

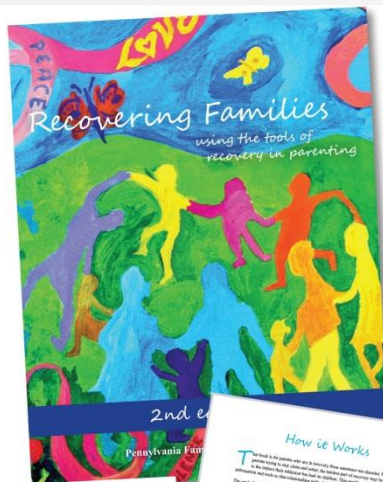


Pennsylvania
Family Support Alliance™

Protecting children from abuse

*Recovering Families:
A Tool For Parents in Recovery
August 1, 2016*

Topics for discussion



What to tell your children

It's not easy to talk to your children about your recovery journey and how it affects your family. Children often wonder how their parents' recovery affects them and how they can help. This page provides some ideas for how to talk to your children about your recovery journey.



When you're ready to talk to your children about your recovery journey, it's important to be honest and open. Let them know that you're working on getting better and that you need their support. Encourage them to ask questions and express their feelings. Remember, your children are your family, and they need to know that you're committed to being a better parent.

How it Works

The goal of this program is to help parents who are in recovery to become better parents. It's not just about getting clean and sober, it's about becoming a better parent. This program provides parents with the tools and support they need to do this.

- Recovery is a journey, not a destination. It's a process that takes time and effort. Parents need to be patient and persistent.
- When you're in recovery, it's important to have a support system. This program provides parents with a community of other parents who are in recovery.
- Recovery is not just about getting clean and sober, it's about becoming a better parent. This program provides parents with the tools and support they need to do this.
- Parents need to be honest and open with their children about their recovery journey. This program provides parents with ideas for how to do this.

Parents need to be honest and open with their children about their recovery journey. This program provides parents with ideas for how to do this.

Parent Information

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____

Zip: _____

Challenges for recovering parents

- Preventing relapse
- Discipline – not having had role models for discipline; intergenerational parenting skills
- Overindulgence - “spoiling” as a way to make up for past
- Family roles and dynamics change
- Balancing parenting and recovery needs
- Maintaining realistic expectations
- Education on parenting in recovery is helpful
- Overcoming stigma and judgments
- Establishing trust
- Others?



Factors contributing to relapse

- Overwhelmed with responsibilities. Everything is hard.
- Financial pressure – old bills/bad credit, no job
- Housing – e.g. felony convictions barred from housing
- No healthy support system – family, friends still using
- Low self-worth and lack of confidence in being able to have a “new life”
- Boredom – what do you do for fun?
- Triggers all around, no place seems safe
- Emotions up and down, not sure how to handle emotions

Factors in continued use for parents with child welfare involvement

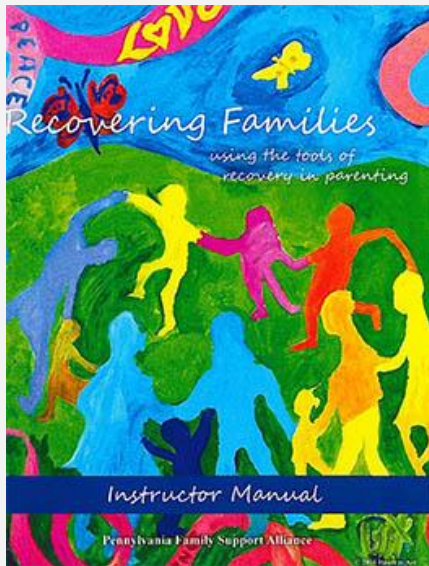
- Overwhelming guilt and shame over harm done to children and family.
- Painful child/adult abuse issues bring pain when not using.
- To kill pain after seeing their children; using helps them “manage” their emotions.
- Fear – living life on life’s terms, rejection of children, not knowing any sober people, being honest and the consequences of honesty.
- Lack of structure and support.

Overview: *Recovering Families*

- Purpose: to help parents in recovery from chemical addiction balance the demands of both recovery and children, and offer suggestions on how to be a better parent in recovery.
- 34 pages of activities and information at fifth-grade reading level. Designed for completion in six two-hour sessions with “homework” in between classes. Can be adapted.
- Topics include: talking with children about addiction; making amends; behavior and communication skills; child development.



