MINDFUL PARENTING DECREASES AGGRESSION, NONCOMPLIANCE, AND SELF-INJURY IN CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

EPSE 549
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RELATION TO CLASSIC READING

Schopler and Reichler, (1971)
- The first to introduce parents as collaborators and contributors in the treatment of children with autism
- Refuted perspective of parents as the cause of autism
- Argued that if parents behaved in a ‘cold’ fashion towards their child it was a consequence of previous attempts to interact that had not been reciprocated by the child

Singh et al., (2006)
- Notes parental stress due to problem behaviours associated with autism
- Recognizes the need to equip parents with tools to alter their interactions with their child
- Focuses on teaching parents skills to adjust their own behaviour rather than training them on behavioural strategies to implement with their child to target specific problem behaviours
PURPOSE OF ARTICLE

• To determine whether mindfulness training could reduce the number of events of problem behaviours their child engaged in.

• To determine whether mindfulness training could increase levels of parent satisfaction with their parenting skills, with interactions with their child and with their use of mindfulness techniques.
MINDFULNESS

• “Being mindful can be described as having a clear, calm mind that is focused on the present moment in a nonjudgmental way. Mindfulness allows an individual to consider alternative ways to perceive and respond to a situation, beyond what he or she previously realized.” (Singh et al., 2006, p. 170).
DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLE

• Participants and Measurement
  ○ Three mother-child pairs
    ▪ Ages 4, 5 and 6
    ▪ Diagnosed with autism
  ○ Measured three behaviours
    ▪ Aggression, noncompliance and self-injury
  ○ Three rating scales for parent satisfaction
    ▪ Subjective Units of Parenting Satisfaction (SUPS), Subjective Units of Interaction Satisfaction (SUIS) and Subjective Units of Use of Mindfulness (SUUM).
DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLE

• Procedures
  ○ Multiple-baseline across subjects design
  ○ Three Phases
    ▪ Baseline: Given no instructions on child management techniques
    ▪ Mindfulness Training: Introduced to exercises and asked to apply them as taught
    ▪ Mindfulness Practice: Requested to continue with all exercises taught
• Results
  o Decreases in events of aggression
    ▪ **Parent-Child 1**: mean number per week decreased by 16% from baseline to training and 88% from training to practice
    ▪ **Parent-Child 2**: mean number per week decreased by 6% from baseline to training and 70% from training to practice
    ▪ **Parent-Child 3**: mean number per week decreased 10% from baseline to training and 85% from training to practice
Results

- Decreases in events of noncompliance
  - **Parent-Child 1**: mean number per week decreased by 33% from baseline to training and 68% from training to practice
  - **Parent-Child 2**: mean number per week decreased by 11% from baseline to training and 64% from training to practice
DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLE

- Results
  - Decreases in events of self-injury
    - **Parent-Child 3**: mean number per week decreased by 17% from baseline to training and 51% from training to practice
Results

Figure 1. Number of events (aggression, noncompliance, and self-injury) per week during experimental conditions across parent–child dyads.

Singh et al., (2006), p. 172
CONCLUSION

Researchers found that the intervention significantly increased parent satisfaction ratings with parenting skills. Specifically:

- Mean ratings during baseline: 25%.
- Mean ratings during training: 43%.
- Mean ratings during practice: 80%.
DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLE

• Results
  o Increases in parent satisfaction ratings with interactions with their child
    ▪ Mean ratings during **baseline**: 55%
    ▪ Mean ratings during **training**: 67%
    ▪ Mean ratings during **practice**: 87%
DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLE

• Results
  - Increases in parent satisfaction with their use of mindfulness techniques
    ▪ Mean ratings during baseline: 72%
    ▪ Mean ratings during training: 42%
    ▪ Mean ratings during practice: 80%
• Results

**Figure 2.** Self-ratings by mothers of satisfaction with their parenting, satisfaction with their mother-child interactions, and their use of mindfulness.

Conclusions

Rather than implementing behavioural strategies based on contingencies, mindfulness provides parents with skills to alter their own behaviour when interacting with their child which then indirectly affects their child’s behaviour.
CRITICAL ISSUES AND FUTURE RESEARCH

• Future research should focus on:
  ▫ How mindfulness impacts interactions between parents and their children
  ▫ Differential effects of behavioural contingency interventions and mindfulness training
  ▫ Differential effects when mindfulness training is provided to parents, their children, or both
  ▫ Refining how to quantify subjective experiences
IMPORTANCE OF THE ARTICLE

• By focusing on unconditional acceptance rather than attempting to reduce problem behaviour, positive interactions between parents and their children are encouraged.
• By training parents to clear their mind and focus on the moment they are able to interact with their children without allowing distractions or past habits to interfere.
REFERENCES