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2016

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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citation for published version (APA)

Niemer, S. I. J., Sarti, A., Dedding, C. W. M., & Seidell, J. C. (2016). *New Insights In Reasons For Children And Parents To Start A Community Based Lifestyle Intervention..*

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New Insights In Reasons For Children And Parents To Start A Community Based Lifestyle Intervention.

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Background & Aim

Because of low enrollment in and high drop out of lifestyle interventions for childhood obesity, more insights are needed in the motivational determinants to participate in such interventions.

Key Methods

LEFF (Lifestyle, Energy, Fun & Friends) is a 10-week community based lifestyle intervention (CBLI) for families with children (7-13 y) who are above a healthy weight. LEFF, the Dutch version of the proven to be effective MEND program, runs in deprived neighborhoods with multi-ethnic populations. Target group research before running LEFF, clearly showed children were participating in CBLI's because they wanted to lose weight (figure 1 and 2). We also wanted to know what were the reasons for families to start LEFF. The participants' (n=158) expectations of LEFF were assessed anonymously in session one and further discussed after the end of treatment in focus groups with children (n=28) and parents (n=25) separately (figure 3).

Results

The vast majority of both children and parents attend LEFF because they hope the child will lose weight. This desired weight loss is related to their wish the child will get bullied less ('be like the other children'), thereby will be more confident and overall feel better about him- or herself.

Conclusions

These results show that, despite often mistaken to be unmotivated, participating children and parents start a CBLI mainly because they find the child's weight and related problems an issue. This knowledge helps health care professionals in talking to them about treatment options.



Figure 1: Children were asked: 'How do you see yourself now and what would you like to be like?'

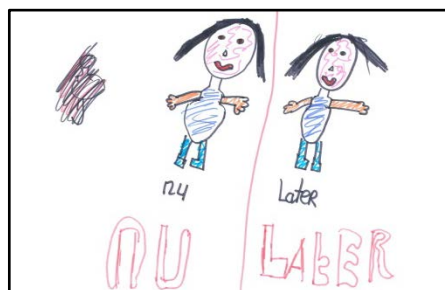


Figure 2: Three typical examples of children drawing themselves thinner in the preferred situation.



Figure 3: Focus group setting with the 'expectation box' at the table to facilitate discussions.