

“We’re All in the Same Boat”: A Qualitative Study of Parents’ Change Processes in a Parenting Program

BAPS 2025



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Context

(Bianchi et al., 2006; Hays, 1998)



(McQuillan & Bates, 2017)



(Musick et al., 2019)



(Nowland et al., 2021)

Context

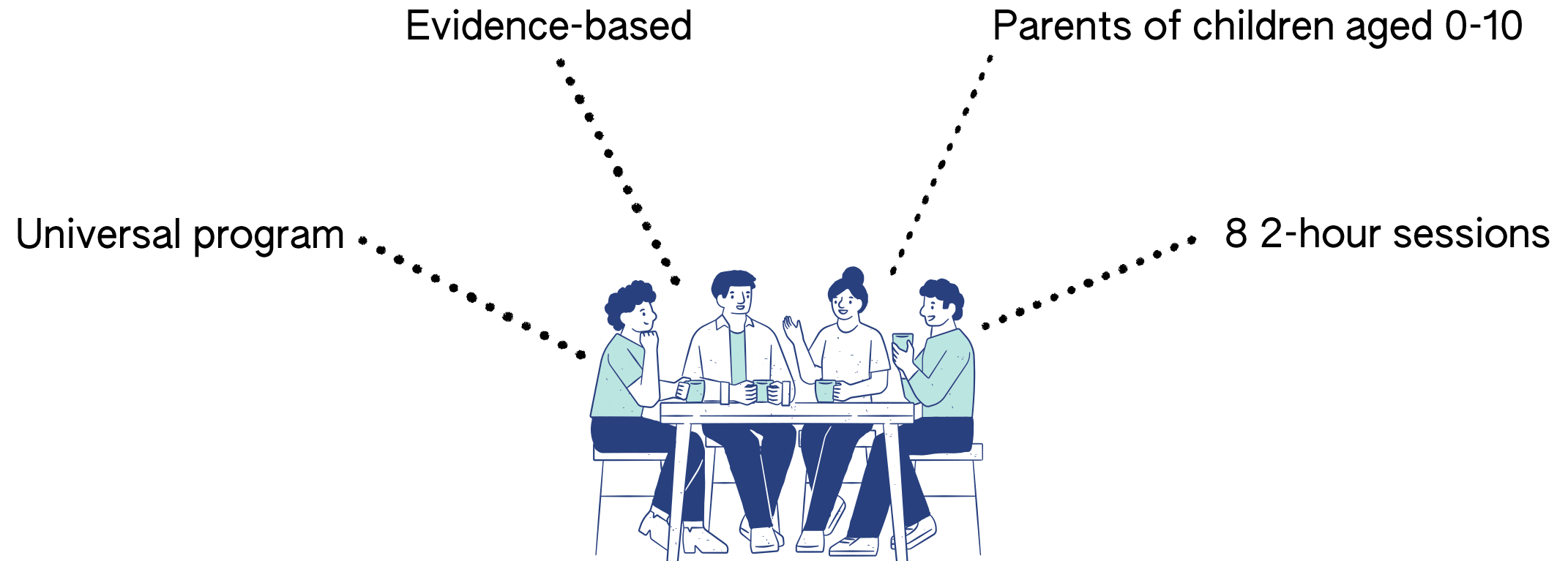


Aart-Jan Venema



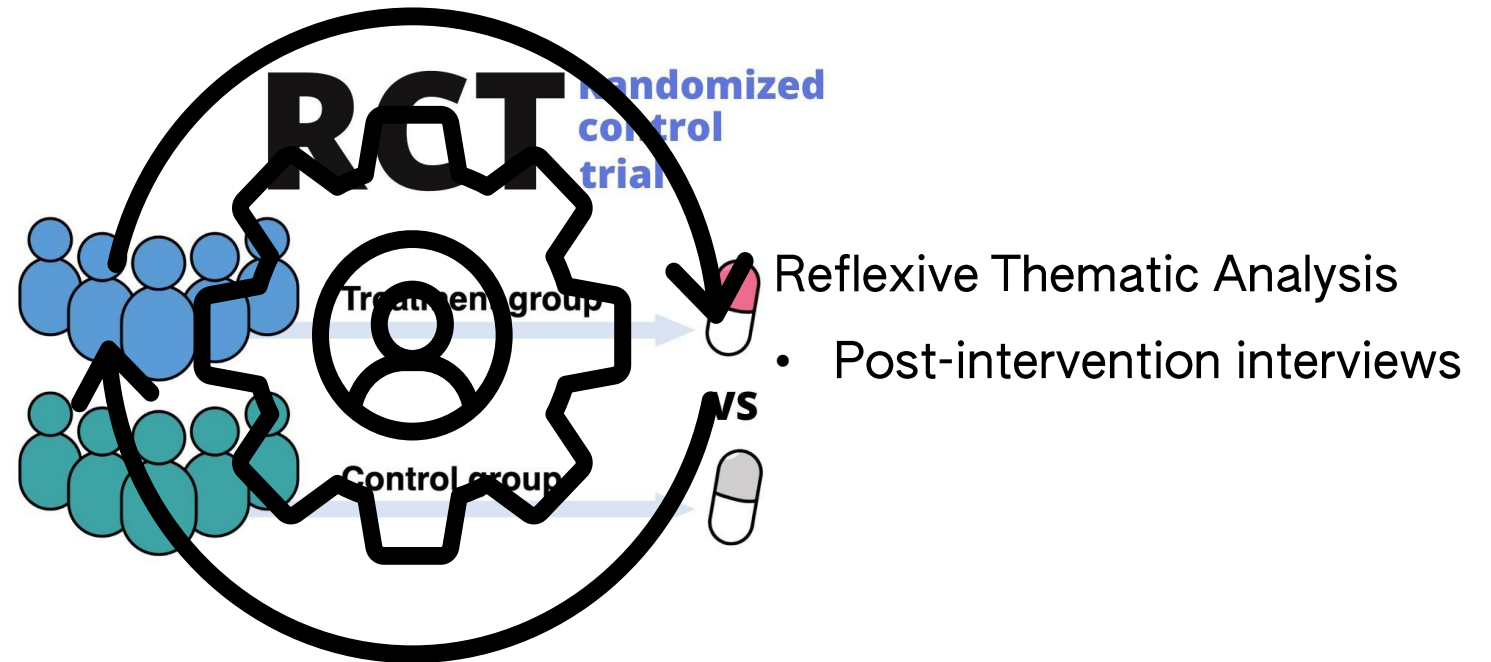
Luci Gutiérrez

ACT-Parents Raising Safe Kids

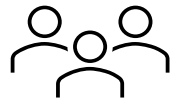


Present Study

Qualitative Study



Participants



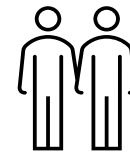
$N = 17$ (1 father, 16 mothers)



