

Effectiveness of the Stepping Stones Triple P group parenting program in reducing comorbid behavioural problems in children with autism

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Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) often have co-occurring behavioral problems (e.g., tantrums, oppositional and aggressive behaviors). These problems have an impact on the way the characteristics of autism present and develop, and on the quality of life of their family. We evaluated the effectiveness of the Stepping Stones Triple P (SSTP) group parent training program as an additional intervention for children with ASD. The participants were parents of 24 children with ASD aged between 3.6 and 12 years. We looked at parents' and teachers' judgments of the children at four successive time points. We found a reduction of co-occurring behavioral problems in the children, primarily in the parents' judgment, at the end of the parent training program. Furthermore, a reduction of the core features of ASD (social communication difficulties; the presence of restricted and repetitive behaviors, interests and activities) emerged. The teachers' judgment, in particular, revealed an improvement in children's social relationships. The findings demonstrate the effectiveness of the SSTP as an additional intervention for reducing co-occurring behavioral problems in children with ASD. Higher levels of parental confidence and parental attributions (e.g., parents' ability to influence child behavioral problems), are discussed as important factors for the effectiveness of SSTP.