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Abstract: Impact of Mindfulness Education and Resources on Stress in Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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Background & Significance:

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) has increased in prevalence in the United States¹. Parents of children with ASD experience higher levels of stress, depression, and anxiety compared to parents of neurotypical children, negatively impacting their health, relationships, and their child's behavior². Numerous research studies support the use of mindfulness techniques to reduce stress levels in adults²⁻³. Mindfulness practices can be taught, and free mobile-based applications are available for use⁴⁻⁷.

Problem Statement: Parents of children with ASD experience high levels of stress, depression, and anxiety².

Purpose of Project: Reduce stress levels of parents of children with ASD by teaching them mindfulness practices.

Inclusion Criteria:

- Adult ≥18 years old
- Parent of at least one child diagnosed with ASD who attends the Thompson Autism and Neurodevelopmental Center (TANC) at the Children's Hospital of Orange County (CHOC)
- Access to iOS or Android mobile device

Method

- **Recruitment:** The social worker responsible for a hospital-sponsored group for moms who have a child with ASD e-mailed members inviting them to participate in an educational session prior to a scheduled meeting.
- **Intervention:** A 20-minute educational presentation and handout on the benefits of mindfulness, specific techniques, and available free mobile mindfulness applications.
- **Measurement:** The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS-10) was administered anonymously pre-/post-intervention. Anonymous demographic data collected.
- **Data Analysis:** Pre-/Post PSS-10 scores and demographic data

IRB: Exempt

Discussion/Conclusions: Teaching mindfulness is a cost-effective and guided mindfulness practice is easily accessible due to the availability of free mobile-based applications. This project could be implemented with other groups experiencing high stress with improved follow-up⁸.

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