



**PARENT SUPPORT NETWORK**

*A not-for-profit corporation providing support, education and service for better communities, parents and kids.*

## **How Successful Is Changes Parent Support Network?**

**Changes** Parent Support Network (CPSN) is a support group for parents, guardians, or other caregivers who are experiencing acting-out, self-destructive behavior from their children. This acting-out behavior may include failure at school or work, defiance of home rules, physical or verbal abuse of parents, running away, substance abuse, stealing, property damage, low motivation for productive activities, breaking the law, depression, low self esteem, mental illness, adoption issues, or gang involvement. As a result, parents or other caregivers may feel stressed out, helpless, frustrated, angry, sad, depressed, fearful, ashamed, or alienated from relatives, neighbors, and friends.

**Changes** is a structured self-help program for identifying and facilitating proactive changes in household dynamics that allow parents to regain control of their home. When parents participate fully in the program, their children have the opportunity to accept more responsibility for their actions (thereby steering them toward opportunities for positive behavior changes). The **Changes** program is based on parent-to-parent sharing of the wisdom and experience they've gained in dealing with their acting-out children. This support is provided mainly at weekly group meetings and periodic individual support team meetings; the program also includes phone support calls and brainstorming e-mail interchanges. Guest speakers, periodic seminars, workshops, and social events supplement the program.

### **How well does Changes actually work?**

The **Changes** organization periodically requests feedback from its members. This document summarizes **Changes** participant responses from the most recent member survey measuring their personal success with the program. Surveys were distributed to approximately 150 current and former members. 61 completed surveys were returned (a statistically respectable response of approximately 40%). Here are some of the questions from the survey, with average responses.

<b>Question</b>	<b>Response Choices Ranged From</b>	<b>Average Response Scale of 0 to 10</b>
What level of support do you feel you received from the weekly group meetings?	"not at all useful" to "excellent"	7.25
What level of support do you feel you have received from your individual support team?	"not at all useful" to "excellent"	8.25
Did the <b>Changes</b> program make you feel less stressed out over your family situation, and more in control?	"not at all improved" to "significantly improved"	9
Did the <b>Changes</b> program improve your ability to be a better parent?	"not at all improved" to "significantly improved"	8.5
Did you notice any positive changes in your child's behavior or attitude as a result of the changes you made as a parent?	"not at all improved" to "significantly improved"	6

## **The Bottom Line Regarding the Success of CPSN**

It is often difficult, or even sometimes impossible, to force someone else to change. Often it is easier to change something in ourselves. Some CPSN members have seen little improvement in their child's behavior. However, other CPSN parents have seen remarkable improvement in their child's behavior -- often after years of trying other parenting approaches and tools on their own, with no success. Our member feedback survey has shown that, *on average*, the behavior of acting-out children has tended to improve due to parents working the **Changes** program.

Parents initially come to **Changes** because they want improvement in their acting-out child's behavior. Even though the program can be successful in this regard, it is even more successful in improving a member's perception of skill and self-esteem as a parent, and in relieving the feelings of stress, anxiety and lack of control that parents of acting-out children commonly suffer. CPSN is especially good at helping parents regain balance and well-being in their lives.

Here's what some **Changes** members say about the program:

*When my stepdaughter's acting-out behavior escalated beyond our control, my partner and I tried many things to augment our parenting skills and approaches before coming to **Changes**. We went to several different family counselors. We met with school officials and school counselors. We read parenting books and articles. We talked to friends who were parents to get advice. But all those things only gave us ideas that we had to decide on and try out by ourselves. **Changes** was the only thing we came across that made us feel like we really weren't in it alone any more. **Changes** gave us a group of caring people, experienced with this kind of teenage behavior, who actively helped us on a day-to-day basis. We stopped second-guessing our decisions, the emotional tension level went down, and the new approaches had positive results with our teenager.*

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*When I first came to **Changes** I was desperate, and I knew that my situation with my child had to change. Through the organization's structured approach I have learned that the only person I can change is myself, and I have. My child's behavior continues to have its ups and downs, but I am doing much better.*

\* \* \*

*You could say **Changes** gave me my life back. It got me out of isolation. I connected with people who could commiserate and relate to the horror of my family life. I couldn't believe I found a place where I could actually laugh and find humor in what I had been living through. The group helped me realize I wasn't crazy, abnormal, or bad, and that I did not have to keep carrying the heavy burdens of shame and hopelessness anymore. **Changes** gave me a place to learn tools to reclaim my life, my home and my future.*

