

Fact Sheet: The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM)

Introduction

The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM) uses a strengths-based approach to measure parent functioning. It focuses on caregivers' sense of control or capacity to engage confidently with the challenges of being a parent. The PEEM places parents at the centre of their own future, encouraging them to identify their existing parenting strengths, and any influences within their environment that may help or hinder their capacity to achieve their parenting goals.

The PEEM is designed for use with parents or carers of children of kindergarten and primary school age. The measure is short and practical. It has twenty positively worded items that relate to personal and child wellbeing, coping skills, relationship building, and communication.

The PEEM has many uses. It helps parents and professionals work together to strengthen parents' efficacy in their role as caregiver. It can also be used to support comprehensive evaluation within parent support programs and community organisations. In particular, it can help agencies to review the effects of the resources and services they have delivered for individual parents, groups of parents, and families within the community more broadly.

The PEEM is delivered using an engaging on-line format called PARENT'S VOICE, although a hard-copy paper version is also available.

Parent's Voice

Q1 I find it easy to talk to people like teachers, doctors and nurses about my children.

Your Progress 5%

Replay Audio

Does this statement describe the way you feel right now?

Definitely not	Not really	Kind of	Mostly	Definitely					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

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Administering the PEEM

The measure was designed for use by family support and community service agencies. It should only take parents about 10 minutes to respond to the twenty items. However you should allow at least 30 minutes for administration to provide time to discuss with parents the purpose of the measure and the individual items in the context of your work with them. This allows you to log onto PEEM's online site (Parent's Voice), complete the administrative details with the parent, check that the instructions and the procedure for providing answers are understood, and respond to any questions or concerns parents may have before they complete the questions at a relaxed pace. Also consider allowing time after parents complete the measure to discuss any concerns raised through the scores and to begin what can be an ongoing conversation about how you can work together to support them in their parenting role. For example, in discussion with you after completing the measure, a parent may pick up on an issue they identified as an aspect of parenting they find either challenging or feel empowered to deal with.

Scoring

Scores based on responses to individual items are calculated automatically in PEEM's online platform (Parent's Voice) so you are provided with a **total score** for parent empowerment and efficacy as soon as the last question has been answered. Subsets of individual item scores are also tallied to provide two distinct subscale values relating to (i) *efficacy to parent* and (ii) *efficacy to connect*. These two subscales are discussed in more detail later.

How does the PEEM help me in my work with parents?

After a parent has completed Parent's Voice you can review the pattern of responses as part of your case planning process and to facilitate program planning. The individual items can be used as conversation starters, and to pinpoint any particular issues that either parents, or you as the support professional, would like to discuss. These focused discussions can deepen understanding of the strengths already held by the parent, and how these strengths can be harnessed to support his or her parenting efficacy. This can help build a trusting professional relationship and a strong foundation for your work together as you plan the kind of support that will promote successful parenting.

How does the PEEM help parents?

Completing and reflecting on their responses to the questions helps parents to acknowledge the capabilities they already have, and how these capabilities can support their role: not only as parents, but as active and capable participants within supportive and connected social networks, and the broader community.

When parents feel challenged by some of the issues they face in their day-to-day parenting role, they can feel that their ability to meet parenting expectations is not strong, and that they may be judged by others who seem more capable.

Working through their answers together with a supportive practitioner can help parents consider their strengths as well as any areas that they may find challenging (e.g., speaking with their child's teachers, or feeling isolated and lacking support to help manage feelings of depression or anxiety). Used in this way, the PEEM can help parents to open a conversation that begins a process of change and provides an agreed focus for structuring support.

Using the PEEM

When do I use the PEEM?

Baseline: Ideally, PEEM can be introduced to parents in the early stages of your working partnership with them.

Follow-up: Repeating the measure three to six months after initial administration provides you with an opportunity to assess the effects of the support programs or services that have been offered, to evaluate program outcomes, and to review any changes in parents' strengths, capabilities and feelings resulting from their participation.

How do I use the PEEM?

It is important to establish a positive rapport with parents before introducing them to PEEM for the first time. This time provides you with an opportunity to reassure them about the way their honest responses can help identify ways you can work together to support them. When you have decided to present PEEM to parents, do so at a time that is suitable to both of you, and provide a space where parents feel safe and comfortable to discuss the items and share information that can at times be quite sensitive. If parents do not feel comfortable or safe, or they feel pressured by time or conditions, they may not reveal either their perceived strengths or the extent of any sense of powerlessness they may feel as a parent. (Whenever we are presented with any kind of survey and do not feel entirely comfortable it is common to respond in a "socially desirable" way - which often means responding more positively than we really feel.)

Parents should feel confident that PEEM is not used to make judgments about their parenting skills, but rather forms part of a process designed to help you work together to extend their capacity to achieve their positive parenting goals.

