

# Changes in Maternal Sensitivity Following a Novel Parenting Intervention for Depressed Mothers of Preschoolers

Joining Dialectical Behavioural Therapy Skills with Positive Parenting Coaching in the BRIDGE Program (Building Regulation in Dual Generations)

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## INTRODUCTION

Maternal sensitivity is an important predictor of positive child developmental outcomes. Both depression and parenting stress threaten maternal sensitivity, putting children at risk of adverse outcomes. There is a lack of interventions that pair together both parenting strategies and mental health interventions for mothers experiencing depression. Thus, it was hypothesized that the effects of this paired intervention will improve maternal sensitivity.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

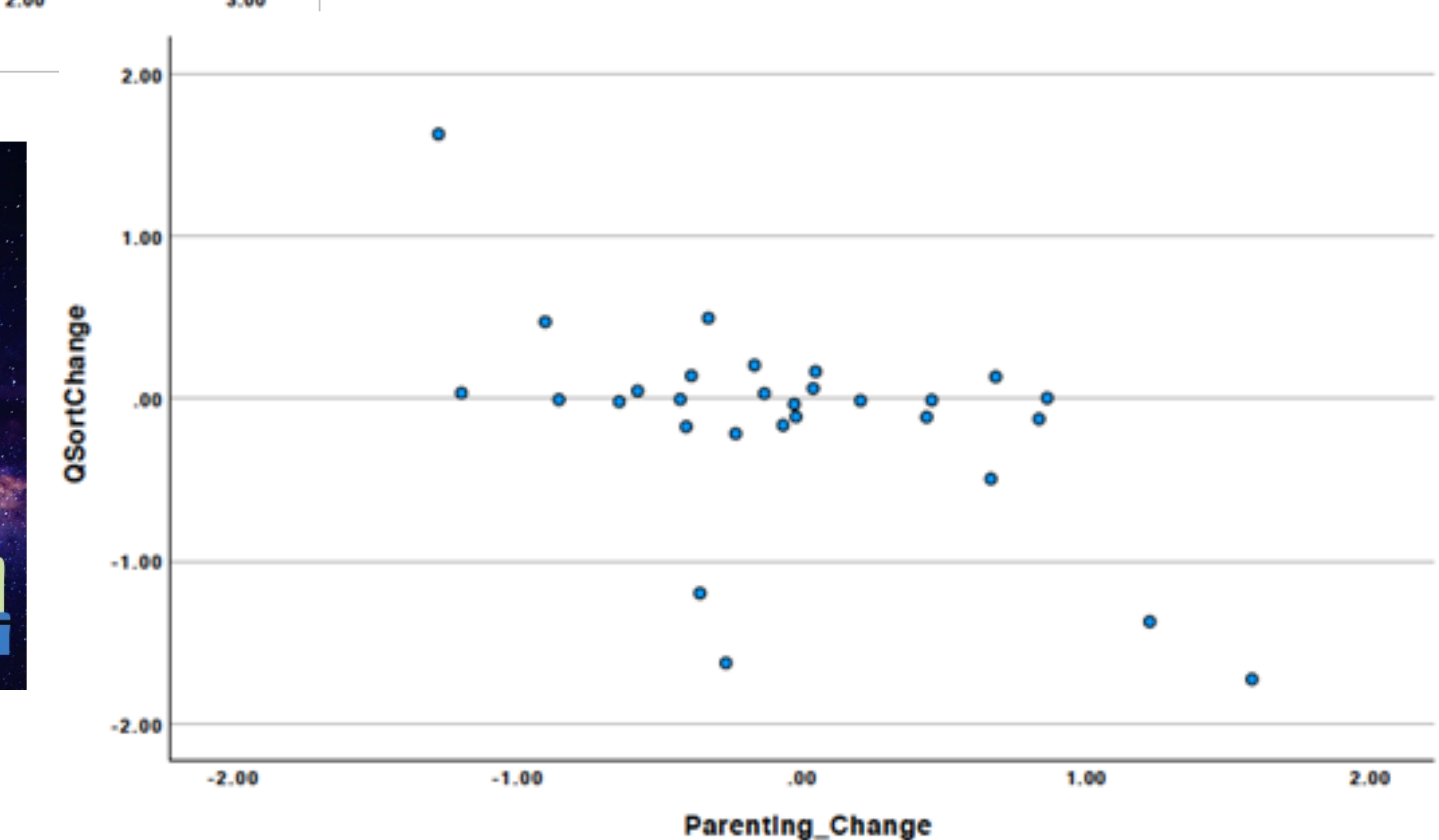
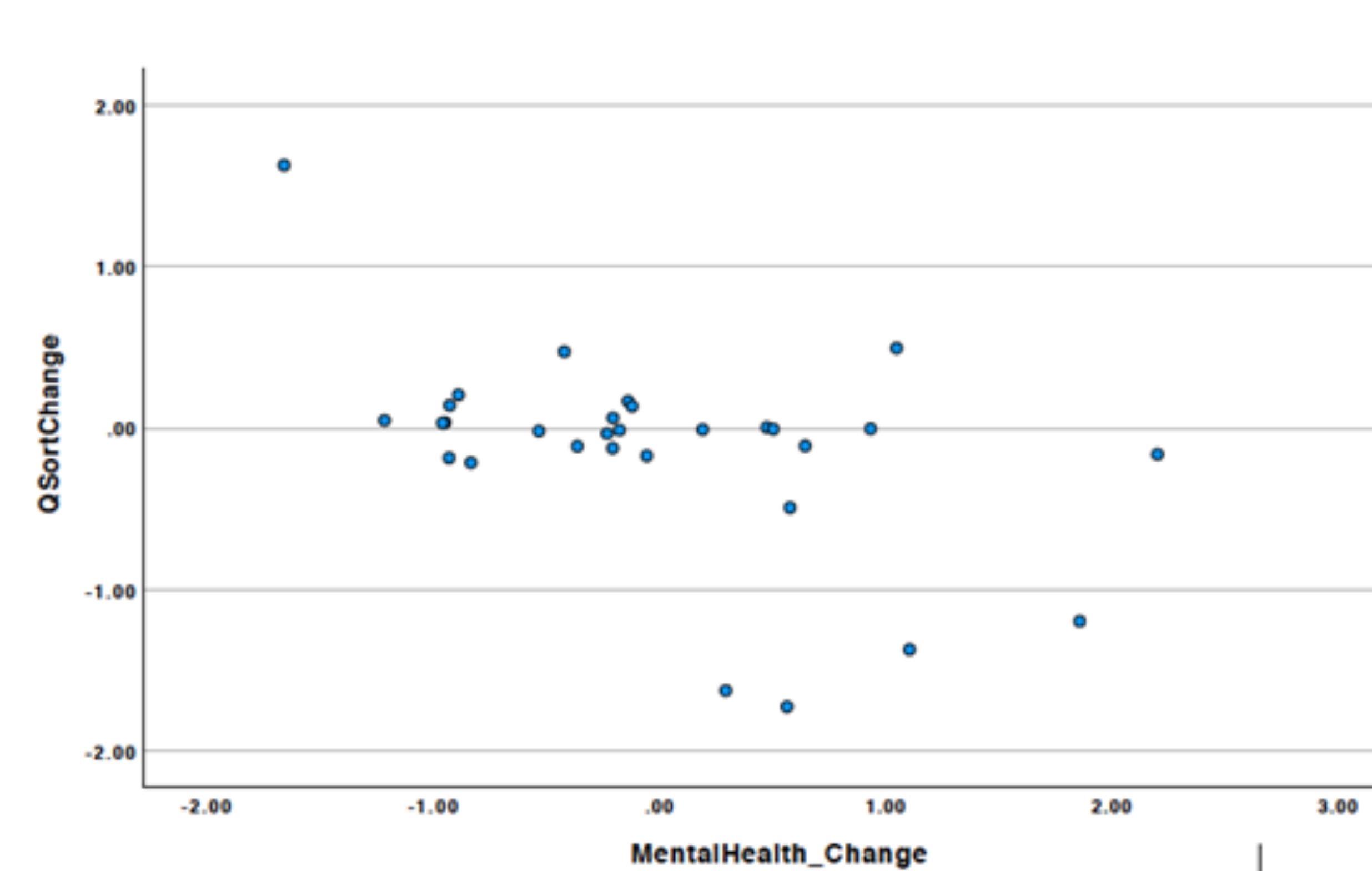
1. Will an increase in observed parenting sensitivity also lead to a decrease in depression severity?
2. Will an increase in observed parenting sensitivity lead to an increase in self-reported positive parenting practices?

## METHOD

Before and immediately following a Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT) Skills Group and parenting intervention, ( $N = 40$ ) mother-child dyads completed questionnaires and an assessment where they were led through a series of tasks to compare changes in maternal sensitivity. Trained coders assessed maternal sensitivity with the Pre-School Maternal Sensitivity Q-sort.

