



# The Realities of Fidelity versus Flexibility

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# Overview

- Introduction to fidelity vs. flexibility
- Very brief overview of Triple P – Positive Parenting Program
- Guidelines for fidelity vs. flexibility
  - Examples of low-risk and high-risk adaptations
- Implications
- Current research and future directions



# Defining Fidelity and Flexibility

- Fidelity - staying true to the evidence-base
  - What *cannot* vary
- Flexibility - tailoring to fit the needs of individual families, providers, agencies, communities, etc.
  - What *can* vary



# Why discuss fidelity vs. flexibility?

- Fidelity is necessary to increase chances for achieving the same results found in the research trials.
- Individual families do not fit into a particular box (or scripted manual).
- Parents cannot benefit from interventions they do not experience. (Fixen and Blasé, 2010).
- Rigid adherence to a manualized treatment program may not be necessary and may not lead to optimal delivery (e.g., not achieving therapeutic change). (Mazuchelli & Sanders, 2010; Kendall et al., 1998; Weisz et al., 1995)



# Another consideration ...

- This question of fidelity and flexibility spans multiple layers of effective dissemination of evidence-based practice, including:
  - Program delivery (provider to client)
  - Provider training
  - Dissemination targets



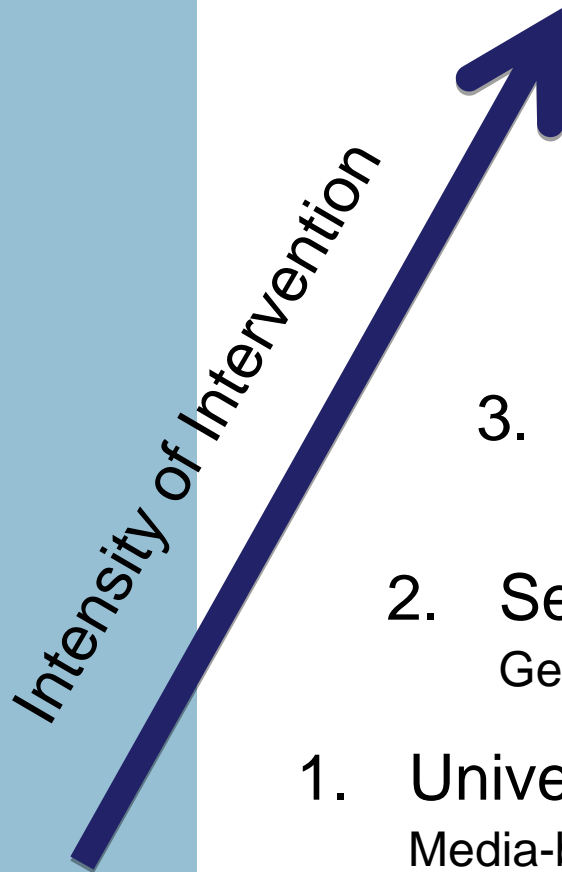
# What is Triple P?



- Multi-level parenting and family support strategy
- Prevention / early intervention / population health approach
- Evidence based
- Use of self-regulation framework
- Multidisciplinary focus and delivered within a public health framework