Parents complete the items themselves. You can assist them, if requested, to make sure the meaning of any item is clearly understood, but be careful not to influence their responses. It is important to balance your sensitivity to a parent's needs as they complete the measure with a degree of objectivity to ensure scores reflect the parent's voice and accurately identify appropriate support options.

Practice using the response scale

Responses to all items are recorded in the form of a 1 to 10 point scale. Parents use the numbers on the scale to indicate the degree to which they think the statement describes the way they feel.

Definitely Not		Not Really		Kind of		Mostly		Definitely	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Items are all scored in the same direction. So '1' always means that parents have no agreement with the statement and '10' always means that they are in complete agreement and the statement reflects exactly how they have been feeling about the issue lately. Higher scores indicate that parents feel they have a greater strength in that area.

The online version of PEEM (Parent's Voice) includes an engaging introduction and set of instructions for parents about how to use the answer scale.

If you are using the paper version, you may like to use the following set of instructions as an example of how you could introduce the answer scale to parents before they complete their responses. You are able to adapt the wording in italics, however, ensure the parent feels at ease and is clear about the process.

Say *"Raising children and being a parent is very rewarding – but it can also be hard work."*

Parents sometimes feel more comfortable in sharing sensitive information if they feel you may have experienced similar feelings or have some understanding of what they are experiencing as a parent. To help parents feel connected and comfortable you may like to say:

"I'm a parent too and as parents, we rarely feel completely satisfied with the job we do. Our lives can be quite complicated, but we all do the best we can."

If you are not a parent you might like to say something like:

"I'm not a parent but working with parents as I do in my role, parents often share with me that they rarely feel completely satisfied with the job they are doing as parents. Life can be quite complicated but everyone does the best they can."

Say - *"Parents' Voice provides a list of the statements about things we often deal with or would like to do in our role as parents. The statements may not be completely true for you right now and that's absolutely okay. Each statement has a range of response options for you to choose from to show how well you think it describes the way you feel or the way things are for you right now (e.g., over the past couple of weeks). Here's an example of how the scale works:*

Let's say there was a statement that is a perfect match for how things are for you at the moment and

describes exactly the way you feel. You would click on 10. If the statement sounds nothing like the way you feel and you couldn't imagine saying it right now (even if you'd like it to be true) you would click on the 1. Things are hardly ever black and white though – so you'll probably find that you normally fall somewhere in between the extreme ends. Use the other numbers to show the level to which the statements describe the way you feel. If the statement is mostly like the way you feel but is not a perfect match then you may choose '7' or '8' depending on how much it describes you. If it is not really like the way you feel but not completely untrue, then you might choose '3'; or if it's sort of like you might choose 5."

Practice Questions

Here are three practice items that you can use to help parents become familiar with how the response scale works:

Say - "Let's practice a few examples before you start?"

1. "I have a good network of friends." - If you think "Yes, I keep in regular contact with my friends and we support each other" then you might choose '9'.
2. "I wake up feeling refreshed and full of energy every day." – If you think "Right now I never seem to get enough sleep and I always feel tired" then you might choose '2' or you might think "I don't always get enough sleep but I feel okay most days" then you might select '7'.
3. "I get time for myself." – If you think "Right now my family needs me a lot and I don't really have too much time - but even though I'm busy, I still try to organise things to make sure I get a bit of time to myself, to relax and do something I enjoy" you may decide that this should be rated a '6'. Or you may think "I feel I am being called on most of the time to do things and can only manage to find a little bit of time each week to do things for myself" you may decide that '4' is the best match.

Once you have taken the parent through the practice items and you both feel comfortable that the process has been understood, invite the parent to complete the measure at a time when they are not likely to be distracted. Allow them complete privacy as they work their way through the 20 items - but you may like to reassure them that they are welcome to ask you questions if they find they need assistance at any point.

If the parent has completed the on-line version of PEEM you can go to the summary report page and save it to a secure file and/or print a copy. If time permits and you feel you are both ready to talk about some of the issues the parent is dealing with, it can be useful to go through the responses with parents following completion to ensure you understand how they have made their decisions.

