



Working Out Dads

The Beginning

Tweddle launched a pilot program called Working Out Dads for men living full time or part time with their 0-5 aged children in response to a lack of therapeutic after hours groups for dads.

The objective of Working Out Dads is to connect, support and strengthen the capacity of dads in families where either partner is experiencing stress, anxiety and parenting challenges. There is also a goal to become more resilient and supportive during the transition to early parenting and to promote healthy relationships and lifestyles.



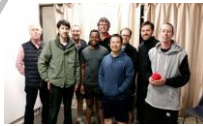
The Model

Working Out Dads is a six week program combining one hour of facilitated discussion and a 30 minute guided workout in a gym.

The program includes weekly text messages, pre and post mental health and parenting confidence evaluation, handouts and online resources.

The program spans the topics of parenting, relationships, mental health, fitness and wellbeing.

Dads were connected to local supports and new friendships.



Evidence

Working Out Dads is an evidence based, manualised pilot program with weekly activities, themes, resources and objectives.

The 64 page curriculum was written by Tweddle and mens' Group-work academic and author Andrew King.

"Supporting parenting behaviours in which the father provides expressive and instrumental affection, nurturance, interest and companionship enhance children's self-esteem, life satisfaction and social competence"

Harris, K. et al. (1998) p. 202



The Delivery

Recruitment for ten dads per group was provided by Tweddle.

Three Maribyrnong programs were delivered at RecWest in West Footscray and four Wyndham based programs were delivered at Aquapulse and Eagle Stadium.

Dads received weekly text messages during the six week program and for four weeks post program. Weekly reminders to attend were sent.

The group-work element was delivered by Scott Hall and the fitness component by Nathan Tarr.



Funding

Working Out Dads was delivered with thanks to two grants.

The four Wyndham groups were delivered with support from a Wyndham City Council Grant and open to all dads living in The City of Wyndham.

North Western Melbourne PHN provided support to help deliver three Maribyrnong programs which were open to any Dad living or working in Melbourne's West.

Dads from Wyndham Brimbank, Moonee Valley, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Melton participated.



Evaluation

59 Working Out Dads participants came from 17 Victorian locations and ten countries of birth.

Program measures included the DASS scale, the Karitane Parenting Confidence scale and psychometrically sound self-report questionnaires.

There was high attendance and engagement, with Dads attending 80% of groups.

Parenting Research Centre assessed 144 fathers attending a Tweddle residential program. 10% of fathers of an infant experienced elevated levels of psychological distress.



Conclusion

Fathers reported that attending the program in a fitness based / non stigmatised environment supported their decision to attend.

Some dads experiencing mental ill health were not connected to a GP or health service.

Program evaluation showed a clinically significant improvement in the fathers' mental health (with reductions in stress, anxiety and depression) and strengthened confidence in parenting their children.



The Future

"I will be able to seek help when I find it difficult" John

"It was great being able to share experiences and hear other dads are facing the same problems so we're not alone" Anwar

Despite an overwhelmingly positive result for dads, funding to continue this program is proving difficult to source. We will continue to seek partners.

For more information about Working Out Dads contact Tweddle on (03) 9689 1577 or visit www.tweddle.org.au