Recovering Families Instructor Manual



- Provides outline for a six-session, two-hour per session format
- ✓ the goals for the session and a list of materials needed
- ✓ instructions for activities and ways to adapt the activities
- ✓ general time frame for each section of the session
- ✓ suggestions for “homework,” optional activities and journal questions
- Sources for additional materials and information included
- Participant feedback form in ready-to-copy form

Development of *Recovering Families*

Rationale

- Fits with Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance mission to educate, inform and lead communities to action to protect children from abuse and neglect.
- Factors contributing to abuse (substantiated reports) include marginal parenting skills, impaired judgment of perpetrator, substance abuse, and insufficient family support
- Supplements work of local family support programs and child welfare offices



Development of *Recovering Families*

Process



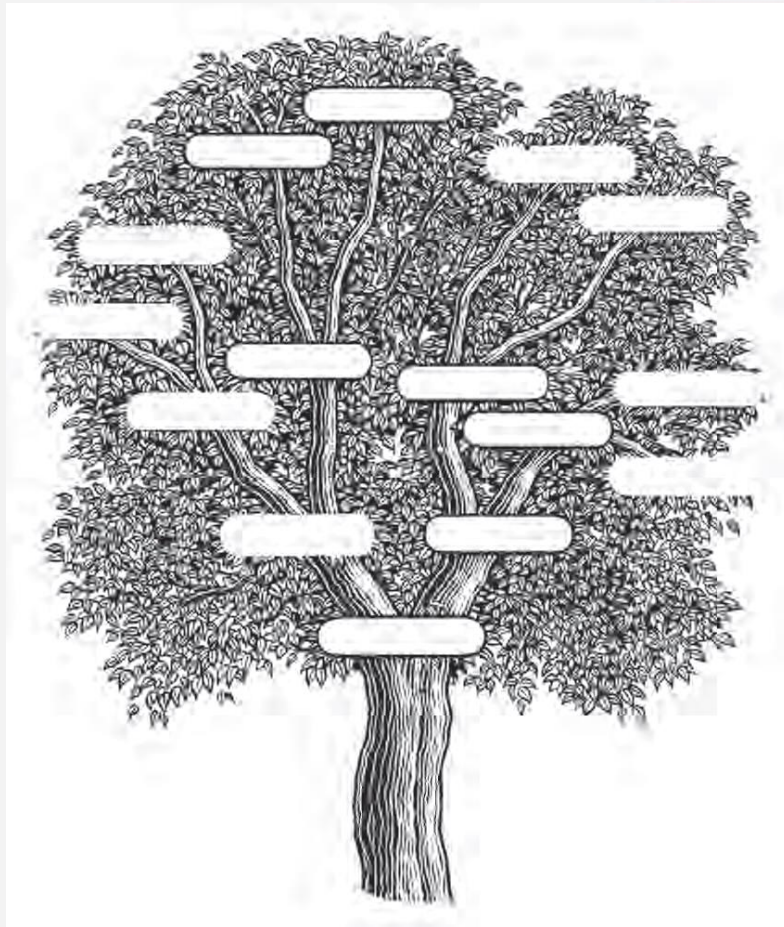
- Use personal experience
- Survey child welfare offices, treatment facilities and family support programs
- Collect suggestions, activities and “what works” strategies
- Draft and test each activity with parents in recovery. Solicit feedback from practitioners. Revise as necessary.
- Review by professionals in adult education, SUD treatment and family life education.
- Publish first edition 2010

Development of *Recovering Families*

- Facilitate groups in different settings
- Observe groups and interview facilitators and participants; collect suggestions for revisions
- Make changes to first edition, test new activities and continue to revise
- Work with research analyst to develop evaluation tools
- Publish second edition in 2014
- Outreach to new groups and increase direct service delivery
- Prepare for next edition



Know Yourself



- Objective: increase self-awareness
- Participants identify key words to describe themselves
- Can be used as homework, getting to know you activity in session 1, or follow up activity in session 2
- Take a few minutes to write some words that describe you on the tree
- Be prepared to share a few of the words with the group

True or False?

