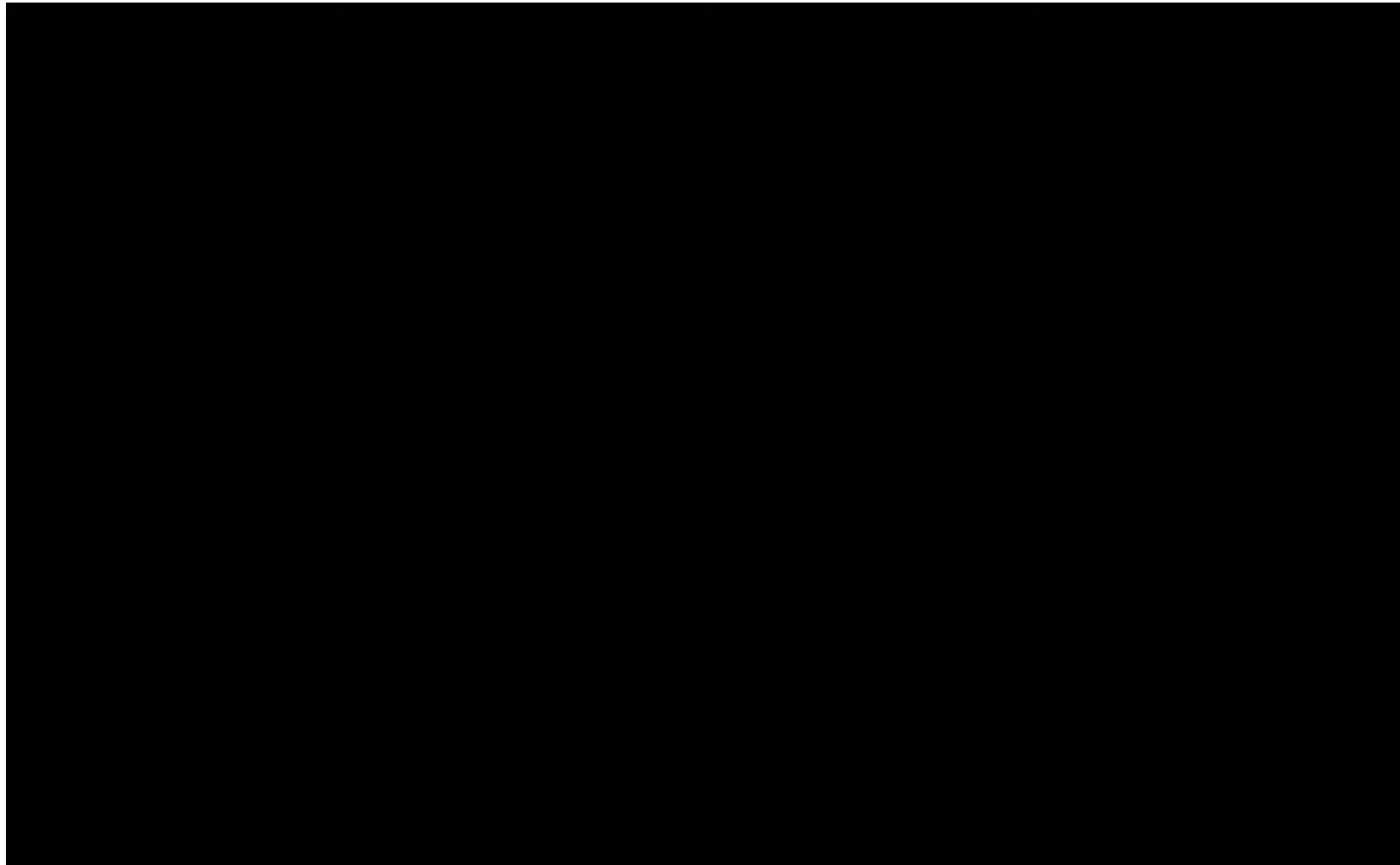




Exploring the Feasibility of a Parent-Based Early Intervention Program, M.I.friends, for Building Mental Health Literacy

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What is "M.I.friends"?



Mental Health Literacy and the Importance of Accessible Early Intervention

Introduction and Background

- Early intervention prevents or delays the onset of mental health disorders, and the benefits of early intervention are sustained over time.
- 70% of childhood mental health issues can be treated if addressed early; however, multiple challenges prevent timely early support (e.g. stigma, accessibility, unawareness)
- It is important for parents to have the awareness, knowledge, and skillset to provide mental health support to their struggling children – “mental health literacy” (MHL).
- A lack of MHL is a large barrier to accessing evidence-based care as parents often struggle to navigate the complexity of mental health services.

(McGorry & Mei, 2018; Nores & Barnett, 2010; Smith & Gallego, 2021)

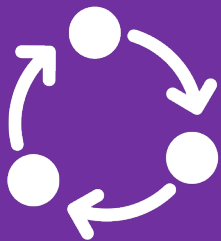
Case Study

Lisa is a single-mom raising her 6-year-old son, Milo who is struggling with some separation anxiety. They live in a townhouse in London, ON. He has just started at a new school and gets very upset when he is dropped off. He repeatedly fakes sick so that Lisa has to come pick him up. Lisa feels lost in terms of how to approach this situation with her son, as his older sister has always transitioned relatively easily to new settings. Lisa has tried talking to other Moms and the school for support, but no progress has been made. She has looked into getting him professional help, but there is a two-year waiting list, and she is unsure if this would be even be necessary.



