

# Incredible Years - Attentive Parenting Programme

Review: February 2023

**Note on provider involvement:** This provider has agreed to EIF's terms of reference, and the assessment has been conducted and published with the full cooperation of the programme provider.

**Incredible Years (IY) Attentive Parenting Programme is part of the IY Parent Training series. It is a universal programme for children between the ages of three and six. It is delivered in community centres or out-patient health settings and aims to prevent children's socioemotional and behavioural problems.**

- The IY Parent Training Program is part of a multifaceted treatment approach that was originally developed to target child conduct problems
- The IY Attentive Parenting Program is a shorter variant of the IY Basic parenting programme – it consists of six to nine 2.5h long sessions, rather than 14 to 18 sessions. It can be used for prevention purposes within a general population or as booster sessions for parents who have completed the IY BASIC Parenting Programme
- Sessions include reviewing the homework and core concepts, watching and discussing vignettes, and role-plays.

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Evidence  
rating: **2**

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Cost rating: **2**

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# EIF Programme Assessment

Incredible Years - Attentive Parenting Programme has **preliminary evidence** of improving a child outcome, but we cannot be confident that the programme caused the improvement.

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Evidence  
rating: **2**

## What does the evidence rating mean?

**Level 2** indicates that the programme has evidence of improving a child outcome from a study involving at least 20 participants, representing 60% of the sample, using validated instruments.

This programme does not receive a rating of 3 as its best evidence is not from a rigorously conducted RCT or QED evaluation.

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## Cost rating

A rating of 2 indicates that a programme has a medium-low cost to set up and deliver, compared with other interventions reviewed by EIF. This is equivalent to an estimated unit cost of £100–£499.

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Cost rating: **2**

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## Child outcomes

According to the best available evidence for this programme's impact, it can achieve the following positive outcomes for children:

### Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing

#### Reduced adjustment problems

Based on study 1

#### Improved prosocial behaviour

Based on study 1

This programme also has evidence of supporting positive outcomes for couples, parents or families that may be relevant to a commissioning decision. [Please see the 'About the evidence' section for more detail.](#)



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# Key programme characteristics

## Who is it for?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to the following age-groups:

- Preschool
- Primary school

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## How is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to implementation through these delivery models:

- Group

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## Where is it delivered?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation in these settings:

- Children's centre or early-years setting
- Community centre
- Out-patient health setting

The programme may also be delivered in these settings:

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## How is it targeted?

The best available evidence for this programme relates to its implementation as:

- Universal
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## Where has it been implemented?

United States, Australia, Brazil, England, New Zealand, Norway, Wales

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## UK provision

This programme has been implemented in the UK.

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## UK evaluation

This programme's best evidence does not include evaluation conducted in the UK.

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## Spotlight sets

EIF does not currently include this programme within any Spotlight set.

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## About the programme

### What happens during delivery?

#### How is it delivered?

IY Attentive Parenting Programme is delivered in approximately six sessions of two and a half hours duration each by six practitioners to groups of five to fourteen families.

#### What happens during the intervention?

The core parenting concepts are introduced in successive sessions.

Sessions include: Parent goal setting, collaborative group discussion to brainstorm potential benefits of positive parenting skills, use of video vignettes highlighting parenting skills to inspire discussion and role-play practices, use of role-plays to practice new skills and anticipate potential barriers, homework assignments to practice new parenting skills each week.

### What are the implementation requirements?

#### Who can deliver it?

The intervention is facilitated by two practitioners. They may come from a range of professions, such as social work, nursing, medicine or education. At least one of the two facilitators will have a Masters degree or higher.

#### What are the training requirements?

Practitioners complete an online training course of 15h total contact time.

#### How are the practitioners supervised?

Supervision is available through online consultation. Supervisors are accredited as IY group leader, peer coach and mentor.

Practitioners have access to self-assessment tools that support fidelity.

## What are the systems for maintaining fidelity?

Programme fidelity is maintained through the following processes:

- Training manual
- Face-to-face training
- Fidelity monitoring.

## Is there a licensing requirement?

There is no licence required to run this programme.

## How does it work? (Theory of Change)

### How does it work?

The program aims to teach parents how to be child-directed and use play and coaching methods to build positive relationships and attachment with children, and promote children's emotional regulation, social competence, problem solving, reading and school readiness, and to build social support networks. IY attentive parenting covers:

- child-directed play promotes positive relationships and children's confidence; ?
- academic and persistence coaching promotes children's language and school readiness;
- emotion coaching strengthens children's emotional literacy and empathy;
- social coaching promotes children's cooperative friendships; ?;
- imaginative parenting promotes children's emotional regulation skills;
- creative play promotes children's problem solving and empathy.