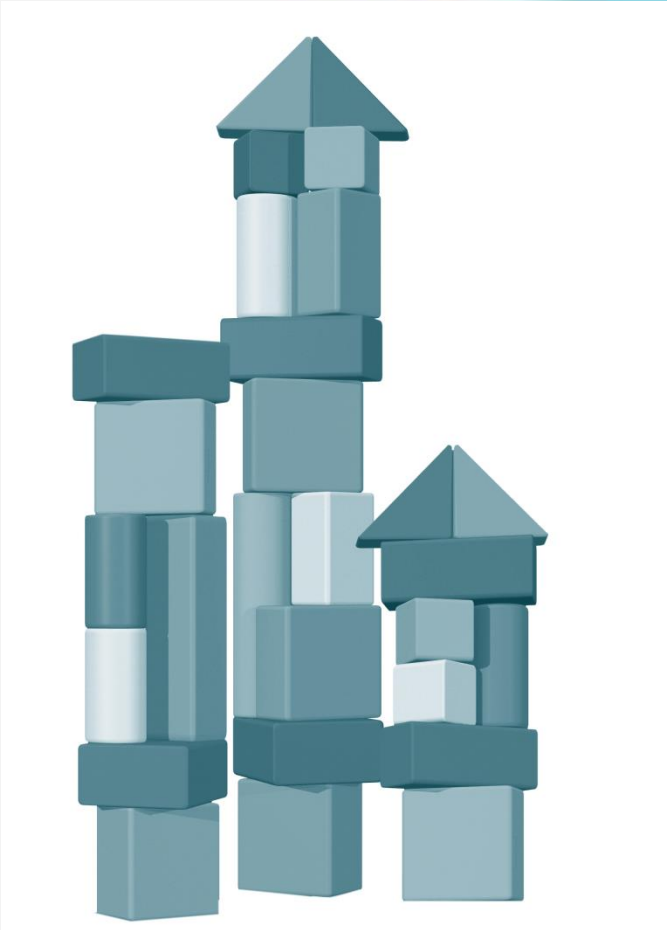
- Usually a session 1 activity
- Objective: Open discussion about the role and responsibility of parents
- No right or wrong answers
- Opportunity to ask follow-up questions as participants give their answers
- Gives instructor an opportunity to informally assess parents' needs

True

False



Creating a strong family



- Session 3 activity
- Can be done as whole group or smaller groups
- Can be a hands-on activity
- Encourage specific ideas that can actually be done by families

