

# Filial Therapy with Parents Court-Referred for Child Maltreatment

by

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(Abstract)

The general purpose of this study was to both evaluate the effectiveness of filial therapy and describe the filial treatment process with parents court-referred for maltreatment. In filial therapy, parents learn basic play therapy skills in a group format that they implement in weekly home play sessions. They then generalize these skills into their parenting. Three research questions guided the quantitative portion of this investigation: (1) Is filial therapy effective at reducing the child abuse potential of parents court-referred for maltreatment? (2) Is filial therapy effective at reducing parenting stress for parents court-referred for maltreatment? (3) Is filial therapy effective at strengthening the parent-child relationship for parents court-referred for maltreatment?

Qualitative data about parents' experience in the filial group was also collected and addressed the following questions: (1) How does the filial therapy process affect participants? (2) How does the filial therapy process affect treatment outcome? (3) What changes, in addition to those measured quantitatively, are reported by parents. The experimental group participants (n=7) received 8 weeks of filial therapy (modified from Landreth's (1991) 10-week model) in 1½-hour weekly sessions. The control group (n=5) received a local agency's standard treatment. Parents completed two instruments, the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) and the Child Abuse Potential Inventory (CAP). Analyses of covariance indicated that parents significantly reduced their parenting stress and strengthened the parent-child relationship. Although parents did not significantly reduce their child abuse potential in this study, those results were based on an incomplete analysis. Most of the pre-test CAP scores for parents in the experimental group (6 of 7) were invalid as a result of excessive "faking good responses." As a result, only post-test scores could be compared between the experimental and control groups. The qualitative data revealed that parents made important changes during the filial therapy process.