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2021

## Parent Education and Creative Art Interventions for Foster Families

Alyssa Haselsteiner  
*A. T. Still University*

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### Recommended Citation

Haselsteiner, Alyssa, "Parent Education and Creative Art Interventions for Foster Families" (2021). *OT Student Capstones*. 30.

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## Background

Children in foster care are at a higher risk of exposure to trauma. High turnover rates of foster parents are associated with negative consequences for children in foster care, with reports of cultural and legal barriers, inadequate parent training and preparation, inadequate mental health support, and challenging behaviors.<sup>1</sup> This highlights a need for more education, resources, and overall support for foster families.

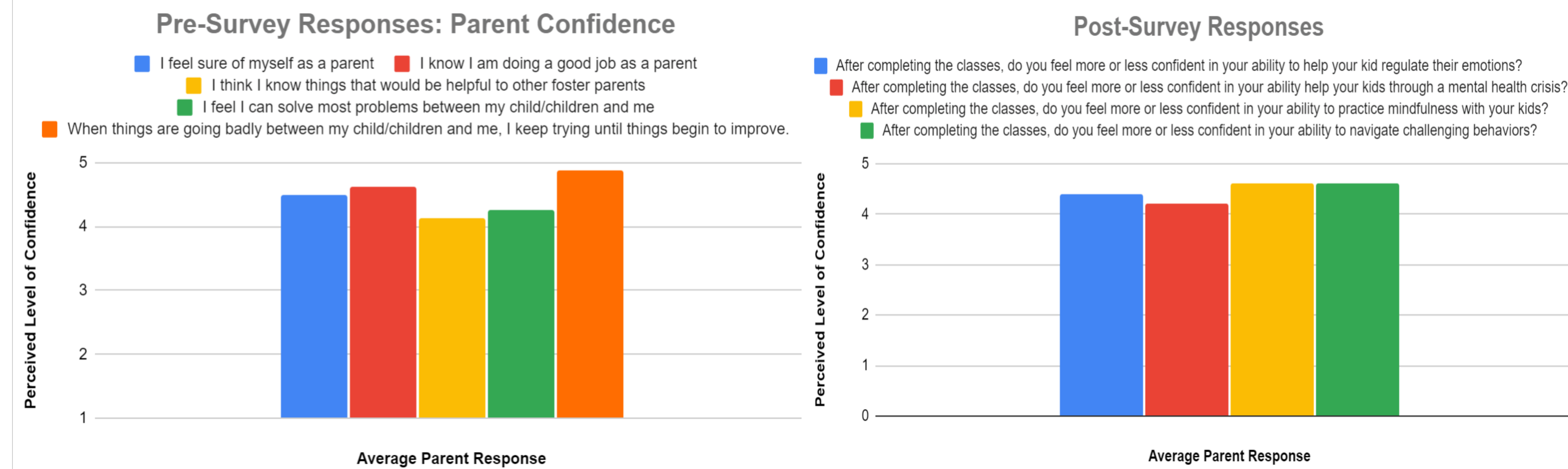
## Program Design

The capstone student developed and offered foster care classes to foster parents at Jose's Closet. Through a needs assessment, the capstone student determined that classes would address attachment and child development, mental health, creative art activities, coping strategies, and trauma informed care. Pre- and post-surveys were utilized based upon the Parenting Self-Agency Measure.<sup>2</sup> The capstone student also asked open ended questions for additional feedback.

## Program Objectives

1. Educate on play as an occupation for development.
2. Implement art-based interventions to develop coping strategies and emotional intelligence.
3. Provide a safe space for foster parents to ask questions and engage in healthy discussions.
4. Provide education to foster parents on behavioral and emotional needs of foster children.
5. Provide therapeutic interventions and coping skills related to emotional needs.

## Outcomes



Describe a time when you struggled with parenting or family tasks.

“When my child bottles up their anger and you feel so helpless when they won't release it. Talking and letting time go by just sometimes doesn't evaporate the issue quickly.”

“When we got a 3-year-old who was defiant, saying bad words, destructive if he does not get his way, hitting, and saying bad words even we tried almost all strategies I could think of.”

Describe a time when you had a parenting win.

“When I sat down with my teens and had them help me create a plan. They were much more willing to follow the plan because they had given input.”

“When my kids are motivated by the incentive system we started and are more likely to consider their actions or complete responsibilities independently.”

“When I got my daughter to engage in breathing exercises to help with her emotions.”

What topics would you like to learn more about related to parenting?

“Dealing with behavior changes in different settings. At home our child is great. But in daycare he is a lot more destructive without the rules and structure.”

“Emotional regulation/dysregulation, and to learn more about ADHD.”

“I'd like to learn more about emotional and behavioral health and resources for behavioral support.”

“It's good to understand how children display mental health and how they deal with their emotions. It looks so different from adults sometimes.”

## Creative Art Interventions (CAIs)

The CAIs which comprised the “Calm Down Kit” consisted of the following:

1. Emotions Color Wheel
2. Color It Out Activity
3. Envelopes of Emotions
4. Sensory Tools

## Discussion

At both data collection points, parents had high levels of confidence in their parenting skills. Several respondents gave answers that related to challenging behaviors, coping/mindfulness skills, and emotional regulation. Class groups additionally discussed academic success, behaviors in and outside of the home, boundary setting, bullying, and transracial adoption.

## Implications

Future projects would benefit from including trauma-informed care and emotional regulation strategies as part of a foster parent education program. Results from the surveys and class discussions suggest a need for continued support and education for foster parents. Occupational therapists working with foster families need to have an extensive understanding of this population to include trauma-informed care and the individualized needs of the families.

## Acknowledgements

Faculty Advisor: Rebecca Wolf, JD, MPH, OTR/L  
Community Mentor: Wendy Esquibel, Founder and Director of Jose's Closet

## References

See provided references