## RESULTS

Participants were excluded if they could not make group times (6%), mothers were too young (16%), and they did not meet PHQ-9 eligibility (43%). Most mothers (62.5%) were married or living with a common-law partner while the median income was in the \$40-60k range. Children's average age was 4.3 years.



## Week 8 Parenting Material

### Therapeutic Topics

- The value of emotion-focused discussions
  - Children with richer emotional vocabularies are more likely to have strong distress-coping and social skills
  - Support perspective-taking and relationship building within the family environment
- Opportunities to discuss emotions in everyday family life
- Step-by-step guide for validating your child's big emotions and helping them to choose a safe way to move forwards
- At-home activities to practice emotion-naming games
- Discussing examples of emotion naming and family learning that has been successful. Problem-solving any challenges

### Video Still

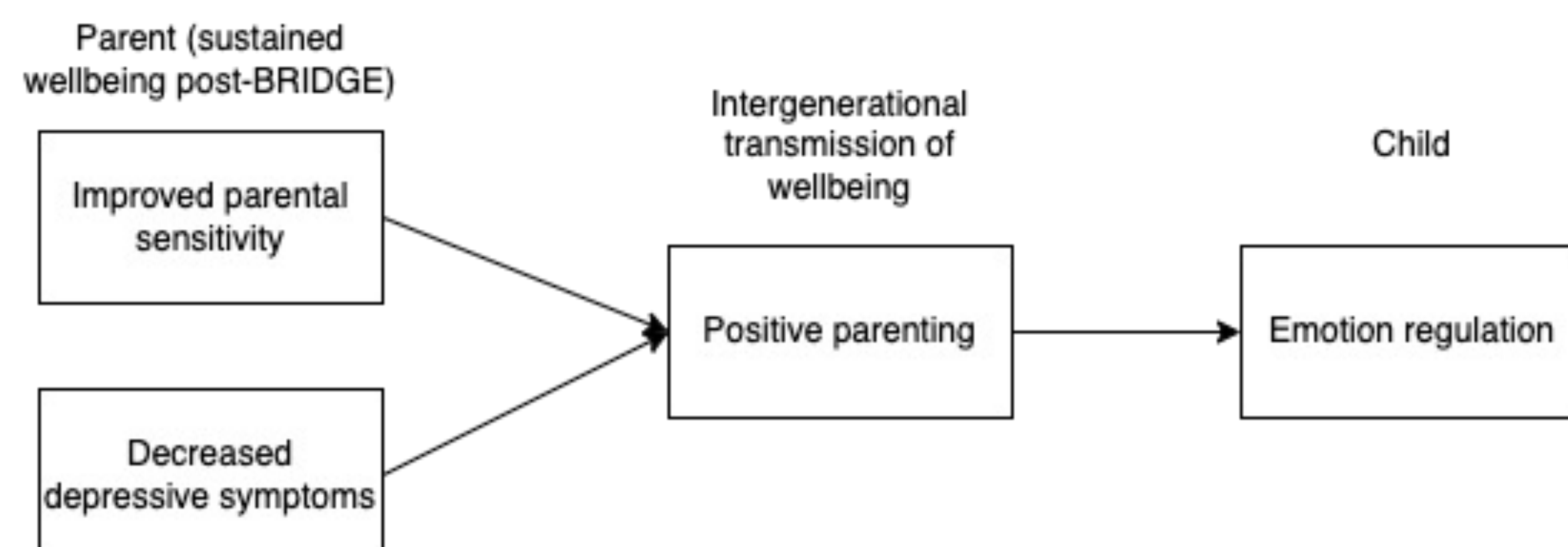
#### VALIDATE EMOTIONS & MOVE ON WITH YOUR DAY

- 1) Identify your own reactions & use **coping thoughts**
- 2) Turn your **whole mind** toward child
- 3) **Validate & normalize** emotions
  - "I hear that you're sad about leaving the park, you LOVE playing here so much!"
- 4) **Clarify** the facts, if needed
  - "We can come back tomorrow right after breakfast."
- 5) Given your child **choices** to move on to a desired activity
  - "Do you want to be giant tigers or sparkly unicorns on our race to the bus?"



## CONCLUSION

The results of this study supported our hypothesis on the paired intervention; mothers with improved sensitivity also experienced a decrease in depression symptom severity. This study was one of the first to adapt and assess maternal sensitivity through the MBQS completely remotely.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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