In the short term, the programme aims to increase positive and responsive parenting and social support networks and to decrease parent depression and stress.

In the long term, the programme aims to enhance children's social and emotional competence, academic success and resilience and reduce behaviour problems and anxiety.

### Intended outcomes

Supporting children's mental health and wellbeing

## Contact details

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<https://incredibleyears.com/programs/parent/attentive-curriculum/>



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## About the evidence

Incredible Years Attentive Parenting Programme's most rigorous evidence comes from a pre-post study which was conducted in the USA. This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of child outcomes.

This programme is underpinned by one study with ?a Level 2?, hence the programme receives ?a Level 2? rating overall.

## Study 1

**Citation:** Zhou et al., 2021

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**Design:** Pre-post study

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**Country:** United States

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**Sample:** 152 families, with children between 3 and 6 years old.

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**Timing:** baseline, post-test

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### Child outcomes:

- Reduced adjustment problems
  - Improved prosocial behaviour
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### Other outcomes:

- None measured
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### Study rating: 2

Zhou, X., Lee, R. M., & Ohm, J. (2021). Evaluating the feasibility of the Incredible Years Attentive Parenting Program as universal prevention for racially diverse populations. *Journal of Prevention and Health Promotion*, 2(1), 32-56.

### Study design and sample

The first study is ?a pre-post study?. Outcomes were assessed before the intervention was delivered and immediately after the intervention was delivered. This study was conducted in the US, with a sample of 152 families with children between three and six years old, 56% of whom were boys?.

Participants identified as? Black (40%); Asian American (30%); White (18%); Latinx (5%); or mixed race (3%); one participant identified as Middle Eastern, one as Native American; three did not disclose their ethnicity?.

12% had no completed schooling; 43% had completed high school; 13% had associate degrees; and 32% held Bachelor's degrees or above. Participants' annual income was <USD 25,000 (55%); USD 25,000-50,000 (36%); USD >50,000 (10%)?.

### Measures

- Child adjustment problems and prosocial behaviours were measured using the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (parent-report)
- Parenting stress was measured using the Parenting Stress Index–Short Form (parent-report).

### Findings

This study identified statistically significant positive impact on a number of ?child? outcomes. This includes:

- Decreased adjustment problems
- Increased prosocial behaviours.

The conclusions that can be drawn from this study are limited by methodological issues pertaining to a lack of a comparison group, hence why a higher rating is not achieved.

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## Other studies

The following studies were identified for this programme but did not count towards the programme's overall evidence rating. A programme receives the same rating as its most robust study or studies.

Fields, Jane; Harty, Claire; Desjardins, Christopher D.. (2016). An evaluation of the cultural contextualization of the incredible years parenting program for African American and Hmong cultural groups. University of Minnesota. Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement. Available at: <https://hdl.handle.net/11299/195475>.

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## Guidebook

The EIF Guidebook provides information about early intervention programmes that have at least preliminary evidence of achieving positive outcomes for children. It provides information based on EIF's assessment of the strength of evidence for a programme's effectiveness, and on detail about programmes shared with us by those who design, run and deliver them.

The Guidebook serves an important starting point for commissioners to find out more about effective early interventions, and for programme providers to find out more about what good evidence of impact looks like and how it can be captured. As just one of our key resources for commissioners and practitioners, the Guidebook is an essential part of EIF's work to support the development of and investment in effective early intervention programmes.

Our assessment of the evidence for a programme's effectiveness can inform and support certain parts of a commissioning decision, but it is not a substitute for professional judgment. Evidence about what has worked in the past offers no guarantee that an approach will work in all circumstances. Crucially, the Guidebook is not a market comparison website: ratings and other information should not be interpreted as a specific recommendation, kite mark or endorsement for any programme.

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[How to read the Guidebook](#)

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[EIF evidence standards](#)

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[About the EIF Guidebook](#)

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## EIF

The Early Intervention Foundation (EIF) is an independent charity and a member of the What Works network. We support the use of effective early intervention for children, young people and their families: identifying signals of risk, and responding with effective interventions to improve outcomes, reduce hardship and save the public money in the long term.

We work by generating evidence and knowledge of what works in our field, putting this information in the hands of commissioners, practitioners and policymakers, and supporting the adoption of the evidence in local areas and relevant sectors.

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[www.EIF.org.uk](http://www.EIF.org.uk) | [@TheEIFoundation](https://twitter.com/TheEIFoundation)

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