ABSTRACT
It usually brings great pressure to parents on taking care of their children with Special Educational Needs. While parents nowadays can easily get equipped with parenting skills, yet we believe that parents with better emotional health can better carry out what they’ve learned on parenting. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is known for its effectiveness in reducing the stress of parents yet few attempts have examined the effectiveness of CBT for Chinese parents of children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The project has offered CBT groups (two hours / 10 sessions) to parents who have children with ASD. It is found that participants who have gone through CBT group would have lower parent-stress, less dysfunctional attitude, and better mental health and quality of life at posttest.

INTRODUCTION
It usually brings great pressure to parents on taking care of their children with Special Education Needs. Also it’s very common that these parents would tend to focus on their children’s needs and continuously equip themselves with knowledge and training skills but neglect their own emotional needs. Studies have shown that there is a correlation between the parents’ emotional health and the effectiveness for them to execute their learned knowledge and skills. We believe that parents with better emotional health can better carry out what they’ve learned on parenting. With Cognitive Behavioral Therapy it’s a self-discovery journey for parents. The worker and parent would work hand-by-hand-together to explore the root of the negative emotions of parent, to identify the frequent thinking patterns when facing difficulties and challenges, and eventually to develop tailor-made emotional management techniques.

METHODOLOGY
Design: Pretest – Posttest Design
Participants: (1) Parents with children with Autism Spectrum Disorder
Instruments: (1) General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12);
(2) Eyberg Child Behavior Inventory (ECBI);
(3) Parental Stress Index—parent domain (PSI-PD);
(4) Marital Satisfaction Scale (MSS);
(5) Functional Social Support Questionnaire (FSSQ);
(6) Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC)
Analysis: (1) Paired-sample t-test;
(2) Test of clinical significances

TREATMENT PROGRAM
• 10 sessions, 2 hours per session, structured group format
• Topics included: Awareness of own internal reactions, thoughts traps, ways out of negative automatic thoughts, and understanding and modifying dysfunctional rules

OBJECTIVE
• To examine the effectiveness of CBT group for parents with children with disabilities in Hong Kong.

HYPOTHESIS
• Participants who have gone through CBT group would have lower parenting stress, less dysfunctional attitude, and better mental health and quality of life at posttest.

RESULTS
Sample size = 18

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parental Variables</th>
<th>Paired Differences</th>
<th>Std. Error</th>
<th>95% Confidence Interval</th>
<th>Lower</th>
<th>Upper</th>
<th>t df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marital Satisfaction</td>
<td>2.416</td>
<td>0.639</td>
<td>1.140 - 3.685</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>13.837</td>
<td>1.885</td>
<td>0.076</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Stress</td>
<td>2.004</td>
<td>0.926</td>
<td>0.178 - 3.831</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>14.357</td>
<td>2.004</td>
<td>0.053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parental Efficacy</td>
<td>2.003</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>1.000 - 3.006</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>14.357</td>
<td>2.004</td>
<td>0.053</td>
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<tr>
<td>PSOC</td>
<td>2.002</td>
<td>0.514</td>
<td>1.000 - 3.006</td>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>14.357</td>
<td>2.004</td>
<td>0.053</td>
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</tbody>
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According to the paired sample t-test, marital satisfaction, parental competence and social support resulted in statistically significant differences when comparing pre and post scores.

REFLECTION
• CBT is applicable to Chinese parents with Autism Spectrum Disorder;
• CBT has a systematic framework and practical steps for participants to follow;
• Due to face-saving, some participants did not acknowledge their negative automatic thoughts;
• Some deep-rooted rules were hard to be modified within the group processes;
• Some participants might benefit more from CBT case counseling.

LIMITATIONS
• Improvement in research design could be made by having a control group and a follow-up test;
• Qualitative studies of participants’ change might be needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Individual CBT counseling is needed for some participants;
• A comparison group will be needed to provide stronger evidence of change;
• Qualitative studies will be needed to tap the cognitive changes of participants.

PARTICIPANTS’ RESPONSES
"Once people described me as struggling in the midst of ocean with my son carried on my back. Thanks to Caritas for the CBT group. Following the load of social workers, we’ve found our own ways to ease our negative emotions through step-by-step practices and eventually taught us to know ourselves in new perspectives. I deeply believe that my children will become better if I myself become better."

"I am thankful for getting to know Caritas and participate in the JC A-Connect Project. Through joining various programs such as CBT, Yoga, and Quiet-book, I have gradually come out from the dead and enjoying emotions of parents, to identify the frequent thinking patterns when facing difficulties and challenges, and eventually to develop tailor-made emotional management techniques.

Caritas Rehabilitation Service
Kit Ling Luke, Wai Ying Ku, Ka Ki Suen
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The Application of Cognitive Behavioral Group Treatment (CBT) for Parents with Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in Hong Kong: A Sharing and Reflection on Our Clinical Experience

The A-Connect Project. Through joining various programs such as CBT, Yoga, and Quiet-book, I have gradually come out from the dead and experiencing my own internal reactions, thoughts traps, ways out of negative automatic thoughts, and understanding and modifying dysfunctional rules.