reported that they were in the same romantic relationship at baseline, post, and follow-up
 - *Single:* Individuals reported that they were single at baseline, post, and follow-up
- In Relationship (N=73)
 - 58 women, 15 men
 - 12 in a relationship for less than 6 months at baseline, 58 in a relationship for 6 months or greater at baseline, 3 did not respond
 - 45 reported they were “happy” in their relationship at baseline, 27 reported they were “unhappy” in their relationship at baseline, 1 did not respond (seven item scale from “Extremely unhappy” to “Perfectly happy,” dichotomized into “happy,” or “unhappy,”)
- Singles (N=105)
 - 76 women, 28 men, 1 did not respond

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Measures

Outcome data (all participants)

1. *Mental Health:* 5 items (example item “How much of the time have you felt sad?”). Scaling was adapted to 3 responses: All/Most of the time; Some of the time; Almost never/Never (Ware, Sherbourne, & Davies, 1992)
2. *Relationship skills:* 10 items (example item “I express myself clearly and without fear”). Answered on a 5 point scale. Scaling was adapted to 3 responses: Strongly agree/Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Strongly disagree/disagree (developed by the creators of the *Caring for My Family* Program).
3. *Conflict Management skills:* single item questions adapted from Amato (2007) assessing invalidation, withdrawal, and escalation, scored using 3-point scaling (Never or almost never; Sometimes; Frequently).

Outcome data (singles only)

1. *Healthy Relationship Beliefs:* 4 items (example item: “I believe that I will choose the ‘right’ partner”). Scaling was adapted to 3 responses: Strongly agree/Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Disagree/Strongly disagree. Items selected from various sources.

Outcome data (participants in a relationship only)

1. *Commitment:* 4 items (example item: “My relationship with my partner is more important to me than almost anything else in my life”). Scaling was adapted to 3 responses: Strongly agree/Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Strongly disagree/Disagree (adapted from Stanley & Markman, 1992).
2. *Confidence:* 4 items (example item: “I am very confident when I think of our future together”). Answered on a 5 point scale. Scaling was adapted to 3 responses: Strongly agree/Agree; Neither agree nor disagree; Strongly disagree/Disagree (adapted from Stanley, 2003).

Analyses: All analyses were conducted separately for singles and participants in a relationship. The following analytic process was used.

1. Repeated measures ANOVAs were conducted with each outcome variable to assess whether there were significant changes in the outcomes at baseline, post, and follow-up assessments.
2. When significant changes were detected, post-hoc comparisons, using Bonferroni adjustments, were conducted to assess whether changes in outcomes were detected between baseline and post, post and follow-up, or baseline and follow-up.

A series of 3 X 2 mixed model ANOVAs were conducted entering each of the following variables as a between-subjects factor: gender, relationship duration, and relationship happiness.

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Results

- Participants reported significant improvements from baseline to follow-up in mental health and relationship skills. Results for conflict management skills were mixed.
 - Escalation: Participants reported significant decreases between baseline and follow-up.
 - Invalidation: Single participants reported significant decreases from baseline to follow-up. Participants in relationships varied by reported happiness. Unhappy participants reported significant decreases in invalidation, but happy participants did not.
 - Withdrawal: Single participants reported significant increases from post to follow-up. Participants in relationships did not report significant changes.
- Single participants increased their beliefs that they would have the skills necessary to attain a healthy relationship from baseline to follow-up.
- Participants in relationships reported significant increases in confidence in their relationships, but there were no significant changes in commitment.
- Outcomes did not differ for men and women.
- For those in a relationship, outcomes did not differ as a function of the length of the relationship. Only one outcome was different as a function of whether the relationship was perceived to be happy or unhappy when starting the class: the use of invalidation decreased only for unmarried individuals in a relationship when they reported being unhappy in the relationship at the start of the class.

