

# NEARI NEWS:

TRANSLATING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE

An Essential Tool for Professionals Working with those who Sexually Abuse or... A Great New Way to Stay Current with Cutting Edge Sexual Abuse Research.



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Dear Colleague,

This month's issue explores the effectiveness of an early intervention program for young children with sexual behavior problems. The program was developed using the most recent research about the risk and protective factors in the development of these behaviors. While this is a small intervention, the results are promising and offer some important insights from our colleagues in Australia.

As always, if you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us at [info@nearipress.org](mailto:info@nearipress.org) or call us at 413-540-0712 x14.

Sincerely,  
Joan Tabachnick and Steven Bengis



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## FEATURED NEARI RESOURCES

### Factors and Successful Interventions in Early Childhood

by Steven Bengis, David S. Prescott, and Joan Tabachnick

#### Question

Can positive therapeutic interventions significantly mitigate early adverse childhood experiences and change the outcomes for these children?

#### The Research

International research has clearly demonstrated the impact and adverse outcomes of sexual abuse in particular during the first few years of life. Recent research also points to the positive impact of early therapeutic intervention on the lives of these children and their families. Building upon research demonstrating that a stable care giving environment and having at least one supportive (non-offending) caregiver consistently were related to high resiliency following childhood maltreatment, Kathryn Prentice, Tania Signal, and Nik Taylor studied the impact of the Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool (BTPS) on sexually abused children in Australia. The program had two specific goals: 1) to promote resiliency in the children and families attending the program and 2) to address and alleviate the child's symptoms and problematic sexual behaviors.

Seventy-two children were included in the study over six years. A variety of tools including the Clinical Assessment Package for Risks and Strengths (CASPARS), Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL), and the Child Sexual Behavior Inventory (CSBI) were used to measure change by administering these tests when a child began and then again when he or she completed the preschool program.

The research found a significant improvement in resiliency (measured by CASPARS) for children who were sexually abused. The most significant risk to resiliency was when a child had witnessed violence within his or her own family. For the majority of children, problematic sexual behaviors (as measured by CSBI) were reduced from clinically problematic levels to with "normal" ranges.

#### Implications for Professionals

While the impact of adverse childhood experiences has been well documented (e.g., the ACE studies of the Center for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/index.htm>) over the years, there is less research about how to build resiliency in children who have been sexually abused. Prentice and her colleagues provide a wealth of information about the dynamic factors that clinicians can examine



## [Trauma Informed Treatment: The Restorative Approach](#)

by Pat Wilcox

Author Patricia Wilcox has written the essential guide to trauma-informed care with at-risk youth. Wilcox provides a foundational understanding of trauma's impact on the developing brain, then details its implications for treatment, the promotion of pro-social behaviors, and improving the culture among clients and staff.

Incorporating the key concepts ranging from compassionate understanding to rebuilding connections in the child's brain, Wilcox tackles some of the most difficult challenges with evidence-based practical approaches.

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### **TWO NEW WEBINARS!**

NEARI Press has added two newly recorded webinars into our archives. These include: "The Changing Face of Pornography and the Impact on Treatment Practice" with Cordelia Anderson and David Prescott and an "Introduction to Best Practices with Sexually Abusive Adolescents" with Steven Bengis. You can listen to these and previous webinars at: <http://nearipress.org/free-webinars>.

in the assessment and treatment of these children including:

- The presence/absence of: a stable care-giving environment
- At least one supportive (non-offending caregiver)
- Stable relationships
- The degree of ego control
- The presence of an internal locus of control
- The impact of peer influences
- Certainty of schooling

When working with this young population, the risk factors that are typically considered "static" in adult sex offenders are nearly all considered dynamic at this stage of development. Therefore, the opportunity for successful clinical work with children is expanded when the clinician also expands their assessment and treatment work to involve all of these resiliency factors.

### **Implications for the Field**

Over the years, research has clearly demonstrated the long-term negative outcomes of childhood abuse. The list includes increased risk for suicide, depression, substance abuse, failed relationships, medical problems, etc. More recently, research has shown that the impact of abuse over a child's lifetime is the most damaging when the abuse occurs at an early age. These realities often leave parents or guardians feeling hopeless about the harm that abuse causes. Although there are not enough research studies about resiliency, this overview of the Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool offers a different, more hopeful outcome to share with both parents and caregivers. This initial study also provides another positive approach towards addressing the harm of sexual abuse and building stronger prevention programs for families and communities.

### **Abstract**

Early childhood experience of maltreatment (including neglect, sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse) is well documented as a risk factor for a number of adverse psycho-social outcomes and confers a high risk for life-long impairment across a range of domains. However, there is some research which indicates that early therapeutic intervention (particularly trauma-focused Cognitive Behavioural Therapy programmes combined with supportive and/or psychodynamic therapies) can mitigate these ongoing effects. The current study examines the outcome of a therapeutic preschool (Bumblebees Therapeutic Preschool - BTPS) for 65 children ranging in age from three to six years of age. Child and family resiliency (suggested as a protective factor against further harm - measured via the Clinical Assessment Package for Risks and Strengths), sexualised (Child Sexual Behavior Inventory) and maladaptive behaviours (Child Behavior Checklist) were measured via Parental/Caregiver report at Intake and Exit of the programme. Analyses demonstrated statistically and clinically significant reductions in problematic behaviour (both sexually-oriented and general) and significant improvement in resiliency scores. The contribution of specific demographic factors such as witnessing family violence, being of Indigenous descent and gender are discussed.

### **Citation**

- Prentice, K., Signal, T., & Taylor, N. (2012, March 4). What's the Buzz? Bumblebees - A Therapeutic Preschool for Abused Children. *Sexual Abuse in Australia and New*

*Zealand.*

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