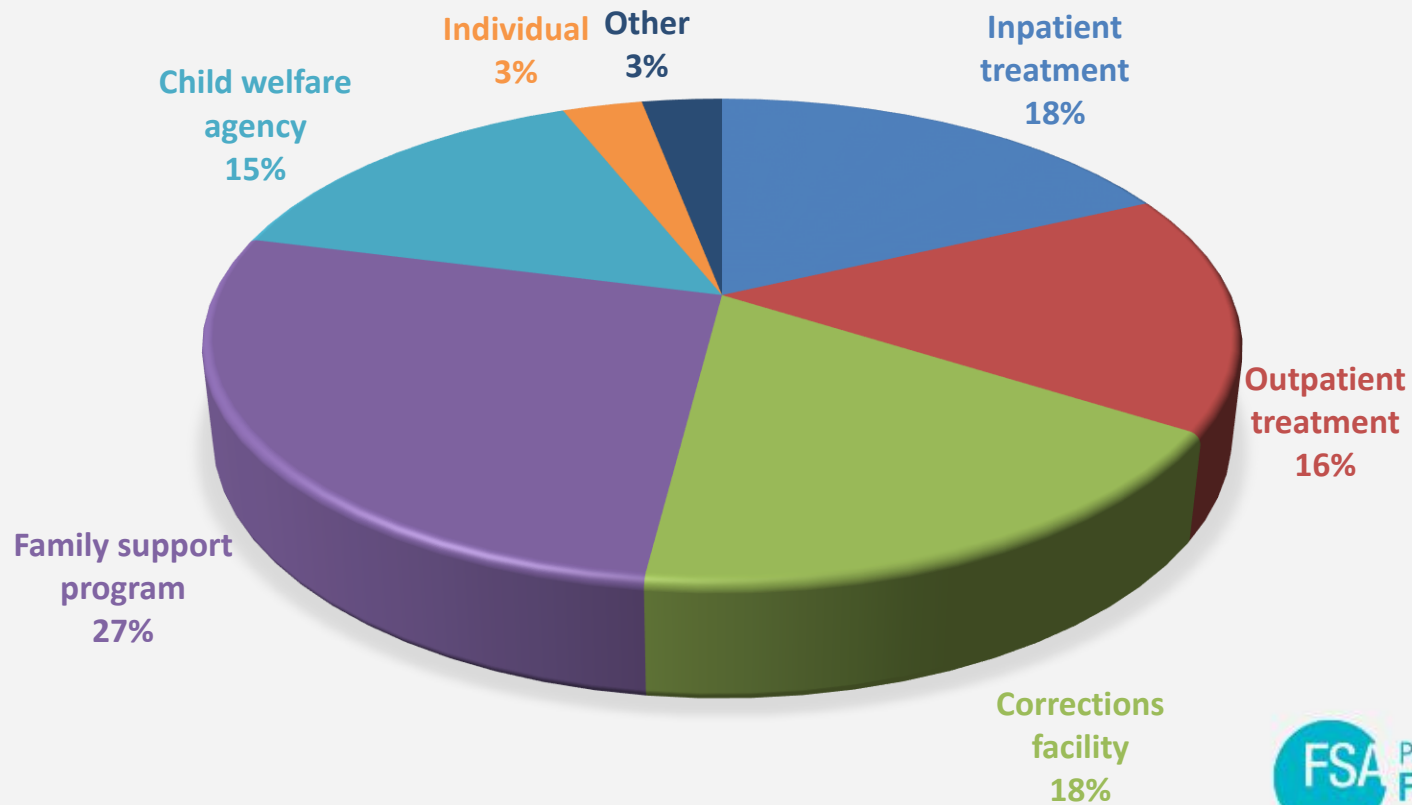
Matching Game: Child Development



- Session 4 activity, works well with “Across the Years” Instructor manual includes text for cards and instructions
- Small group activity
- Supplement with specific child development materials if desired



Setting for *Recovering Families*



Facilitator-identified challenges

- In early recovery, weakened condition may interfere with participation
- Clients facing poverty, homelessness, incarceration or loss of custody of children = parenting not most urgent need
- Feelings of guilt and shame can be overwhelming
- Parents who have been out of touch with children: “I don’t know where to start.”
- Unrealistic expectations for moving forward



Facilitator/staff comments

My experience has been that parents **can relate to the program** since it incorporates both the steps and traditions of AA and NA. It gives me the opportunity to discuss important recovery-related topics in the context of parenting. **We are sharing the same language.** It also emphasizes the importance of balancing the work of recovery with the responsibilities of parenting. It helps parents see how their substance use disorders have impacted their children and how to begin the process of healing for the entire family. It **speaks to parents in a supportive manner that avoids sounding judgmental.** This leads to greater receptivity to change.

Bob Brinker, M.A.
Parent and Community Educator
Family Services of Western PA

Facilitator/staff comments

We chose *Recovering Families* because it focuses on giving clients skills for working on both recovery and parenting. It's unique. **Before we started this program, there was a big gap in our treatment.** If we don't address our clients' parenting and family issues, we miss a big chance to help them recover.

Clients love it. It has become **the most popular group we offer** here.

Amber Dissinger, MSW
Quality Improvement Coordinator
White Deer Run Allenwood

Evaluating *Recovering Families*

- Anecdotal evidence
- Use participant feedback form
- Administer pre/post test



Best outcomes when:

- Incorporated with ongoing programs
- Offered in a series over a two-month (or longer) time
- Parent-child interaction is included

Evaluating *Recovering Families*

“Recovering Families” (second edition)

Pre _____ Post _____

Name/Number: _____ Score: _____

Class: _____ Date: _____

True or False

1. _____ It is important to talk with children about addiction and recovery so they understand their parents' behavior.
2. _____ Children of recovering addicts often have a hard time trusting their parents or feel “lost” and don't know how to react to their sober parent.
3. _____ It's important to promise a child that you will never drink/use again so they feel reassured and secure.
4. _____ A parent can't expect a teenager to stop being “in charge” of the family just because the parent gets sober.
5. _____ Discipline means “teaching,” not just punishing the child.
6. _____ It is best for the recovering parent to correct all of a child's bad behavior at one time, as soon as the parent gets home from rehab.
7. _____ One strategy for helping a child understand a parent's addiction is to explain that addiction is a disease.
8. _____ Withdrawing and isolating from family and friends can be a sign that a child needs help with their feelings or emotions.
9. _____ Feeling guilty about how your addiction hurt your children can be a trigger for relapse.
10. _____ The best way to make amends to your children is to buy them gifts and give them privileges that they didn't have when you were using.
11. _____ Visits with children can be easier if you plan what you will do with the children and use the time to have fun and talk to your child.
12. _____ The “scapegoat” is one role that a family member may play; this is a child who misbehaves and gets into trouble either at home, school or in the community.