$M_{\text{age child}} = 6.2$ years



$M_{\text{age parent}} = 36.8$ years



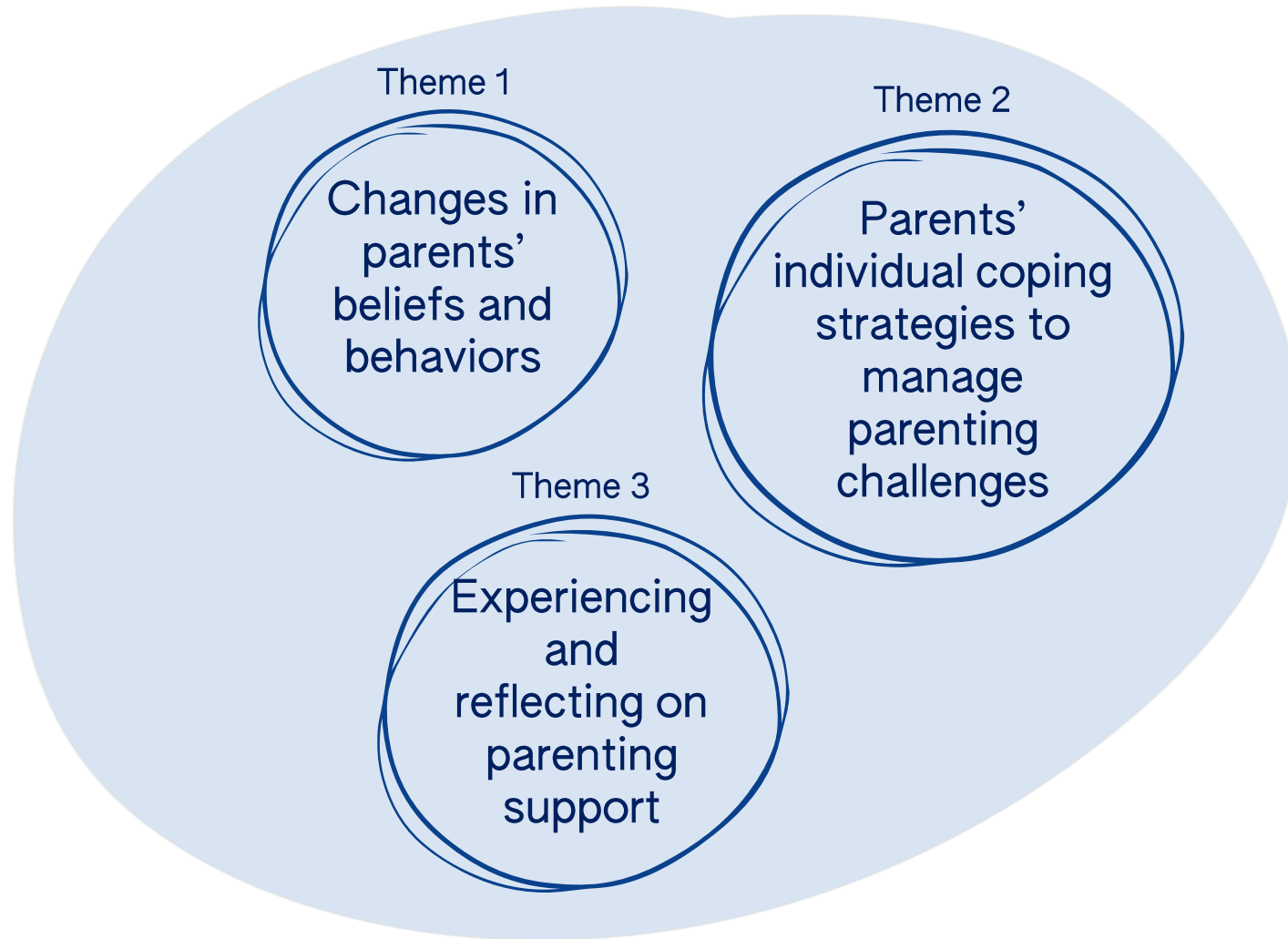
85% couple



50% > 4000 euros

Results

RQ: What are parents' perceived change processes following a group-based parenting program?



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Theme 1

Changes in parents' beliefs and behaviors

Sub-theme 1

Adjustments in parents' own behaviors and family dynamics

Sub-theme 2

Reframing and accepting children's behaviors

Sub-theme 3

From isolated daily struggles to shared reality: parenting struggles as a part of parenting

REALIZING THAT OTHER PARENTS FACE DIFFICULTIES TOO

« I think the benefit of the group is realizing that we're not alone, that we're facing the same problems and that, actually, there might be a kind of normality in what feels difficult or abnormal or not what we initially wanted. »

(Nathalie, mother of a 2-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter)

NORMALIZING AND ACCEPTING OWN STRUGGLES

« It helps to put our suffering and difficulties into perspective and to normalize them...Because we're going through the same things, asking ourselves the same questions, and facing the same difficulties... Once you know that, you feel so much less alone, and that changes a lot of things. Yes, that you're not the only one. Yes, that it's not me, it's not anyone. it's just that it's hard, in fact, to be a parent. »

(Ava, mother of a 5-year old son)

Results

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"Just the fact of telling myself that I'm human and that sometimes when I snap, when I get angry, it's natural, it's normal — and that I just need to release the pressure and stop feeling guilty — that's really the biggest thing that stands out. I'm realizing it's actually the other way around — I won't be able to be a good mother in the long run, let's say, if... if I don't make myself a priority. It was unthinkable before, and little by little, it's starting to sink in. I've started putting it into practice, and I'm glad I did."

(Nayla, mother of an 8-year-old girl)

Results

