Partners in LIFE Newsletter

October 2013

Partners in LIFE (Love, Intimacy, and Family Education) is a relationship-strengthening HIV/STI prevention intervention for young parenting couples. This randomized controlled trial (RCT) pilot study uses the nationally recognized Nurturing Families program as the control group. The 15-session intervention, Partners in LIFE (PiL), covers topics such as communication, empathy, conflict resolution, sexual risk reduction, and family planning (see table below for complete list of topics). Each session is conducted in a face-to-face group format and led by 2 trained facilitators. Child care, transportation, and dinner are provided. The basic inclusion criteria are:

- mother and father of the baby are in a romantic relationship
- mother is between 14 and 25; father is 14 or older
- child is between 0 and 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Session Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Program Intro</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Increasing Positive Emotions</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Appreciating &amp; Nurturing Partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Parenting &amp; Relationship Challenges</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Sex &amp; Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Conflict &amp; Communication</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Sexual Risk Reduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Identifying Emotions</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Recurring Conflict in Relationships</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Family Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Emotion Regulation</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Conflict Resolution</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Wrap-up &amp; Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I already helped improve my relationship, we understand each other more. Like, we talk about situations instead of, you know, arguing about it and we just...get more time to enjoy ourselves, because we relate more.”

- PiL Dad

“I like how you can avoid conflict. I like how she [the facilitator] taught us how to compromise with your partner. And basically how to balance being with your partner and being a parent at the same time.”

- PiL Mom

Study Timeline

Enrollment, randomization, & 1st computer-based survey ($25 incentive)

Couples attend 15 weekly sessions in intervention or control group

2nd computer-based survey ($35 incentive)

Final computer-based survey ($50 incentive)

Progress

# Couples Enrolled & Baselined

Retention

100% of participants returned for their follow-up visits 4 months and 8 months from baseline.

arch.yale.edu/projects/partnersinlife
Facilitator Spotlight

October 2013

We would like to thank our amazing facilitators for the first cycle of the program, Victoria Dancy and Tim Brown.

“This has been my 2nd year working with Partners in LIFE. I realize that most of these couples really want to have a healthy relationship and they are eager to learn communication, empathy and other skills. I have worked nine years in the human service field. I hold a bachelor’s degree in Human Services and I have grown personally as well as professionally in doing this work. I truly enjoy working with these young couples.”

Tim Brown, PiL Facilitator

“What I liked most about working with Partners in LIFE is that, the curriculum was participant and facilitator friendly. The structure provided a comprehensive and well planned system to deliver to participants, as well as keep them engaged. Most importantly, the design of the program featured some of the real life issues that affect the targeted population; and offered solutions that would help eliminate some of the barriers. My facilitator skills have advanced immeasurably since collaborating with Partners in LIFE.”

Victoria Dancy, Former PiL Facilitator

Process Evaluation of Partners in LIFE

During the RCT, we collect various forms of data from participants, facilitators, and observers to evaluate the strengths and areas for development of the PiL program.

Hot topics, based on participant, observer, and facilitator feedback and ratings:

- Communication & Listening skills and role plays
- Reducing Sexual Risk
- Wheel of Sex
- Conflict Resolution & Compromise

Thoughts from the field

“One of the things that really stands out in group are the affirmations at the end of each session, when couples have a chance to tell their partner something heartfelt and meaningful. Participants often make a point of thanking their partner for all of the effort they are putting in to improve their relationship. Specifically, one participant thanked his partner for working hard, being their children’s primary caregiver, and still coming to the sessions every week to work on their relationship as a couple.”

-Meghan Angley, PiL observer/Yale MPH Candidate

“Well we use condoms now. So it was definitely like, you know, a wake-up call.”
-PiL Dad in response to the effect of the program on his sexual risk

“Better communication...is another thing I learned. That stops a lot of problems, if you just talk it out.”
-PiL Mom in response to the effect of the program on her relationship

Recruitment

We recruit for our program mainly through referrals from our community partner, Children’s Community Programs of Connecticut, and other recruitment partners:

To date, we have screened 107 potential couples and we are currently looking for new couples to participate in our program. Please refer any interested couples to Valen Grandelski at the contact information listed below.

Have a question?

Please feel free to contact Dr. Trace Kershaw or Valen Grandelski with any questions!

Trace Kershaw, Principal Investigator  trace.kershaw@yale.edu  203-785-3441
Valen Grandelski, Research Assistant  valen.grandelski@yale.edu  203-785-5293

Like us on Facebook by searching ARCH Research Team!

arch.yale.edu/projects/partnersinlife