

# THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

GIVE NOW



## The University of Arizona Health Sciences

[Events](#) [Resources](#) [Room Scheduling](#) [Library](#) [Blog](#)

[About](#) [Research Centers](#) [Global and Online](#) [Tomorrow Is Here](#) [News](#)

**TOMORROW IS HERE**

---

**HEALTH SCIENCES CONNECT**

---

**PHOTO GALLERIES**

---

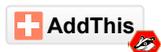
**VIDEOS**

### Contact

Health Sciences  
Office of Communications  
520-626-7301  
[public@arizona.edu](mailto:public@arizona.edu)

Health Sciences  
Office of Communications  
520-626-7301  
[public@arizona.edu](mailto:public@arizona.edu)

# Parent-Training Approach Shows Promise in Decreasing ADHD Behaviors in Children



Feb 23, 2021

TUCSON, Ariz. — The Nurtured Heart Approach, a family-centered approach for the treatment of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) in children, showed positive results in reducing behaviors such as inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, according to a recent [University of Arizona Health Sciences](#)-led study.

In the United States, diagnoses of ADHD in children have increased dramatically in recent decades, affecting 6-7% of children and adolescents. One of the most common mental disorders affecting children, ADHD is often treated with medication, especially stimulants that help to modulate dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain.

**Velia Leybas Nuño, PhD**, assistant professor in the [UArizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health](#) led a team of researchers that assessed the efficacy of the Nurtured Heart Approach for the treatment of ADHD behaviors. The paper, “[The Online Nurtured Heart Approach to Parenting: A Randomized Study to Improve ADHD Behaviors in Children Ages 6-8](#),” was recently published in the journal *Ethical Human Psychology and Psychiatry*.

“In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, parents and practitioners may be looking for ways to learn new approaches while keeping their families safe and healthy,” Dr. Nuño said.

“The online Nurtured Heart Approach showed improvement by training parents, rather than a direct child-focused treatment approach, and thus could be diffused throughout the family, potentially yielding benefits for other children within the household,” added co-author **Bridget Murphy, DBH**, a research program administration officer in the Zuckerman College of Public Health’s Center for Rural Health.

All of the parents who participated had children who were between the ages of 6 and 8 and were



*Parents who participated in Nurtured Heart Approach training saw a decrease in inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity in children who were suspected of having or diagnosed with ADHD.*



*Velia Nuño, PhD*

diagnosed with or suspected of having ADHD. The parents were randomly divided into two groups: one group underwent weekly online Nurtured Heart Approach training sessions for six weeks while the other did not. Once the first group completed their training, the second group completed the Nurtured Heart Approach training. This way both groups participated in the training, but at different times.

The results were based on parent reports about their child's ADHD behaviors using the Conners 3-Parent Short Form, an established tool that measures ADHD-type behaviors including inattention, hyperactivity/impulsivity, learning problems, executive

functioning, defiance/aggression and peer relations.

“Inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity are the primary reasons parents and educators refer children for evaluations and the resultant ADHD diagnosis. Our study found significant improvements in ADHD behaviors as reported by parents,” Dr. Nuño said. “We were hoping to see improvement in inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, and we did. But we also saw improvement in executive functioning and learning problems. Additionally, we saw a reduction in parenting-related stress.”

Of the children who originally scored high in inattention, 31% showed significant improvement to the point that their scores were no longer considered high. Also, 11% of children who originally scored high in hyperactivity/impulsivity significantly improved to the point that their scores were no longer considered high.

The Nurtured Heart Approach was developed by Tucson family therapist [Howard Glasser, MA](#), based on two decades of experience working with families, teachers and mental health professionals. The most commonly used treatment for ADHD is medication; however, the clinical recommendations are behavioral therapy or medication. The Approach works toward reducing ADHD behaviors, but also building a relationship between parents and children that in turn promotes confidence and self-worth in children.

Glasser founded the [Children's Success Foundation](#), which has trained many parents, teachers,

caregivers and mental health professionals in the Nurtured Heart Approach. The Children's Success Foundation partially funded the study after one family who benefitted from the Approach pledged funds and challenged individuals and groups to match their donation. The result was an overwhelmingly positive response.



*In addition to children with ADHD, the Nurtured Heart Approach may benefit siblings and other children in the household.*

“Our study presents an approach to working with children with ADHD behaviors which focuses on changing behaviors through parent-child relationship,” Dr. Nuño said. “We hope to expand our study to reach more parents and older children. We would like to work in partnership with schools, behavioral health agencies, and pediatricians and family practice doctors to share these findings.”

Other co-authors include: **Betsy C. Wertheim, MS**, assistant scientific investigator in the UArizona Cancer Center; **Richard A. Wahl, MD**, professor in the UArizona College of Medicine – Tucson’s Department of Pediatrics; and **Denise J. Roe, DrPH**, professor of biostatistics in the Zuckerman College of Public Health.

# # #

Photos available upon request.

### **About the University of Arizona Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health**

Established in 2000, the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health at the University of Arizona Health Sciences is the first nationally accredited college of public health in the Southwest. Today the college remains the only accredited college of public health in the state of Arizona, with campuses in Tucson and Phoenix. The college enrolls more than 1,100 students per year across degree programs at the bachelor's degree, master's degree and doctoral levels. Through research, education and community engagement, the UA Zuckerman College of Public Health continues to find solutions to public health problems in Arizona, the Southwest and globally. For more information: [publichealth.arizona.edu](http://publichealth.arizona.edu) (Follow us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)).

### **About the University of Arizona Health Sciences**

The University of Arizona Health Sciences is the statewide leader in biomedical research and health

professions training. UArizona Health Sciences includes the Colleges of Medicine (Tucson and Phoenix), Nursing, Pharmacy, and the Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health, with main campus locations in Tucson and the Phoenix Biomedical Campus in downtown Phoenix. From these vantage points, Health Sciences reaches across the state of Arizona, the greater Southwest and around the world to provide next-generation education, research and outreach. A major economic engine, Health Sciences employs nearly 5,000 people, has approximately 4,000 students and 900 faculty members, and garners \$200 million in research grants and contracts annually. For more information: [uahs.arizona.edu](https://uahs.arizona.edu) (Follow us: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Instagram](#)).

**Original Story Link:**

[Parent-Training Approach Shows Promise in Decreasing ADHD Behaviors in Children](#)

## The University of Arizona Health Sciences

### **Tucson Campus**

Health Sciences Innovation Building (HSIB)  
1670 E. Drachman St.  
Tucson, Arizona 85721  
Tel: (520) 626-1197

### **Phoenix Campus**

Health Sciences Education Building (HSEB)  
435 North 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85004  
Tel: (602) 827-2002



Copyright © 2017-2021 Arizona Board of Regents. All rights reserved.

The University of Arizona is an EEO/AA - M/W/D/V Employer.

[Admin Login](#)

Web development by [BioCommunications](#), UArizona Health Sciences

---

### **University Privacy Statement**

© 2021 The Arizona Board of Regents on behalf of [The University of Arizona](#).

