

A group-based parenting intervention for mothers of preschool children with emotional and/or behavioral regulation difficulties: a randomized controlled trial of the From Ego to Eco program versus an active play-based control

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| Submission date 30/04/2026 | Recruitment status Recruiting | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Prospectively registered |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Protocol |
| Registration date 01/05/2026 | Overall study status Ongoing | <input type="checkbox"/> Statistical analysis plan |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> Results |
| Last Edited 01/05/2026 | Condition category Mental and Behavioural Disorders | <input type="checkbox"/> Individual participant data |
| | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Record updated in last year |

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

Some young children find it hard to manage their emotions or behaviour. This can show up as frequent tantrums, strong emotional reactions, or difficulty calming down. These difficulties in early childhood are linked to later emotional, social, and learning problems. Many parenting programmes focus mainly on managing behaviour and give less attention to parents' emotional experiences and relationships with their children. This study aims to test a group-based parenting programme called From Ego to Eco. The study will compare this programme with another active parenting group to see which one better supports mothers and improves children's behaviour.

Who can participate?

The study is for mothers aged 18 years or over who have a child aged 3 years to 6 years with emotional and or behavioural regulation difficulties. Mothers need to be willing to join a group programme and accept being randomly assigned to one of the two study groups. Some screening is done before joining. Mothers will not be able to take part if they currently have a psychiatric condition needing intensive specialist treatment, if there is ongoing family violence or serious safety concerns at home, or if they cannot attend at least 75 percent of sessions due to health, work, or language difficulties.

What does the study involve?

Participants will be randomly assigned to one of two group programmes. Both programmes involve 13 weekly group sessions, each lasting about 2 hours. One group will take part in the From Ego to Eco programme, which focuses on emotional regulation, reflection, cooperation, and the parent-child relationship. Sessions include guided exercises, discussion, and shared reflection. The other group will attend a Play Workshop, which focuses on parent-child play activities and practical information about child development, but does not include the specific

therapeutic elements of From Ego to Eco. Mothers will be asked to complete questionnaires about themselves and their child before the programme starts, after it ends, and again about 3 months later. A smaller number of mothers will also be invited to take part in a brief observation of parent–child interaction.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Possible benefits include gaining new skills and understanding that may help with parenting, reduce parenting stress, and improve children’s emotional and behavioural regulation. Some mothers may also find it helpful to share experiences with others in a similar situation. Possible risks are minimal but may include emotional discomfort when talking about personal experiences or parenting challenges during group sessions. Support is provided during sessions to manage this.

Where is the study run from?

The study is run from Achva Academic College in Israel, with groups delivered through local educational psychology services.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study is expected to start recruiting participants in June 2026 and to finish in May 2028. Each participant will be involved for around 6 months, including the group sessions and follow-up assessments.

Who is funding the study?

The study does not have a dedicated external research grant. The delivery of the intervention is supported through routine service budgets of the local Educational Psychology Service.

Who is the main contact?

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Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator, Public, Scientific

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Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title

A parallel-group randomized controlled trial evaluating the effectiveness of the From Ego to Eco group intervention, compared with an active control Play Workshop, for mothers of children aged 3–6 years with emotional and/or behavioral regulation difficulties

Acronym

EgoToEcoRCT

Study objectives

To evaluate the effectiveness of a 13-session group adaptation of the From Ego to Eco model, compared with an active control Play Workshop, in improving parental capacities, parental reflective functioning, self-compassion, parenting distress/parental helplessness, and child behavior problems in mothers of children aged 3–6 years with emotional and/or behavioral regulation difficulties. The study will also examine whether baseline parental stage and attachment style are associated with differences in response to the intervention. A structured observational substudy will assess mother–child interaction in a balanced subsample of dyads.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)

approved 13/04/2026, Achva Academic College (Department of Educational Psychology, Achva Academic College, D.N. Shikmim, Yenon, 7980400, Israel; +972-72-2248542; shimrit_s@achva.ac.il), ref: 0327

Primary study design

Interventional

Allocation

Randomized controlled trial

Masking

Open (masking not used)

Control

Active

Assignment

Parallel

Purpose

Prevention, Treatment

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Emotional and/or behavioral regulation difficulties in preschool children, and associated parenting difficulties in mothers of children aged 3–6 years

Interventions

Intervention arm: From Ego to Eco group intervention

Participants allocated to the intervention arm will attend 13 weekly group sessions, each lasting 2 hours. Groups will be led by two trained facilitators using a structured manual and ongoing supervision. The intervention is based on the From Ego to Eco model and includes work on regulation, vulnerability, cooperation, and fluctuation. Sessions include bodily regulation exercises, emotional processing, narrative work, shared reflection, and mentalization-oriented components.

Comparator arm: Active control group: Play Workshop

Participants allocated to the control arm will attend 13 weekly group sessions, each lasting 2 hours. The control program includes structured parent-focused activities involving parent-child play and practical information about child development. It is an active and structured parenting program but does not include the specific therapeutic components unique to the From Ego to Eco model.

Randomisation process:

Participants will be randomized after completion of the intake meeting and baseline assessment, using a computer-generated random allocation sequence. Randomization will be conducted separately within each cohort, in a 1:1 ratio, to one of the two study arms.

Intervention Type

Behavioural

Primary outcome(s)

1. Child behavior problems measured using Mother-report using the Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI) and the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) at Baseline (T0), post-intervention (T1), and 3-month follow-up (T2)

Key secondary outcome(s)

Completion date

31/05/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria

1. Mothers of children aged 3–6 years with emotional and/or behavioral regulation difficulties
2. Willingness to participate in the study and accept random allocation to one of the two study arms
3. Eligibility confirmed following a brief screening procedure, including kindergarten-teacher completion of 5 conduct-problem items from the SDQ

Healthy volunteers allowed

No

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 years

Upper age limit

99 years

Sex

Female

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

1. Current psychiatric condition requiring intensive or specialized treatment
2. Ongoing family violence or serious safety concerns in the home
3. Significant difficulty preventing regular participation in the group, including severe physical illness, work constraints preventing attendance at at least 75% of sessions, or major language difficulties preventing meaningful participation

Date of first enrolment

01/06/2026

Date of final enrolment

31/12/2027

Locations

Countries of recruitment

Israel

Sponsor information

Organisation

Achva Academic College

ROR

<https://ror.org/024hcay96>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name

This study has no dedicated external research grant. Intervention delivery is supported through routine service budgets of the Educational Psychology Service in Beitar Illit.

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available