

# Introduction to Parent Confidence Project

*A program to strengthen parent's confidence in their capacity to facilitate their child's flourishing.*

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## **Description:**

A 6-session coaching program (individualised or in a group) for parents who are committed to facilitating their children's emotional well-being.

Parents are helped to consider their role in encouraging their child/adolescent's healthy development.

## **It aims to:**

- Optimize the way you support your child's wellbeing
- Shift focus to yourself, the parent rather than trying to change the young person
- Promote more autonomy and responsibility in your young person through how you manage yourself
- Help you get back on track as a loving and firm leader
- Establish a longer-term project of parent leadership. This is not a quick fix, but with changes to old patterns of interaction, the young person is helped to gradually improve the way they manage their own life challenges.

## Confidence building: From child project to parent project

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It's natural to want to try to take on responsibility for trying to change a child who is struggling in aspects of life. Hence it may be a surprise to hear that this program is designed to focus on the parent rather than to try to change the young person. A repeated idea in this Parent Confidence Project is that when parents shift their energies away from trying to change their child and invest in what is in their control as parents, their child has increased breathing space to grow in character and resilience. Changing another is outside of anyone's control, whereas changing self is always achievable. When a parent discovers ways they can promote more autonomy and responsibility in their child, through how they manage themselves, it can increase a parent's confidence. It doesn't promise a dramatic improvement for the young person but it does enable the parent to secure themselves as a loving and firm leader. Usually after some initial protests from the young person as they experience changes to old patterns of interaction, the parent begins to observe their child/adolescent beginning to manage their own life challenges more successfully. Even gradual changes can make a huge difference to a young person's path towards adulthood.

Information/worksheets are included at the end of each sessions to assist with the parent's change efforts.

## Program structure

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### STAGE 1: SESSIONS 1-3

#### **Stepping back: Observation and awareness**

Learning to observe the parent-child interactions when stress is high

Parents are assisted to:

- Find the most effective ways to lower the high stress of caring for a symptomatic young adult
- Understand the child/adolescent's developmental stage and how this shapes parenting, to grant appropriate independence and to foster connection with the young person
- Consider any patterns that might be fuelling tension in the parent/carer partnership
- To identify any patterns that may be triggering increased dependency or reactivity in the child/adolescent
- Distinguish between what is within a parent's control and what is not.

### STAGE 2: SESSIONS 4-6

#### **Stepping up: Adjusting self**

Learning to adjust parent interactions to promote the young person's growth in responsibility and wellbeing

Parents are assisted to:

- Experiment with acting only on what is in a parent's control
- Reduce unhelpful tensions with the other parent
- Experiment with ways to connect without intensity
- To be able to hold one's own limits with the child/adolescent without creating a power struggle
- Be able to say what I am willing to do as a supportive parent and what I'm not willing to allow as a loving parent
- Set a realistic action plan for maintaining progress.

This program can be equally useful for one or both parents to attend. It can be very helpful for just one parent to work on changing the way they manage interactions. As one person changes, others in the family make adjustments that can lead to a healthier family.

**If done in a parent group** it can be an added value to gain insights from hearing the descriptions of other parent's interactions and change efforts with their children.