

Stress and Coping Strategies Among Parents of Children with Hearing Impairment

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Abstract:

Having a child with a disability is a major event that negatively affects families and forces families to reconsider their plans, goals, and relationships and to re-evaluate the limitations associated with the child's disability and the resulting stresses in their parents, and their competence in coping with these stresses. Knowing the nature and levels of stress faced by families of children and the competence in coping with them, and the strategies they use, are important issues in family counseling programs, and should be a key pillar in training programs for parents, as they are more likely to face the developmental deficits and challenges in a child with a disability, (Glidden, 2012, pp314.)

Keywords: Parental stress, Coping strategies, Hearing impaired children

1. Introduction:

Children's development of the cognitive and social skills needed for later success in school may be best supported by a parenting style known as responsive parenting. Responsiveness is an aspect of supportive parenting described across different theories and research frameworks (e.g. attachment, socio-cultural) as playing an important role in providing a strong foundation for children to develop optimally. Parenting that provides positive affection and high levels of warmth and is responsive in ways that are contingently linked to a young child's signals ("contingent responsiveness") are the affective-emotional aspects of a responsive style. These aspects, in combination with behaviours that are cognitively responsive to the child's needs, including the provision of rich verbal input and maintaining and expanding on the child's interests, provide the range of support necessary for multiple aspects of a child's learning. Acceptance of the child's interests with responses that are prompt and contingent to what the child signals supports learning, in part, by facilitating the child's development of mechanisms for coping with stress and novelty in his or her

environment. With repeated positive experiences, a trust and bond develop between the child and parent that in turn allow the child to ultimately internalize this trust and then generalize their learning to new experiences. This sensitive support promotes the child's continued engagement in learning activities with his or her parent. Thus, these affective-emotional behaviours communicate the parent's interest and acceptance, fostering self-regulation and cooperation, critically important behaviours for effective learning to occur. From a socio-cultural viewpoint, cognitively responsive behaviours (e.g. maintaining versus redirecting interests, rich verbal input) are thought to facilitate higher levels of learning because they provide a structure or scaffold for the young child's immature skills, such as developing attentional and cognitive capacities. Responsive behaviours in this framework promote joint engagement and reciprocity in the parent-child interaction and help a child learn to assume a more active and ultimately independent role in the learning process. Responsive support for the child to become actively engaged in solving problems is often referred to as parental scaffolding, and is also thought to be key for facilitating children's development of self-regulation and executive function skills, behaviours that allow the child to ultimately assume responsibility for their well-being.

2. Review of Literature

Young children's acquisition of problem solving, language and social-emotional skills is facilitated by interactions with their parents. There is some evidence that the mechanism by which responsiveness supports a child's development may be dependent on consistency across development in this parenting style. As the child and parent are part of a broader social context, many factors may support or impinge on a parent's consistent use of responsive behaviours. Personal factors that may compromise a parent's responsiveness include depression, perception of the parent's own child-rearing history as negative, or beliefs and attitudes that detract from a parent's sense of importance in his or her child's life. However, other factors, such as higher levels of social support from friends and family, can buffer some of these negative social-personal factors as well as predict which parents move from a non-responsive to a responsive style with intervention. This is an encouraging finding, as parenting interventions can be developed to provide a level of social support mothers from high-risk social backgrounds need in order to develop responsive parenting styles.

3. Need for the Study

Present study findings from studies demonstrate that some areas of a child's learning are best supported by specific responsiveness behaviours or combinations of these. Now research is needed to further delineate this specificity between particular types of responsive support and particular developmental goals.

Expanding our understanding of how responsive parenting looks and works across different family and child characteristics would add to the development of a more highly specified model of responsive parenting. Finally, determination of what supports need to be in place to assist parents with their attempts to be responsive could enhance the effectiveness of responsive parent interventions.

4. Results and discussion

Responsive parenting, according to many descriptive research studies is an important process for supporting young children's learning. There is now support for a causal role of responsive parenting, as greater gains in the parental behaviours associated with a responsive style were responsible for the effect of several parenting interventions on greater gains in young children's learning. Also, recent research evidence for normally developing children showing links between early high levels of responsive parenting and increased volume in brain regions responsible for regulation of stress suggests the critical importance of this parent practice in early development.

As both normal and high-risk children benefited from responsiveness that provided affective-emotional and cognitively responsive support, the effectiveness of responsiveness seems best understood when it is defined as a broad construct. Recent evidence shows that certain responsive behaviours may provide different types of support for children's learning and this support may vary depending on a child's developmental needs. There are many new research avenues that need to be explored and questions addressed in recent studies that require further examination.

5. Implications of the study summary and conclusions

The importance of responsive parenting for young children's well-being has many policy implications. Policy and practice decision-makers need to pay particular attention to parents

who are most at risk: they need find ways to facilitate change in parents' behaviours, taking into consideration factors such as parent beliefs, social support, mental health status, in order to maximize effectiveness. Synthesis of relevant research should guide new investments in parent programs and the development of research initiatives concerning responsive parenting. Developmental science is frequently not well integrated into policy or program application. Given the critically important role of early experience in brain development, policy-makers have an interest in making sure that young children's environments (e.g. home, child care) are of high enough quality to promote positive outcomes. When new investments are made in publicly funded services for children and families, there is often a greater emphasis on accountability. This should serve to encourage a greater consideration of research-based evidence that can better assure program effectiveness.

6. References

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