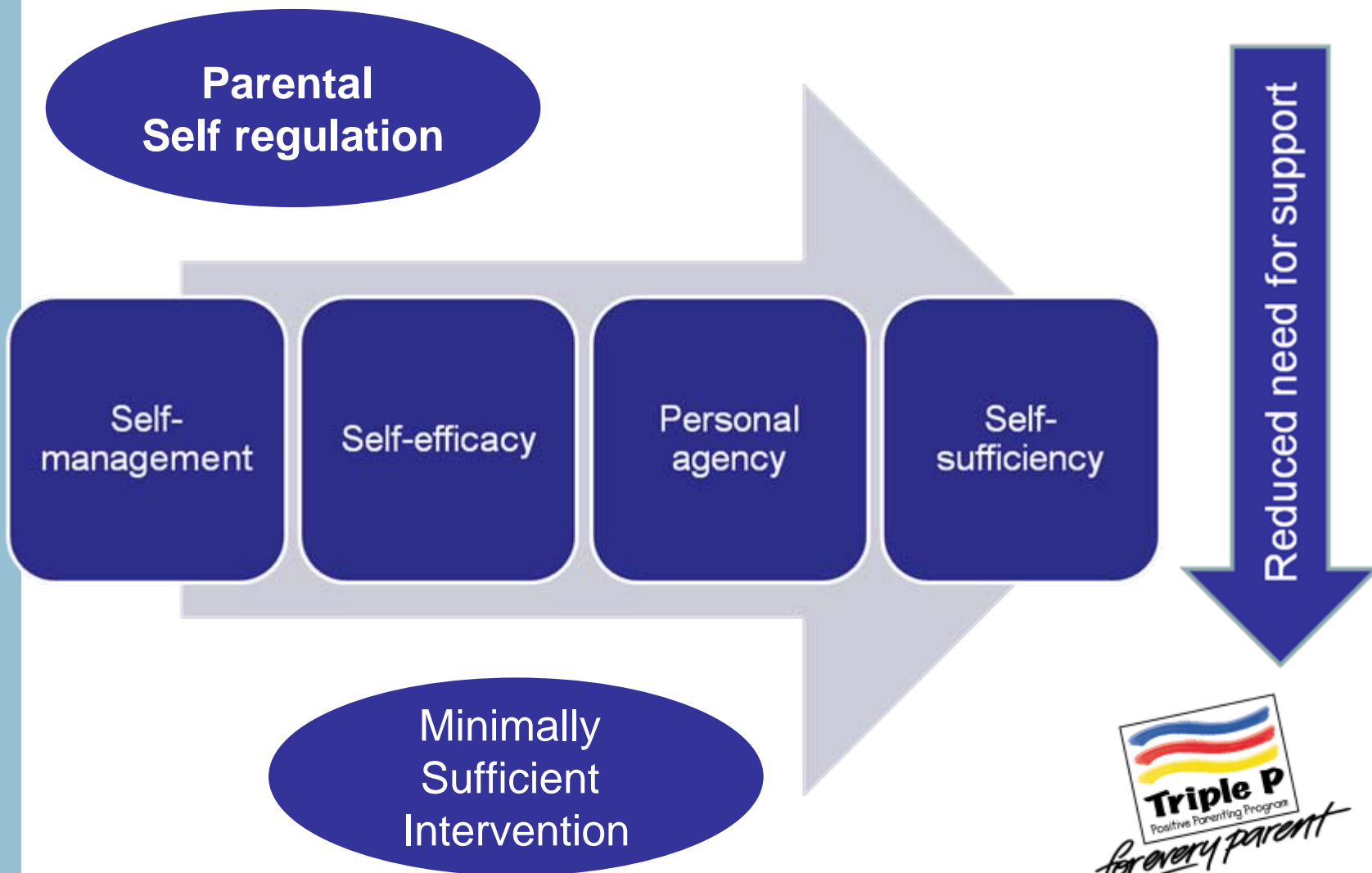
# Five Levels of Triple P Intervention



1. **Universal Triple P**  
Media-based parenting information campaign
2. **Selected Triple P**  
General information/advice about parenting
3. **Primary Care Triple P**  
Narrow focus parenting skills training
4. **Standard/Group/Self-Directed Triple P**  
Broad focus parenting skills training
5. **Enhanced/Pathways Triple P**  
Behavioral family intervention



# Self-Regulatory Framework





# Guidelines for Fidelity vs. Flexibility

- Program fidelity (what *not* to vary)
  - Content and order (e.g. No adaptations, picking out strategies, adding new strategies etc).
- Program flexibility (what can vary)
  - Process (e.g. length of program, duration of sessions, mode of delivery etc).



# Process variations

Low Risk	High Risk
More sessions	Advice to use or not to use specific strategies
Session length	No agenda or session structuring
Session location	No review of homework
School contact	Repeated abandoning of agenda
Switch to briefer version	Always providing answers
Individual prep before group	Giving feedback without graded prompts
More emphasis on practice and DVD	

Mazzucchelli & Sanders (2010)



# Content variations

Low Risk	High Risk
Modify examples to make more relevant	Withholding information about certain strategies
Modify steps from a tip sheet in a parenting plan	Suggest parent stray from principles underlying recommended parenting strategy
Changing focus of session to partner support	Combining a selection of Triple P strategies with other programs

Mazzucchelli & Sanders (2010)



# Fidelity and Flexibility in Training and Dissemination

- Provider Training
  - Who is eligible for training?
  - Fidelity vs. flexibility in the training process?
- Dissemination Targets
  - What organizations/agencies are targeted?
  - What do communities need in place to be effectiveness with evidence-based practice?



# Implications: Implementation Support

- Use of a multiple level model of implementation support, much like the multi-level model of interventions for families
- Current implementation support offered by Triple P America:
  - Pre-planning
    - Telephone consultations
    - Site visits
    - Management Briefings
  - Pre-accreditation day for practitioners
  - Clinical implementation and support days for practitioners approximately 6 months post-training
  - Consultation calls with cohorts of 5 practitioners



# Current Research and Future Directions

- System trials of Triple P demonstrate positive population outcomes in community settings without strict fidelity monitoring. (Prinz et al., 2009; Sanders et al., 2005)
- However, experience tells us that there is more to learn about how to best support an appropriate balance of flexibility vs. fidelity.
  - Implementation support for providers and/or organizations (pre and post training)
  - Training process
- One trial currently in development to examine a peer-assisted, self-regulation model of supervision



# References

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