

# The efficacy of an intervention on healing the inner child on emotional intelligence, and adjustment among the college students

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People are conditioned to suppress their hurt child within oneself in order to avoid the pain and by repeating such things continuously, the free child may also be suppressed and subsequently people do not feel the joy either. The intervention on Healing the Inner Child (HIC) in oneself targets the experience of the joy and happiness by realizing the limitless potential of Healing the Inner Child is becoming popular among the therapist. The present study was aimed at exploring the extent to which the efficacy of the Intervention on Healing the Inner Child (HIC) by incorporating the four steps techniques developed by Bradshaw (1992). A repeated testing (pre-post) design was used to collect data on two psychological aspects Emotional Intelligence and Adjustments levels from 68 college students who had attended a three week training intervention programme on Healing the Inner Child (HIC) at two interval periods before and after the training period. The results revealed that the Intervention did have a positive effect and enhance the various dimensions of Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment levels.

Keywords: healing the inner child, emotional intelligence and adjustment

The “inner child” is a term adopted from a concept introduced by Eric Berne (1961) where the child ego state has been enriched to become the “Inner Child”. John Bradshaw (1992) who was a pioneer in highlighting the strengths of “Inner Child” had presented new and powerful insights into how people can reclaim their ‘wounded’ inner child, and move towards the journey that awakens the potential of their deepest selves. If our vulnerable inner child was neglected, abandoned, shamed or abused that child's pain, grief and anger live within us. People may not even know why they continue to do things or be with people who make them unhappy. John Bradshaw (1992) demonstrated that how reconnecting with their own inner child through original pain can be the source of hope, fulfilment and regeneration. Each individual's strengths, problems, level of self esteem and habits are at large a product of one's development. At each age, from birth to toddler to child to adolescent, an individual encounters typical challenges. If individual's upbringing is made in a natural way that allowed healthily traverse at each stage and mastered the skills necessary to progress, one is most likely to be well balanced and confident with a strong sense of self. However, at each stage there are countless traumas, which can occur and keep one from resolving the issues of that stage. Unresolved issues stay throughout the lives, expressing themselves in one relationship with one-self and others. If there is a pattern of unhealthy relationships, low self esteem, addictions or other problems, one may be experiencing the results of unresolved issues from their childhood and adolescent stages.

Further, the term had gained significance based on the popularity of the writings which expressed the importance of Inner Child as technique to nurture the psychological wellbeing (Missildine, 1963 ; Whitfield,1989; Bradshaw, 1992; Taylor, 1990). The concept of Inner Child has gained enormous significance in the recent years although the studies in the field are in its infancy. The Inner Child Therapy has been used as a remedial tool to resolve chronic problems that includes depression, low self esteem, low self confidence, and insecurity. Other than specific issues, it can be used as a way to healthier life or well being. In order to develop a healthy world view,

the role of “reparenting” ourselves and to unload the programs which are superstitious, illogical and immoral so as to free one from any conflicting views that contradict the day-to-day activities. The process of Inner Child helps to understand the key in loving oneself and also in turn being affectionate towards others. In order to offer healthy relationships to one's family, one needs to resolve the issues deep down the conscious.

Bradshaw (1992) designed a powerful form of group therapy to rekindle and nourish the “Inner Child”, which gives group members opportunities to express themselves, receive feedback from others, and observe, practice and learn new behaviours that can then be transferred to group interactions in the real world. Interpersonal learning occurs when members offer feedback to each other on their behaviour and when participants observe how their own behaviour affects other members in the group (Vander Kolk, 1985). The group offers settings in which members are able to vent out their feelings (catharsis) (Puthenangady 2006).

## *Intervention on healing the inner child*

Taylor (1991) observed that one may react strongly in an interaction if there are any unresolved issues occurred in the past. For instance, as a child, if one was never given a positive feedback, as an adult the individual may react strongly for criticism or feedback. Another instance that makes a harsh impact on the child is the separation from the parent or separation of parents. The fear instilled as a child may emerge even as an adult in intimate relationships. These recurring reactions to specific events are most likely related to one's childhood. When one can identify the reasons and heal the circumstances that created it, the individual could be free to respond to present interactions, not react to them because of the past. Although, the facts of the past cannot be undone, one can definitely change the way one reacts to similar situations.

