

“Parental Stress”

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Abstract

Aggressive and disruptive behaviour in autistic children and adolescents creates a lot of problems for parents and caregivers. If left uncorrected, it can become more severe over time, interfere with a child's learning and socialization, lead to ostracism at school and interfere with a fulfilling life. Applied behaviour analysis techniques (ABA) are often recommended to correct instances of unwanted behaviour. In this respect it is the ABA that is the most effective means with huge scientific evidence. However, for many parents, ABA techniques turn out to be time consuming and are a source of additional stress.

Indeed, many parents we have worked with have confirmed that their stress levels increase when behaviour analysts ask them to participate in intensive therapy with their children. They note that the family challenges are such that even if they know how to apply behavioural techniques, it is difficult to do so because of the high stress levels. Thus, their stressed condition affects their child's behaviour, which becomes more difficult, which in turn pushes the parents' stress level even higher.

Parents of ASD children experience chronic stress levels that exceed those of parents who have children with other disorders. One of the proven programs to reduce parental stress is mindfulness-based programs. By adding a mindfulness-based stress reduction program to the parents' ABA knowledge, the effectiveness of the behavioural program can be greatly improved.

Reducing parental stress will provide parents with the energy to overcome physical and psychological problems and lead to clear and measurable positive changes in their Childrens' problem behaviour. The conference will provide practical tips on stress reduction and a method for dealing with it.