A Positive Parent Support Program for Parents of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

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Background:
Parents with ASD children often face additional difficulties and parental stress in taking care of their children, and also experience stigma from the public.

Since 2009, SAHK has adopted the "Level-4 (Standard) Group Triple-P", an evidence-based parent support program developed in Australia for parents with disabled children. With modifications to address the needs of Hong Kong Chinese parents, a randomised control study was done in 2012 and proved that this program was effective in reducing the child’s behaviour problem, parental stress, parental conflict and also dysfunctional discipline styles. (Leung, Fan & Sanders, 2013).

To further address the specific needs and parental difficulties of parents with ASD children, a Positive Parent Support Program (ASD version) was designed referencing to the framework and content of "Level-4 Group Triple-P".

Objectives of the Program:
- To develop and test the efficacy and acceptability of the Positive Parent Support Program for parents with children with ASD.
- To promote the positive parent-child relationship, encourage children's appropriate behaviour, manage children's misbehaviour and emotion, and also enhance parental competence and confidence, that in turn of reducing parental stress.

Arrangement of the Program:

<table>
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<th>Duration</th>
<th>September 2015 to December 2016</th>
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<tr>
<td>Target</td>
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<td>1. Chinese parents with 2-6 years old pre-school children with ASD</td>
<td>2. Chinese parents with junior primary school children with ASD</td>
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<td>No. of Group</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>No. of Participants</td>
<td>84</td>
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Framework of the program:
- Positive Parenting Program (Triple-P)
- Training Strategies for ASD children/ Students
- Positive Parent Support Program (ASD version)

Content of the Program:

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<th>Session</th>
<th>Theme</th>
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| 1       | - Share the challenges of taking care of ASD children  
- Introduce the characteristic of ASD children  
- Identify causes of children's behavior problems  
- Understand positive parenting |
| 2       | - Introduce the main themes of positive parenting  
- Develop positive relationships with children |
| 3       | - Encourage desirable behavior  
- Assist children to acquire new skills |
| 4       | - Introduce training strategies for ASD children  
(Social Story, Theory of Mind, visual strategies, conversation book, remin in advance, environmental arrangement, home activities for sensory integration)  
- Manage misbehavior I |
| 5       | - Manage misbehavior II  
- Develop parenting routine  
- Manage children's emotion |
| 6       | - Identify high risk situation  
- Maintenance of change  
- Planned activities routine |

Parents’ Feedback:
- “I have more communication with my husband and mother-in-law about parenting. We have less conflict and more consistent in parental direction.”
- “I found that my child started to change when I changed my mindset and attitude first.”
- “I become more patient and calm when facing my sons’ behavior problems and disability.”
- “I got better control of my temper and learnt the way to calm down.”
- “Now, I know how to appreciate my son and myself more, and I can respond to my son and my husband positively.”
- “I’ve gained support and an inspiring and fruitful experience in the group. I am not alone.”
- “I know how to express my love to my son and we have a close relationship. In the past, he liked to stay with the maid. But now he actively tells me that he loves me and is willing to play with me.”

Result:
- 100% participants rated satisfactory or above to the group.
- Participants found the knowledge and skills of the positive parenting are useful. They are applicable at home and in daily context, and improve the parent-child relationship.
- Supportive network was developed among groupmates.
- Participants shared and discussed the learned skills and concept from the group with their spouses or even parent-in-law.
- Participants would like to have regular group gathering for reviewing and sharing their application of positive parenting.
- 100% participants would recommend the program to others.

Conclusion:
Although there was a standard framework and content of the Positive Parent Support Program (ASD version), worker should be flexible to adjust the content and use appropriate examples and exercises in accordance with the family background, readiness and needs of the participants. It was found that the Positive Parent Support Program (ASD version) could help parents with ASD children to develop a positive parenting style. The relationship between the child and parents improved, which benefited the family as a whole.

Reference:

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