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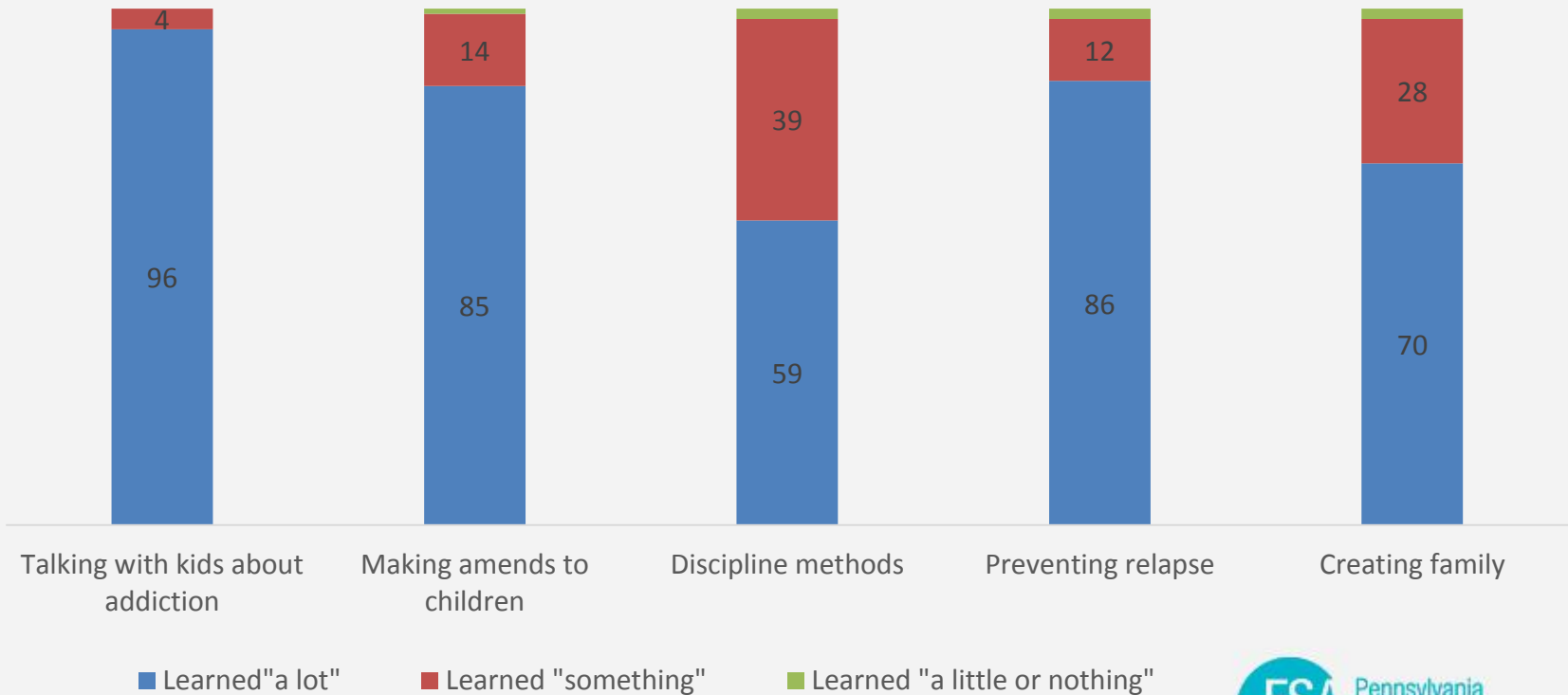
Pre and post-test

- 12 true/false questions
- 3 short answer questions
- Basic “facts” from workbook

