

Preface

In the early 1990s, at a time when youth aggression was on a disturbing rise in residential care in the Montreal area, a movement toward Family TIES was set in motion. Batshaw Youth and Family Centres were using secure custody services from the francophone sister organization dealing with delinquent youth under the Young Offender's Act. A residential program manager at Centre Jeunesse de Montréal, Clément Laporte, envisioned a treatment approach for rehabilitation services to the most heavily adjudicated English-speaking youth in the province of Quebec. His leadership and management produced an excellent team effort in the development of prosocial competency training for these youth. The approach was based on selected elements of Dr. Arnold P. Goldstein's Prepare Curriculum (Goldstein, 1988) and Aggression Replacement Training (ART; Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs, 1998). These psychoeducational, cognitive-behavioral approaches were seen as promising practice for remediating the aggressive approach to life that these tough and very troubled youth presented.

Out of these beginnings emerged the program that would eventually evolve into the Family TIES approach described in this book. As a new social worker assigned to do the family work for these violent young offenders, I (R.C.) was trained by Dr. Goldstein and then asked to offer a family group to complement the youth programming being delivered. The notion of the family as the context for change was a significant strategy in this overall plan.

A specific goal of the program was to stimulate empathy in these young men for the victims of their crimes, in what was, effectively, a victim impact program. As a result, the Prepare Curriculum was used as the text to organize group work to meet these goals. The curriculum contained the three elements of Aggression Replacement Training—Skillstreaming, anger control training, and moral reasoning training—but also included other topics relevant to the project. In particular,

empathy training and problem solving training became a focus in designing this intervention for young offenders.

Anger control training, empathy training, moral reasoning training, and problem solving/conflict resolution were adopted as the first four program components used in the residential unit's cognitive-behavioral interventions. A program we referred to as "Parental Empathy" was designed to include the parents in the initiative from the beginning. Skillstreaming and elements of situational perception training were also employed. The Parental Empathy program evolved to become Family ART and today has further evolved into the Family TIES program.

Parental Empathy training originally consisted of four meetings, one to introduce the parents to the content of the training their youth were receiving and three more in which youth and parents could work together to try some of these concepts. In brief, youth and parents practiced using basic Skillstreaming skills such as Listening, Negotiating, and Understanding the Feelings of Others. Exercises from the Prepare empathy training course were used to teach communication styles, feelings vocabulary, and nonverbal skills. Training situations from the Prepare situational perception training course were combined to examine situations where empathy was required, and so on.

Parents appreciated having a better understanding of their youth, and youth were moved by the participation of their parents in these early family group activities. The program succeeded in turning the hearts of the youth to their parents and vice versa. Given those early successes, the program has developed until it is now being used with families of troubled youth in schools, child welfare agencies, and juvenile justice centers alike.

Dr. Goldstein advised us at Batshaw Youth and Family Centres to build our programming on a base of Aggression Replacement Training. As programming grew to eventually involve 24 residential units for youth and a half dozen other specialized programs and school applications, Batshaw refocused accordingly. However, Prepare Curriculum elements continued to be used, especially in Family TIES programming.

Training in Aggression Replacement Training to all residential programs began in 1999. Given the family-centered orientation of Batshaw, the Parental Empathy program was quickly expanded to become an eight-week Family ART program. The length of the program was extended on two occasions over the next 10 years until the program reached the current format of 11 weeks plus a booster session and became known as Family TIES.

Hundreds of staff members were trained in the methods of ART and Prepare Curriculum components to deliver programming to the youth. As these social competency programs were implemented in the youth care facilities, the Family TIES program was further developed and refined. Whenever possible, Family TIES was used to transfer and reinforce the youths' learning experience to their family life.

Family TIES is a simple program based on a solid foundation that Dr. Goldstein and his colleagues created. As the programming has developed in Montreal, a large number of exceptional frontline child care workers have helped to create a collection of ideas, implementation styles, and adaptations that, piece by piece, have influenced the development of Family TIES.

The opportunities to work together to help youth via this family skills training approach was successful largely because of an exceptional staff and their commitment to facilitating change in families. Facilitators went above and beyond the call of duty to do so. Involved were tasks that many completed on their own time, including making phone calls to families to recruit and support, training, transporting, feeding, and providing ongoing support to a large number of families.