PEEM Responses

[List of results](#)[Print this page](#)

Name Phil Kingham	Client ID 12345678	Date 2015-11-11 14:19:10
Total Score 181	Efficacy to Parent Subscale 99 Efficacy to Connect Subscale 82	

Responses

1	I find it easy to talk to people like teachers, doctors and nurses about my children:	9
2	I know how to get useful information about how my children's needs change as they grow:	10
3	I feel good when I think about the future for my children:	9
4	I can work out what to do if any of my children have a problem:	9
5	We have clear rules and routines in my family:	9
6	I can find services for my children when I need to:	9
7	In my family there is more to enjoy than to worry about:	9
8	I stay calm and manage life even when it's stressful:	9
9	I believe my children will do well at school:	9
10	I can help make this community a better place for children:	9
11	I can help other families find help when they need it:	9
12	I have someone I can rely on to help with my children if I need it:	9
13	I know good parenting tips that I can share with others:	9
14	I feel that I'm doing a good job as a parent:	9
15	I feel good about myself:	9
16	I feel good about the way my children behave:	9
17	I feel part of a community:	9
18	I have good friends outside my family:	9
19	I can make time for my children when they need it:	9
20	I know my children feel safe and secure:	9
Efficacy to Parent Subscale		99
Efficacy to Connect Subscale		82
Total Score		181

How is the PEEM scored?

A response to each item is necessary to calculate the score and understand parents' overall feelings of empowerment and efficacy.

When parents complete the measure on-line the reporting function automatically calculates the scores for you. The scoring technique is simple. Once responses to all 20 items on the measure have been collected, the individual scores are added to calculate the **total empowerment score**. The total possible score ranges from 20 to 200.

Interpretation of scores:

Research conducted in the process of validating the Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure indicated that the average score on the measure based on a general population sample is 154. The variability of scores around the population mean (standard deviation = 24) in that validation sample suggests that a score below 130 indicates a low level of parental efficacy.

For more information on the development and validation of PEEM see the paper by Freiberg, Homel, & Branch, 2014 at:

https://www.griffith.edu.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/648103/PEEMpaper.pdf

The *total empowerment score* can be used as the best indicator of a parent's overall feelings of efficacy. However, you can also break the items into two subscales that provide you with scores for a parent's (i) *Efficacy to parent* and (ii) *Efficacy to connect*.

- *Efficacy to parent* indicates level of parental confidence and positive feelings. The total possible score on this subscale ranges from 11 to 110 (average 87). The higher the score, the more positive the parent feels in their parenting role, in their personal growth as a parent and an individual, and in their achievement of goals shared by family.
- *Efficacy to connect* indicates the degree to which parents feel empowered to access support and to participate in social or other activities that promote positive parenting. The total possible score on this subscale ranges from 9 to 90 (average 67). The higher the score the more positive the parent feels in their capacity to connect to essential services, support resources, formal and informal community and social networks, and other parents who may need support.

The two subscale scores also provide helpful information about the direction of any potential support that could be offered to parents. You can continue to refer back to individual scores within the two sub-scales for more detailed indications regarding strengths and areas for support.

Next Steps

What happens now?

Parents' initial or baseline responses to the PEEM items can provide some specific information that can help guide the decisions you make with parents about how to tailor services to support their needs in the short term. It's also important to collect follow-up data sometime down the track (e.g., three to six months after the initial test) to review how things are going. Of course follow-up testing is essential to program evaluation, but it also provides tangible evidence for the parents themselves of their growth and success. It is a concrete and empowering way for you to acknowledge, with parents, the outcomes they've achieved and to celebrate the progress they've made.

This use of data for measurement and review to inform planning and action is part of a continuous cycle (as shown in figure below) that propels the work we do to strengthen family outcomes. It can be effectively applied at an individual, group and program level to promote good practice in quality improvement.

Continuous Improvement Cycle

Needs assessment and case planning

In your work with families, you continually draw on known family histories to plan responsive family-centred services and practices. This information probably includes things like religious, social and cultural values and beliefs, experiences in raising children, mental and physical health issues, current levels of family, social and community support, or previous participation in, and responses to other programs. Using the PEEM provides you with yet another layer of information as you consider the next steps, and possible structure for the most appropriate way to work together to assist parents and their families.

You can use responses provided to specific items in the PEEM to create focal points for your discussion with parents. These focal points will help you explore any issues that parents find personally challenging, understand more about the overall picture that parents have of themselves in their parenting role, and their capability to participate in any support programs. This information can provide you with clear direction for the next steps. For example a low score at item 15 - *I feel good about myself* – might prompt a conversation about the negative feelings the parent has about him or herself and the issues that possibly contribute to those feelings.

It can sometimes be helpful to use a framework, perhaps like the following, to extend the utility of the data and examine patterns across responses that can help focus attention on issues where parents feel empowered and disempowered, and where support may be focused to promote parental confidence, capability and function.