Table 1: Results of Statistical Analyses of Differences in Outcomes at Baseline, Post, and Follow-up

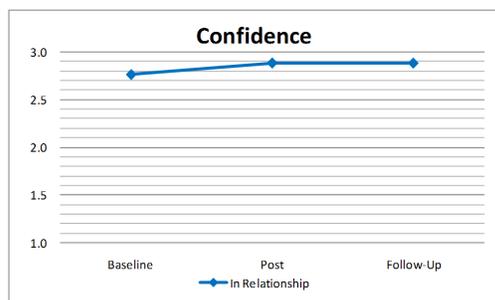
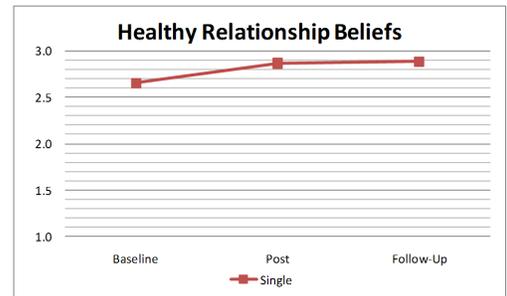
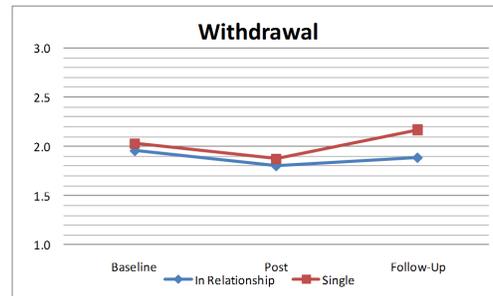
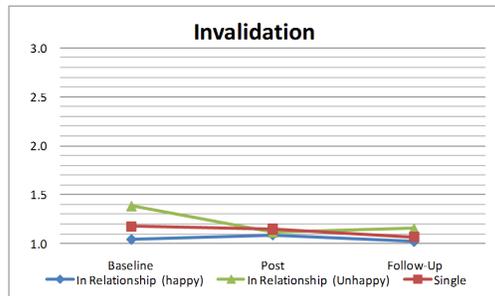
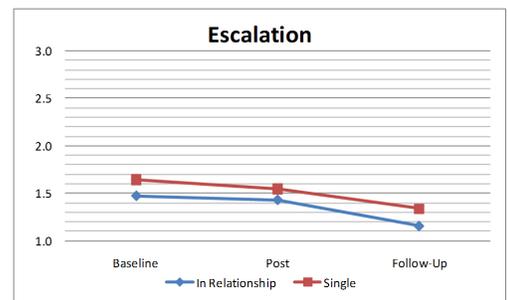
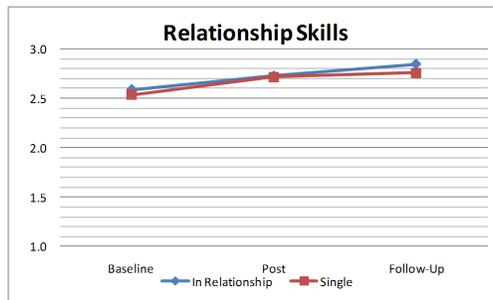
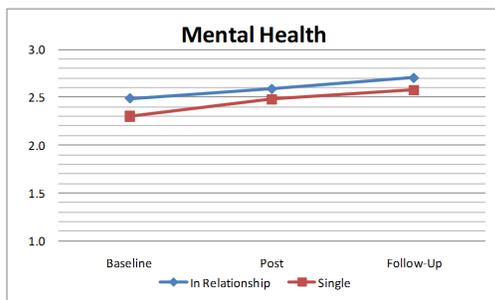
	n	Means			F	p	Pairwise comparisons
		Baseline	Post	Follow Up			
In Relationship							
Mental Health	73	2.49	2.59	2.70	9.18	< .001**	Follow > Base
Relationship Skills	73	2.59	2.72	2.84	20.96	< .001**	Follow > Base > Post
Conflict Management Skills							
Invalidation					5.06	< .05*	
Happy	45	1.04	1.09	1.02			Base > Post
Unhappy	26	1.39	1.12	1.15			
Withdrawal	70	1.96	1.80	1.89	1.25	= .289, ns	
Escalation	70	1.47	1.43	1.16	10.29	< .001**	Follow > Post = Base
Confidence	70	2.76	2.88	2.88	5.22	< .01**	Post > Base
Commitment	70	2.56	2.63	2.61	1.46	= .237, ns	
Single							
Mental Health	101	2.30	2.48	2.57	15.95	< .001**	Follow = Post > Base
Relationship Skills	103	2.54	2.72	2.76	24.22	< .001**	Follow = Post > Base
Conflict Management Skills							
Invalidation	103	1.18	1.15	1.07	3.99	< .05*	Follow > Base
Withdrawal	102	2.03	1.87	2.17	7.02	< .01**	Follow > Post
Escalation	101	1.64	1.55	1.34	8.69	< .001**	Follow > Post = Base
Healthy Relationship Beliefs	102	2.65	2.86	2.88	18.67	< .001**	Follow = Post > Base