SOCIAL TRANSMISSION OF PRESSURE

“I feel that there are really a lot of injunctions around parenthood nowadays, and that it's too much for me...There is a kind of heaviness and guilt, a fear of doing things wrong. Now, that's also clearly linked to my personality, to some of my character traits and all that. But still, I think there's a broader climate that encourages this.”

(Hannah, mother of a 9-month-old boy)

PARENT NEEDS TO BE OVERLY INVOLVED

“In today's reality — in the world we live in — you're expected to be the perfect mom, you know? To always do everything, like baking birthday cakes, being present at all the school events, at all the parent meetings — to really be present for everything.”

(Laura, mother of a 5-year-old boy)

Taking a step back
from unrealistic
parental
prescriptions

PRESSURE LEADING TO DOUBTS AND GUILT

“There is a general tendency among parents to give the impression that everything is going well, and that, as a result, everyone feels guilty when they think to themselves ‘Oh no, everything is fine with the others, but not always with me.’”

(Marc, father of a 3-year-old girl)

GROUP HELPED TO ALLEVIATE PRESSURE

“It helped to gently compare myself and say, well, ‘Maybe I need to take a step back from perfection, push a little less on perfection, it's normal what's happening’, you see, it's the normality...the right to make mistakes really gives you a feeling of being happier, of not constantly carrying the burden of saying ‘I can't make a mistake.’”

(Marc, father of a 3-year-old girl)

Results

RQ: What are parents' perceived change processes following a group-based parenting program?

Theme 3



Sub-theme 1



Sub-theme 3



Sub-theme 2



FEELING UNPREPARED FOR PARENTHOOD/LACK OF SUPPORT

“There’s no one who really explains to us how to raise a child. So, we just learn as we go... you don’t know what to expect.”

(Laura, mother of a 5 -year-old son)

“To be a good cook you have to take cooking classes. I don't know, for construction, you have to do architecture and all that. Do you take courses to become a parent? Never in life!”