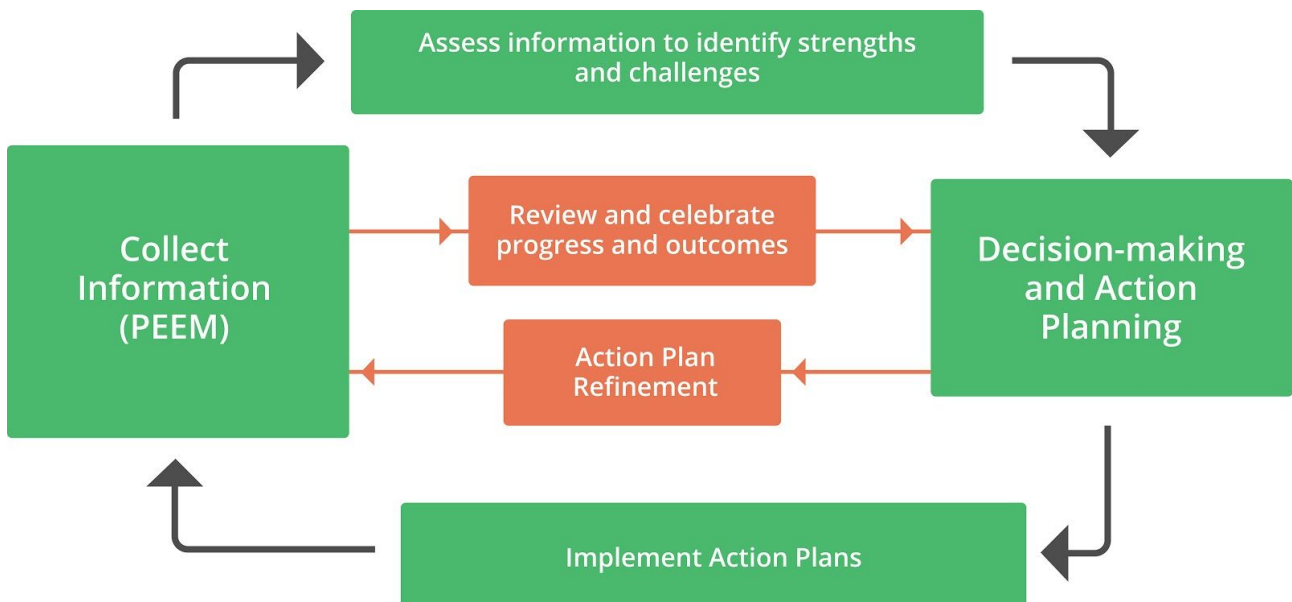
1. What strengths have the parent identified in their responses on PEEM?
2. What issues have been raised by the parent as challenges currently being experienced?
3. Are the challenges related to the parent who has completed the PEEM, or another person within the family, or the family itself?
4. What is the relationship between the parent and others identified through the PEEM and how does the parent cope with those relationships?
5. What do the two sub-scores reflect about the parent's efficacy to parent and efficacy to connect?
6. Are the concerns related to relationships, communication, or health and wellbeing?
7. Is the parent currently or have they recently accessed a parenting program or other support resources? What effect has that had on parental practices and feelings of efficacy?

When the focal points raised through the PEEM are explored together in conversations with parents, they can create a foundation on which to strengthen outcomes in specific areas, which can in turn have positive effects on parents' self-efficacy in other areas and on overall capabilities in the parenting role.

Review and evaluation

Once you have used PEEM as part of your baseline assessment for decision-making and case-planning processes it is useful to incorporate PEEM as part of your program evaluation process. As part of the follow-up after programs have been implemented, you can repeat the measure to review and understand the way in which the resources and services that have been provided have influenced parental function.

The information gathered through the PEEM can also be de-identified and aggregated across large numbers of parents. Group data can be used to explore patterns of responses (strengths and needs) that emerge across clusters of participants at a program, service agency, or multi-service coalition level. For instance, results aggregated across large numbers of parents who reside in a community might be used by a coalition of service providers to explore whether parents are confident in their capacity to locate and connect with relevant services located in that community, or in their ability to meet the developmental and emotional needs of children. These patterns can be used to steer decision-making about the structure of parenting and family services offered within the community. By monitoring changes in parental efficacy over time, a community organisation or coalition of multiple service providers can also evaluate the effectiveness of their collective efforts to enhance the lives of families in their community, and to determine whether their program objectives have been met in relation to enhancing family outcomes.



Conclusion

The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure endorses the importance of the strength-based approach to measuring parent function. It promotes collaborative and equitable partnerships between parents and support professionals in the development and delivery of relevant and purposeful community based parenting and family support programs and practices. The PEEM (especially as an online tool) equips community service organisations with a practical process for collecting the type of information that enriches their work together with parents to explore and use parent's existing strengths to build further capabilities, and a greater sense of empowerment and efficacy in their parenting role.

More information

More information about the PEEM is available at: www.creatingpathways.org.au

Freiberg, K., Homel, R., & Branch, S. (2014). The Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure (PEEM): A tool for strengthening the Accountability and Effectiveness of Family Support Services. *Australian Social Work*, 67 (3), 405-418. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0312407X.2014.902980>

To access paper version of PEEM_Parent Empowerment and Efficacy Measure

<https://www.griffith.edu.au/>

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