Developing a Comprehensive Intervention Plan for Parents of Children with Autism with Regard to Parental Stress and Training

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Parents of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) often enroll their children in intervention programs and support groups to help treat their symptoms. Very few support groups, however have resources to treat parental stress and the purpose of the current study was to survey parents of children with ASD and identify useful stress reduction strategies and develop a model of support groups including these strategies to help parents to better cope with stress. Autism support groups from all over the US were contacted and invited to participate in the survey. The survey received a total of 603 responses and subsequent data analysis revealed significant correlations between various therapies and stressors in families' lives. Significant differences between high-functioning and low-functioning samples and between married and divorced samples were also identified. Parents of younger and less well-developed children show a greater interest in parent support groups. Data from the survey indicates that parents of children with autism would most benefit from including parent support groups to reduce parental stress and support groups for typically developing siblings. Future research should examine the effects of implementing these groups into current autism treatment programs.

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