Taylor (1991) reported that Inner Child therapy or healing is a process that helps one to resolve past experiences, healing inner child issues so that they no longer consciously or unconsciously control the present behavior. It dredges up the original memories from each stage, or at least creating symbolic images, pictures, voices, sounds etc and then replacing them with healthier ones. It is a form of NLP and therein lies its power.

### *Emotional health: The wounded inner child*

Lawrence (2010) reported that our inner child contains all our positive and negative emotional patterns. One lives in our psyche as the little child and carries the wounds of the past trauma. The children who grew up with emotionally distant father addicted to alcohol were found to be addicted to alcohol and unable to know or express one's emotions or understand the needs in a relationship like their father's. The influence of the childhood experience made them to numb their feelings and pain through alcohol. Through the process of various inner healing techniques and other meditation practices they were able to quit alcohol and be in touch with one's emotions and feelings. The self awareness gradually developed and expressing one's emotions came naturally thereby breaking the childhood trauma. By staying in the present with the feelings, one can transform and tranquillity could be accomplished.

Healing the Inner Child could be effective in healing the areas of wound at adolescence and in healing the wound of the previous stages of development which could lead to enhancing psychosocial adjustment. A robust literature documents the association between parental conflict and child adjustment (for reviews, see Grych & Fincham, 1990; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002). In both intact two-parent families (e.g., Emery, 1988; Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001) and recently divorced families (Emery, 1988; Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990), parental conflict has been associated with a range of child adjustment difficulties, including insecure attachments, internalizing and externalizing disorders, problems with peers, and academic difficulties. Consistent with Garbarino's accumulation of risk model (Garbarino, 2000), children who feel threatened both within and outside the home may be at greatest risk for maladjustment.

Children raised by parents who demonstrate both acceptance (i.e., warmth, support) and firm, consistent control (i.e., discipline, monitoring) score higher on a wide range of adjustment outcomes, including social competence, academic performance, and psychological well-being (Garbarino, 2000). The positive effects of authoritative parenting, as originally discussed by Baumrind (1968), persist beyond childhood and adolescence and into young adulthood (Jones, Forehand & Beach, 2000).

Evelyn Lim, a life coach, NLP practitioner has suggested seven steps to heal the inner child: (i) Understand one's Childhood Programming, (ii) Recognize Repeated Life Patterns, (iii) Acknowledge the Pain (iv) Disengage in Self-Judgment, (v) Embrace the Wounded Child, (vi) Practice Courage and (vii) Free oneself through Forgiveness

Lawrence (2010) reported that codependency as an addictive behavior, involves taking responsibility for someone else's thoughts, feelings, or behavior. It could be due to wounded inner child and it can be healed through the process of identifying the reason for the wound and address the issue.

In another observation, Lawrence (2010) mentioned that if the inner child is not healed it can run the life of the individual and one can identify it with typical behavior such as reacting to events, and signs of emotional instability. Also, the chances of passing down the accumulation of negative and positive experiences and self worth to the next generation are lofty.

As long as one perceives the reason for suffering is the result of external events, one would continue to avoid and escape the suffering. If the reason is turned inward, i.e. to look at the inner child

and tackle the unresolved issues, it takes one to the path of healthy living (Aponte & Winter, 2000; James, 1994).

In sum, Healing the Inner Child acts a step towards overcoming fears, anxieties, and enhancing self confidence.

### *Purpose of the study*

The positive psychology has attempted to shift the emphasis from understanding and treating youthful dysfunction to facilitating well-being and resiliency in young people. The focus is on the positive side of development to reduce its emphasis on dysfunction, and rekindle its neglected missions of making normal people stronger and more productive. Different studies have been carried out to emphasise the effectiveness of individual and group based interventions targeting at the personal development. But the present study focuses on the extent to which the Inner Child within oneself can be revitalised and its subsequent effect on personal development, emotional intelligence and adjustment of the respondents after the intervention. The study here is focusing on repairing a "wounded personality" due to early trauma, promoting healing and development.

### *The intervention on healing the inner child*

A comprehensive one week Healing the Inner Child Programme is offered at the Anugraha Counselling Institute, Dindigul, Tamil Nadu State, India. This intervention deals with the new method evolved by S.I. Wilson, the Director of Anugraha. Drawing inspiration from the method developed by Bradshaw (1992), a new approach has been followed by emphasising on how the Inner Child can be revitalised through a series of modules which are organised in a sequential order such as Reclaim, Release, Reconcile and Reparent. The details of activities assigned at each stage are given as below:

#### *Reclaim*

- Reclaiming the lost self is done by having a dialogue with the Inner Child. Any one of the four objects (namely Teddy Bear, Pillow, Mirror, or a Photo of one's childhood) is used to symbolize the Inner Child.
- Journaling and drawing the Inner Child are done to reclaim the inner self.
- Sharing the childhood tales and events with a trusted companion is done several times.
- Narrative and other expressive arts are adopted to reclaim the lost self.
- Reclaiming is also done by practicing daily self-acceptance and learning to live in the present.