Participant feedback form

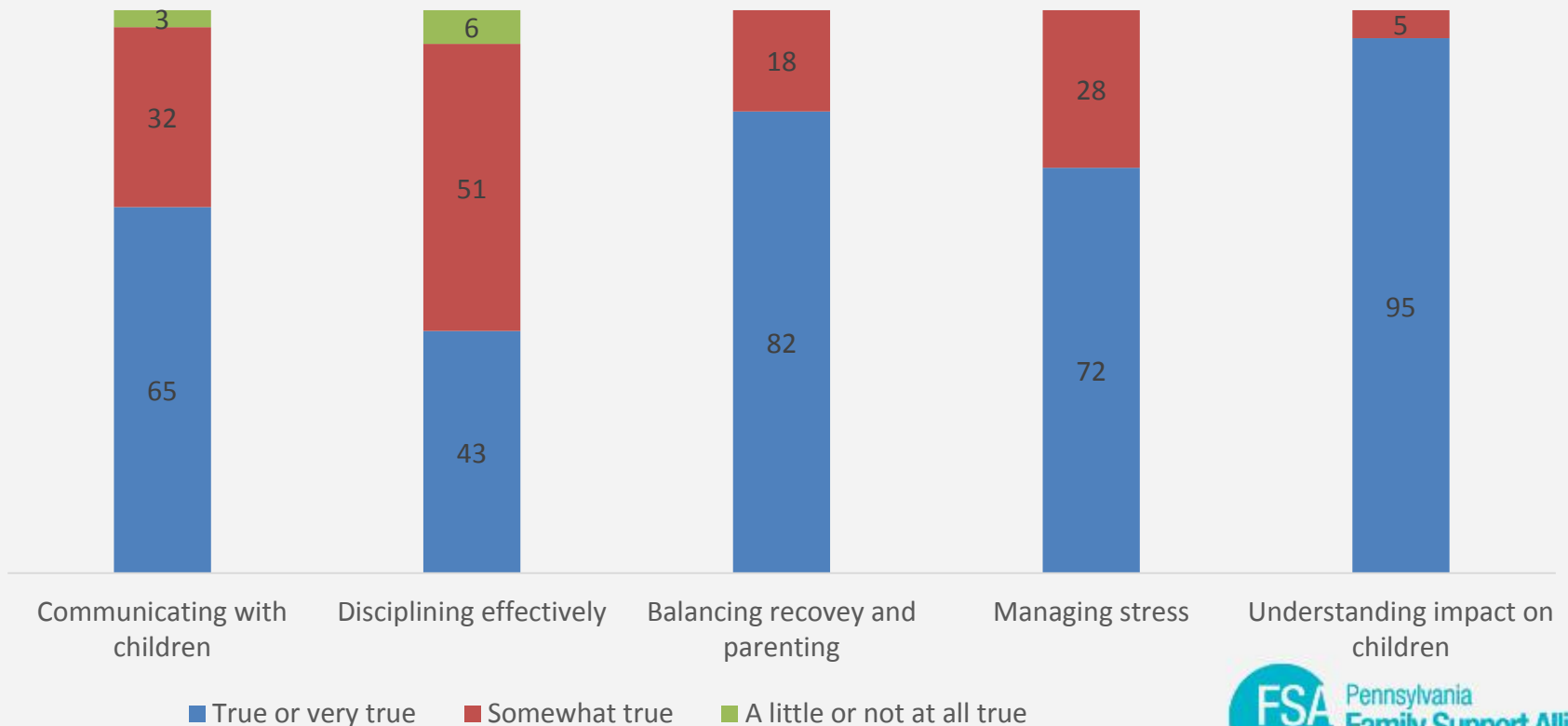
- Self-reported gain in knowledge and confidence level in parenting
- Feedback on instructor, logistics and workbook

Learning key concepts in *Recovering Families* Inpatient treatment setting (n=165)



Confidence in parenting skills after *Recovering Families* Inpatient treatment setting ($n=165$)

“I am more confident now than before I participated.”



Participant comments – *Recovering Families* book

I like that it goes deep into how you feel in recovery. I figured out that I wasn't a bad parent...I was a good mom in a bad addiction.

Tina, recovering parent of two daughters and a son.

It was hard to do. It forced me to look at things with my kids. But I'm happy I did it.

Colleen, recovering parent of three-year-old daughter

The best part was the explanation of how addiction affects kids.

Kaylee, recovering parent of two children, ages 3 and 6

Participant comments – *Recovering Families* book

I cried a lot after I saw my kids. I talked about that in the group.

Stephanie, recovering parent of three children

I want to keep writing in it (the book) when I get home.

Ryan, recovering parent of two-year-old son

The class opened my mind to how it's never too late. My kids are little and I can turn this around. When I heard (another participant's) stories I could really feel it and I wanted to do it better this time out.

Scott, recovering parent of two, ages 6 months and 2 years

Toss a ball and say what you learned

- Can be done at the end of each session or in the final class session
- Form a circle, throw the ball to another person, one at a time
- As the ball is thrown, the person calls out something they learned
- Variation: imagine your child in the center of the circle. Say something you want them to know about you.





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Family Support Alliance™

Protecting children from abuse

- Training for professionals
- Support for families
- Education for communities

Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance

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