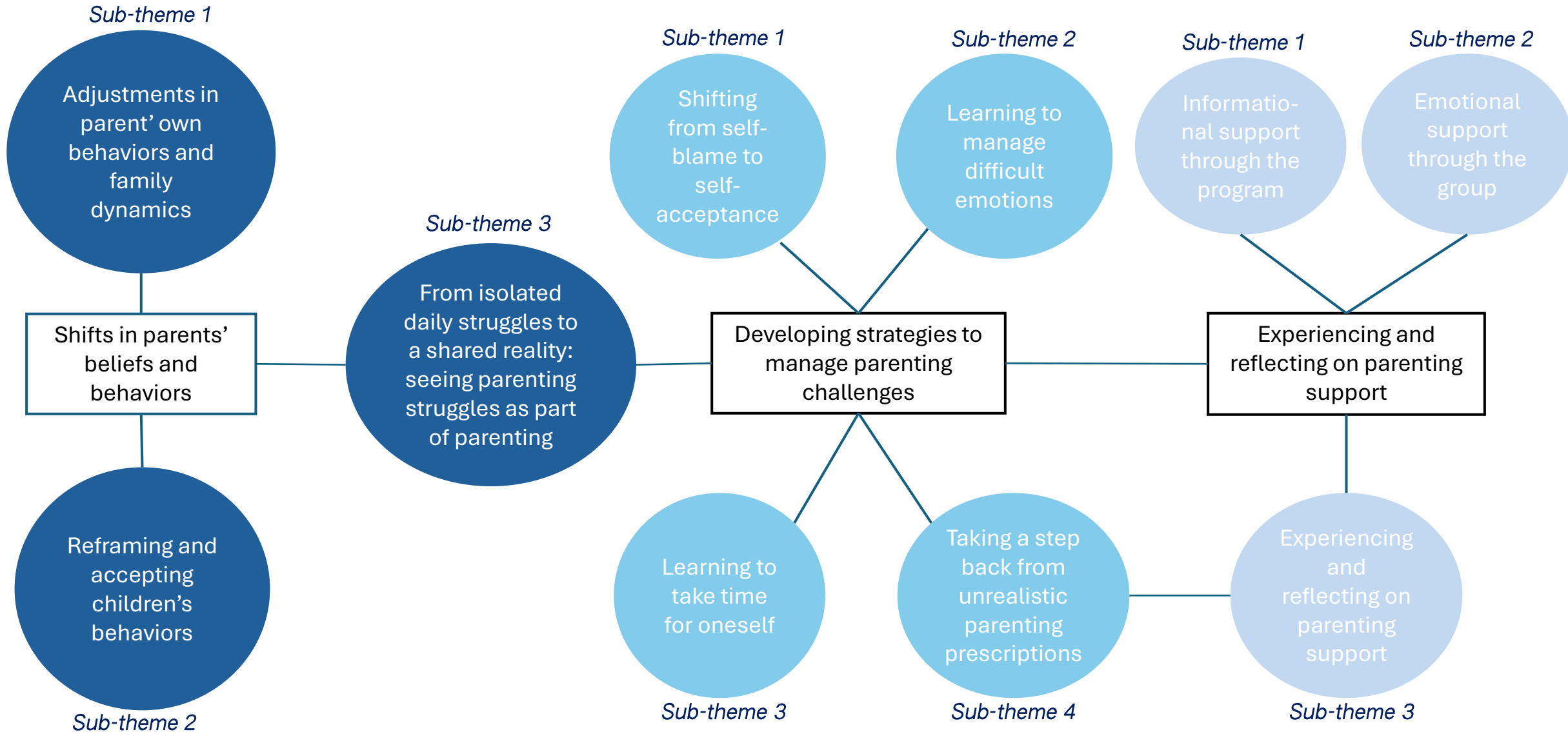
(Farah, mother of a 9-year-old son)

REALIZING THE IMPORTANCE OF SUPPORT

“It [parenting] is an incredible turmoil, and one for which we had very few tools, really. But now, thanks to what we did together, it allowed us to be better equipped. We have more knowledge, and yes, we actually feel more empowered to react, to react better, and to know, 'OK, actually, there is always a way of doing things that could work for me.’”

(Ava, mother of a 5-year old son)

Overview of the Results



Discussion



Improved parenting strategies & increased knowledge (van Aar et al. 2017)

Shifts in family dynamics (Erráziriz et al., 2016)



Self-compassion (Neff, 2003)

Doctor: have you been drinking water, exercising, getting rest and practicing self-care?

Me:



Self-care (Lee & Miller, 2013)



Group support (Barlow & Coren)
Social capital (Fielden & Gallagher, 2008; Putnam, 2001)

Discussion



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Thank you!



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Overview of the Results