#### *Release*

- Release is done by expressing the past grief, anxiety, anger and shame.
- Releasing of emotions is done (catharsis) in separate sessions facilitating the respondents to experience and feel as and when they practice.
- Gestalt therapy is done to release the residual negative emotions.
- One to one sharing in (Co-counselling setting) is a major cathartic process where the respondents have a chance to vent out their feelings freely and spontaneously without any inhibitions.
- Physical work is carried out to take care of their emotions. The unexpressed negative emotions from the childhood have become

stuck over time in certain parts of the body, for example anger in the legs, always feeling obliged in the shoulders, to impress in the chest, fear in the throat, sorrow in the eyes or shame in the pelvis. Together they form our "bodily armour". This has inhibited the free flow of natural energy in the body. In working with the body we gently encounter these blockades and bring in some movement and space by breathing. By doing this the participants discover the places in their body where energy often gets stuck. And they learn how it feels to start expressing your emotions and letting flow their energy.

### Reconcile

- Integrating Disowned Parts of the Self is done by NLP-techniques like V.K. Dissociation, Anchoring and Swish Pattern.
- Shadow (Repressed part by Jungian) Exercise (dialoguing with inner child- perceiving it as lump and integrating it but not denying) is done at various levels. It begins by
  - Reflecting the disowned part, and then by
  - Facing it. The participant then proceed to
  - Talk to that disowned part.
  - Getting integrated by happily accepting the disowned part completes this reconciling process.

### Reparent

- This is most important part of the Inner Child work. It is done in various ways.
- The main reparenting is done by having an affirming dialogue with the inner child. Any one of the four objects (namely Teddy Bear, Pillow, Mirror, or a Photo of one's childhood) is used to symbolize the inner child.
- The participant does nurturing works to the inner child from the adult self.
- Subliminal Programming is done by the therapist is a group setting. (with subliminal music audio cd)

### Re-parenting activities include

- Inner child healing
- Mirror work
- Unconditional self-acceptance
- Personal journal writing
- Self assertiveness
- Stress reduction and relaxation work
- Exercise program
- Self-nurturing physically by hugging and cradling self
- Child play work
- Self-affirmations
- Identification of feelings
- Personal feelings log
- Accepting personal responsibility for self
- Goal setting

### Objective of the study

To explore the extent to which Healing the Inner child Programme interventions enhance the personal and interpersonal relations, adjustment, emotional intelligence etc. among the college students.

### Hypothesis of the study

There will be a difference in the dimensions of emotional intelligence and adjustment post the treatment

## Method

### Participants

The samples for this study consisted of 68 college students who were

pursuing post graduation from three districts of Tamil Nadu. Among them, 44 were male and 24 were female. The age range of the sample was between 20 and 26 years. Informed consent was obtained from all of them after explaining the objective of the study.

### Instruments

In order to carry out the research the investigator made use of the three questionnaires.

*Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (EIQ):* The EIQ consisting of 60-item self-reporting questionnaire with a 5 point likert response format (5 describes me very well to 1 not at all describes me) was developed by Sinha & Jain (2004) to evaluate the emotional intelligence. This questionnaire consisted of five dimensions namely, self awareness, self regulation, motivation, social awareness and social skill.

*Self-awareness:* the ability to stand aside and look at self, understand strength and weakness.

*Self-regulation:* Having the integrity to work with in the strength and while focusing to improve upon weakness.

*Motivation:* referring to the driving and pulling forces which result in persistent behaviour directed towards certain goals.

*Social awareness:* the ability to understand others behaviour and acknowledge differences as acceptable.

*Social skill:* Managing emotions in others through communication based on empathy and understanding, to build mutual trust; social skills, including constructive handling of disagreements and the ability to create and sustain friendships; leadership effectiveness.