What are the ways in which Lisa and Milo could be supported through the M.I.friends program? How would we know it would make a difference for them?

Method



- Gadke, Kratochwill, & Gettinger (2021)'s proposed feasibility framework of 10 dimensions will be utilized to evaluate M.I.friends in the current intervention in a feasibility trial.
- We will apply the following 5/10 dimensions to analyze the case of Lisa and Milo:
 - d) social validity
 - e) practicality
 - f) integration into existing systems
 - g) adaptability
 - h) implementation

Dimension #1: Social Validity

- The social importance and acceptability of treatment goals, procedures, and outcomes.
- The M.I.friends program aims to enhance resiliency and MHL among parents + youth, which aligns with socially significant goals (improving knowledge and mental health)
- Many community stakeholders have have invested resources into the implementation of M.I.friends.
- Participating families have indicated that the delivery of M.I.friends is fair, non-intrusive, and designed to fit into their daily routines.
- M.I.friends has the relevant resources to address Lisa and her son Milo's goals of feeling better equipped to support her son and managing his struggles with social anxiety.

Dimension #5: Practicality

- Determining whether M.I.friends can be used given contextual and environmental constraints.
- **Materials and technology requirements:** Lisa and Milo will just need internet connection and a working computer to access the M.I.friends program from home.
- The time required to complete each resource is reasonable. It is also optional which/how many resources are utilized.
- It is practical for Lisa and Milo to implement M.I.friends into their daily routines, as resources are designed to fit smoothly with existing daily tasks (example: bed time)

Dimension #6: Integration into Existing Systems

- The extent to which M.I.friends is aligned with the practice setting so as to facilitate integration into the current service delivery approach and maximize implementation.
- M.I.friends can act as a stepping stone for Lisa and Milo to start making positive progress before and/or while waiting to seek evidence-based support.
- M.I.friends has already begun integrating into a variety of school boards across Canada and other community organizations. It aligns with broader community goals (e.g. greater access to mental health support and education for families).
- Families can realistically commit their time and effort to integrating the program into their daily routines. As a busy single mom, Lisa will be able to conveniently implement M.I.friends into her daily schedule.

Dimension #7: Adaptability

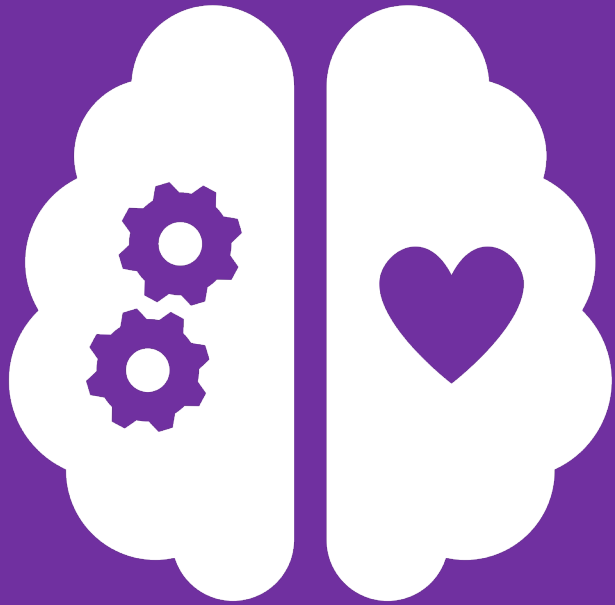
- Addresses whether M.I.friends can be modified to fit various contexts and needs without compromising its effectiveness.
- The program can be adapted to meet cultural and linguistic needs of diverse families (e.g. translating materials, modifying content). Lisa and Milo are native English speakers, so the resources do not need to be adapted for them.
- There is no set time frame for Lisa and Milo to complete the resources, so they are able to navigate M.I.friends at their own pace and adapt their use to their schedule.
- M.I.friends to date has seemingly achieved consistent outcomes across different settings and socio-economic backgrounds.

Dimension #8: Implementation

- The extent to which the M.I.friends program can be implemented as intended.
- The program is designed in a way that Lisa and Milo can easily progress through the materials and navigate the M.I.friends program together.
- For Lisa and Milo's schedules, M.I.friends could be smoothly implemented by doing the activities together before bedtime, and then Lisa could view/complete parent resources after putting Milo to bed.
- Lisa and Milo's responsiveness can be comprehensively assessed by measuring their engagement, enjoyment, and attentiveness through surveys, feedback, and interviews.
- The pilot study will provide a clearer picture of how M.I.friends is implemented by a variety of different families.

Conclusions

- M.I.friends is largely feasible in terms of social validity, practicality, integration, adaptability and implementation for Lisa and Milo.
- We will be able to learn more about the generalizability of M.I.friends during the pilot study; however, the study will be small-scale and likely have limitations in this dimension.
- Overall, the M.I.friends program has sufficient feasibility to rationalize implementing it further and moving towards a pilot study evaluating it's effectiveness.
- The current research, as well as the following pilot, will contribute to maximizing access to mental health care and bridging the science-practice gap.



Thank you!

Questions?



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