**The Effects of Parent Involvement in the Development of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders: A Work in Progress**

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**Common Behaviors of Autistic Children**

**Abstract**

Parent involvement is extremely important in the development of children with autistic spectrum disorders. There is a direct correlation between problem behaviors in autistic children and the level of dissatisfaction in parents. It is hypothesized that by teaching parents techniques to avoid the development of problem behaviors, the level of parental satisfaction as well as a better parent-child relationship will emerge. Parents will be taught by behavioral specialists how to work with their children to develop positive behaviors. Success of this method will be based on a before-and-after consultation and survey given to the parents. Conclusions will be based on the results of the experiment as well as the parent surveys.

**Experimental Methodology**

To examine the effects of parental involvement, specifically in relation to parental satisfaction and the appearance of problem behaviors, on children with autistic spectrum disorders, a longitudinal study and assessment will need to occur. The literature found in relation to this topic exemplified several ways in which this experiment may be carried out.

**Experiment**

- Parent completes a survey assessing different levels of satisfaction involved in parenting a child with autism.
- Parents and children attend classes with a behavioral specialist who teaches them techniques in dealing with problem behaviors.
- Parents must videotape a natural occurrence of the practice of these techniques in the home to later be reviewed and discussed with the behavioral specialist.
- Once all of the techniques have been taught and reviewed, parents will then complete a survey similar to the one taken prior to the classes, assessing the different levels of satisfaction involved in parenting a child with autism.

**Results**

The results of this experiment will be analyzed to determine the impact that the level of parental involvement has on the parents in terms of stress and satisfaction, and on the child, in terms of how often problem behaviors occur, as well as the overall parent-child relationship.

**A Few Helpful Words**

“Do not spend all your time and effort on the kid with Autism at the expense of your marriage, family and friends. The best treatment for your kid is a happy, healthy, and loving family to support them. Your Husband, Wife, other Kids and YOU need love and support as well…understand, your kid will improve and grow over time. You will go through the grieving process for the loss of the child you had dreamed of raising. Raising a child with Autism can be a very different path than you had planned. It is OK to feel grief, guilt, depression, joy, anger, frustration and job burn out. You cannot avoid it, understand and work through it.”

Paul Watson C.P.M., Past President of ASCC Autism Society of Collin County, Texas ASCC and parent of a child with autism.

**References**


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**Sample Survey Questions**

Sample Parent Survey

1. How satisfied are you with your parenting techniques?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7

2. How satisfied are you in your relationship with your child?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7

3. How stressed do you feel in everyday life?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7

4. How often does your child participate in problem behaviors?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7

5. How confident do you feel in your ability to deal with your child’s problem behaviors?
   - 1
   - 2
   - 3
   - 4
   - 5
   - 6
   - 7

Note: 1 = Not at all/ Never; 4 = Average/Normal Range; 7 = Always/Very

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**Autistic Children Separate Themselves**

Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders tend to separate themselves from others and refuse physical affection. Image found at abcnews.go.com/Health/wireStory?id=3729698

**Why Is This Important?**

It is important to understand the bidirectional flow between children and parents, especially when the child has a special need as children with autism do. There is an added amount of stress upon both parents and children in these relationships and it is crucial for the development of the children and of the family to understand those stressors and how they impact the family.

Allowing parents and children to learn together how to deal with the added stresses of autism is an effort that is beginning to be used in hopes of improving the overall development of the autistic child as well as improving the parental and family satisfaction level as a whole.

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