*Indian Adaption of Bell's Adjustment Inventory:* The Adjustment inventory consisting of 80 items self-reporting questionnaire with two alternative format (The responses are marked as yes or no) was developed by Dr. Lalita Sharma (1984) to assess the individual's adjustment in a variety of situations. The yes/no answers obtained for the items are divided accordingly into four different areas and are scored. 1 point is awarded to a 'yes' responses of the positive items and to the 'no' answers of negative items. This questionnaire consisted of four dimensions. They are Family, Social, Emotional, and Health.

*Family:* satisfaction or dissatisfaction in relation with parents and siblings, and the economic and health condition

*Social:* comfortable in terms of participation in social activities (festival, function), relating to friends and unknown people

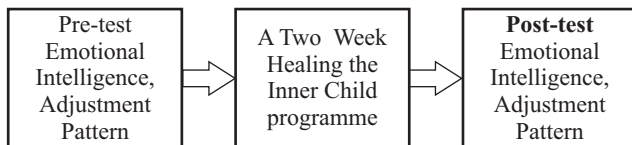
*Emotional:* adjusting to frustration, distress, anxiety and minor disturbance.

*Health:* adjustment with simple health reasons (headache, stomach ache, tiredness)

### Research design

*Experimental Design:* The pre-post experimental design was followed to study the efficacy of a Two Week Healing the Inner child programme on Emotional Intelligence and adjustment among the college students. The researcher approached the Director of Anugraha, Tamil Nadu Capuchin Institute for Counselling Psychotherapy and Research located in Dindigul, Tamil Nadu, to conduct a Two-Week residential Healing the Inner child programme and to find out its efficacy. Informed consent was obtained from all of them after explaining the objective of the study. The respondents were approached as a group and elicited data on two aspects such as Emotional Intelligence and Adjustment Pattern twice before and

after the intervention. Instructions were given to the participants of this Two-Week Residential Programme as per the directions given in the respective manuals and the investigator was available to provide clarification and attend to questions raised by the respondents. The response rate was 100 % as every one had shown willingness and interest in filling up the questionnaire. They were assured that their anonymity will be kept confidential and only the summarized group data will be analyzed and presented. All possible precautions were taken to ensure that accurate data would be collected from respondents.



**Statistical analysis**

Data of all the respondents were subjected to statistical analysis using SPSS software for carrying out 't' test.

The respondents were approached as a group and elicited data on two aspects such as Emotional Intelligence and adjustment. The obtained data were subjected to relevant statistical analysis using SPSS software. Data was analyzed using the students' paired't' test.

**Findings and discussions**

The obtained data were subjected to relevant statistical analysis using SPSS software and the results were shown in the following tables.

*Table1: Showing the difference in dimensions of Emotional Intelligence in pre and post intervention*

	Pre-test (N=68)		Post-test (N=68)		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Selfawareness	47.72	6.19	52.86	5.54	6.57*
2. Selfregulation	46.64	6.02	50.63	6.67	5.12*
3. Motivation	45.63	6.53	50.92	6.99	6.00*
4. Social awareness	46.22	6.71	51.30	6.18	6.34*
5. Social skill	44.35	6.46	49.98	6.88	7.19*

\* P<05

Daniel Goleman defines emotional intelligence in terms of self-awareness, altruism, personal motivation, empathy, and the ability to love and be loved by friends, partners, and family members. Emotional Intelligence is the ability to view situations objectively and thus to understand ourselves and other people. The intervention has contributed to better emotional intelligence of individuals in the present study. There is a significant difference in the dimensions of Emotional Intelligence viz. Self Awareness (6.57, p < 05), Self Regulation (5.12, p < 05), and Motivation (6.00, p < 05, Social Awareness (6.34, p < 05) and Social Skills 7.19, P < 05. Only part of our success in life is attributable to intellect. Other qualities are collectively described as Emotional Intelligence.

Self exploration and developing self awareness are life-long processes for therapist. Self awareness is a sense of insight which is gained in the presence of others. Regular formal support groups, Co-counselling, Journaling and drawing the inner child, Sharing the childhood tales and events with a trusted companion, Narrative and other expressive arts, reparenting (Mirror work, Self-nurturing physically) are some of the other ways of working on self. The

pyramid approach support for students' social and emotional growth and academic success over the course of a school year. The participants work in a group of between 8 and 10 develop a sense of integrity and authenticity (t-value 6.57)

Therapists' sense of wellbeing and esteem is highly influenced by their ability to master self-regulation and impulse-control skills (Valente, V., and Marotta, A., 2005). Expressing Past Grief, Anxiety, Anger and Shame, Releasing of emotions through catharsis, Gestalt therapy, NLP-techniques like V.K. Dissociation, Anchoring and Swish Pattern, Getting integrated through reconciling process and reparenting. Fear and anxiety are the black holes that prevent one to face new challenges, act on spontaneity. The above therapies remove facades and improve the emotional maturity (t-value 5.12).