Table 1 presents the sample size (n) for each outcome measure, average (mean) scores on the measures for each administration time (baseline, post, and follow-up), the ANOVA F values, significance results (p), and pairwise comparisons for relationship outcomes for singles and participants in relationships. For Conflict Management skills, decreases in means over time represent improvement. For the remaining outcome measures, increases in means represent improvement. The final column of the table provides information on at what time points significant differences were detected (e.g., were improvements seen between baseline and post or baseline and follow-up?). Significant pairwise comparisons (measured by a p-value of at least .05 or lower, after Bonferroni adjustments) are indicated in the final column with 'greater than' (>) or 'equal to' (=) symbols. For example, for Mental Health for singles, the means at follow-up ("Follow") and post ("Post") were both significantly greater than the mean at baseline ("Base"). The post test and follow-up means were not significantly different from each other.

"It kept me looking forward to Fridays and it gave me the confidence to feel I can have a healthy relationship"

"It made my relationship with my significant other stronger"

Figures



Limitations

There were several limitations to consider when interpreting the findings:

- Sample sizes from the follow-up evaluation were small. This was especially true when examining male participants and participants who were in a relationship for less than 6 months at baseline.
- Individuals who were demonstrating successful outcomes may have been more likely to participate in the follow-up evaluation than individuals who were struggling, which may have introduced bias into the results.
- Scaling was adapted on the measures to reduce the data collection burden at follow-up. On average, individuals reported relatively strong outcomes at baseline, which limited the ability to detect large changes.
- There was no control group to compare changes for those who did not receive Healthy Relationship programming.

Conclusions and Future Directions

Findings support the positive impact of participation in the Healthy Relationships Programming:

1. Participants reported improved wellbeing and enhanced skills critical for engaging in successful relationships and marriages.
 - a. Single participants reported increased beliefs that they would have the skills needed to engage in a successful, committed, and healthy relationship in the future.
 - b. Unmarried individuals in a relationship increased confidence in their relationships.
 - c. Improved outcomes were documented six months after participation in the program, supporting a sustained impact from Healthy Relationships programming.
2. Some hypothesized outcomes were not detected in the data (i.e., decreased withdrawal; increased commitment). Future research is needed to better understand the impact of healthy relationships programming on conflict management patterns and the factors that improve relationship outcomes for unmarried individuals in a relationship participating in relationship skills programming without their partners.
3. Future research with larger samples should investigate the impact of Healthy Relationships programming on outcomes as a function of gender, other demographic factors, and individual and relationship characteristics.
4. Data analysis is underway examining the effectiveness of other curricula offered through the Healthy Relationship programming.

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The Healthy Relationships Program is provided by Peer Assistance Services, Inc. with evaluation by OMNI Institute through funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families