

STARSS in Hanover, Ontario

A group of moms consisting of Brighter Futures participants as well as consumers of our host agency, Keystone Child Youth & Family Services in Owen Sound, Ontario gathered 16 times between January 22/10 and June 25/10. We met in a 'family room' at the site weekly for 1.5 hours with plenty of healthy snacks and offered a child care program in the adjoining room. We used all of the tools and interventions outlined in the **Guide to STARSS Strategies** and the **I'm a STAR! Journal** and were able to enhance the experience with some interventions of our own. The extra sessions were mostly focused on stress reduction, balance, and wellness.

In keeping with the **STARSS** philosophy, we were careful to watch for any small steps in the direction of reducing tobacco use and celebrated every chance we got. Praise and congratulations were given out lavishly in person, over the phone, and even with balloons from non-smoking moms that attend another group at the centre! During sessions we regularly looked at and shared smoking patterns and triggers, closely examined relationships with the cigarette and consistently provided an environment where failure didn't exist. As long as a mom showed up and kept talking and "thinking about reducing secondhand smoke", we recognized success. However, one of our parents served as a role model after quitting smoking in the second trimester of her pregnancy after smoking heavily for 15 years.

We had some helpful factors in our favour through our groups such as a setting that families were already familiar with and comfortable in. Since we are linked to the Healthy Choices (Health Canada-funded time-limited) program we could offer 1:1 sessions outside of group times as well as telephone support. Our group members could access many stress reduction services and interventions like yoga, meditation, visualization, reiki, and massage. We offered nicotine replacement therapy through the Ontario-wide STOP study and handed out 'quit packs' with gum, straws, toothbrushes, etc.

This **STARSS** format made the groups easy to deliver with the content being useful and effective while the attitude toward the participant facilitated pride and success. Smoking women experiencing extra stress in their lives while parenting young children deserve the opportunities and respect that is packaged in this program.