Personal power, to accomplish what is needed is the outcome of self-motivation. Self motivation is done by Self-affirmations, Unconditional self-acceptance, positive affirmation, Goal setting and Self-affirmations in reparent. Empowering and Permission (what parents have not given) are the ways to enhance the self-motivation (t-value 6.00)

Personal growth takes place in the group, as well as individually. Sharing the childhood tales and events with a trusted companion increases social awareness. (t-value 6.34)

Self assertiveness and Accepting personal responsibility for self in reparenting are the ways that helps in changing the social skill of emotional intelligence (t-value 7.19).

*Table 2: Showing the difference in dimensions of Adjustment in pre and post intervention*

	Pre-test (N=68)		Post-test (N=68)		't' value
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
1. Family	5.61	3.27	5.57	3.02	0.09
2. Social	6.01	2.24	5.00	2.36	3.36*
3. Emotional	8.51	3.31	6.44	3.32	4.80*
4. Health	5.07	2.91	3.83	3.00	2.93*

\* P<05

There is an association between parental conflict and child adjustment (for reviews, see Grych & Fincham, 1990; Repetti, Taylor, & Seeman, 2002). In both intact two-parent families (e.g., Emery, 1988; Frosch & Mangelsdorf, 2001) and recently divorced families (e.g., Emery, 1988; Fauber, Forehand, Thomas, & Wierson, 1990; Jones et al. 2005), parental conflict has been associated with a range of child adjustment difficulties, including insecure attachments, internalizing and externalizing disorders, problems with peers, and academic difficulties. Consistent with Garbarino's accumulation of risk model (Garbarino, 2000), children who feel threatened both within and outside the home may be at greatest risk for maladjustment.

Children raised by parents who demonstrate both acceptance (i.e., warmth, support) and firm, consistent control (i.e., discipline, monitoring) score higher on a wide range of adjustment outcomes, including social competence, academic performance, and psychological well-being (for a review, see Basic Behavioural Science Task Force, 1996). The positive effects of authoritative parenting, as originally discussed by Baumrind (1968), persist beyond childhood and adolescence and into young adulthood (Jones, Forehand, & Beach, 2000).

Reparenting is the concept in inner child work which can change mal-treatment by parents and lead to adjustment in social, emotional

and health. (3.36, 4.80, 2.93 respectively). The adjustment in the family does not change and the retest (after 90 days) would clear the doubt whether family adjustment change (Stubenbort et al., 2007).

Self awareness leads to Social awareness that results in social adjustment (Jones et al., 2005; Forehand & Jones, 2003) (t-value 3.36) Emotional adjustment is enhanced by daily self-acceptance and learning to live in the present. (t-value 4.80) Regarding Health, body work in Release, Stress reduction and relaxation work, Exercise program in reparenting and integrating disowned part of the self leads not only to health adjustment but also health enhancement which can be studied further. (t-value 2.93).

### Applications of the study

Healing the Inner Child Programme comprising of one week session, offered at Anugraha Focuses on

- Identifying and healing the negative issues which caused the separation from our inner-child.
- Reconnecting and reintegrating with our inner-child, and learning to maintain and develop the connection.
- Learning to play and have fun with the inner-child.
- Regaining that blissful state of unconditional love and inner joy that is the ultimate goal for all of us. The person is guided and motivated from false state of protection to new state of protection which lead to well being.

The positive results on the dimension of the emotional intelligence and adjustment have a proof of the above statement. In future, the same process can be repeated for different groups (healing the inner child course on heterogeneous group) can be studied to further verify the different dimensions change. Since the study is limited to only one group. The abuses in the society are more. It right way starts from the family whether from the parents, brothers and close relatives. No one claim to be coming from an ideal family. In one way or other we are abused by words, physical assaults or to some extent sexually abused. This results in the later stages of one's life. It is reflected in the families. If one's hurt feelings are cured, there will be reduce in the broken marriages or divorces. The orphans who brought up without parents can be helped through this intervention. All the more it helps one to accept oneself. At large it helps the society. This intervention may not work with people suffering from personality disorder and people suffer from hormonal problems. The study here focuses on repairing a "wounded personality" due to early trauma, promoting healing and development.

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