

Therapy for kids with autism pays off for moms, dads

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(HealthDay)—Behavioral therapy for children with autism also benefits their parents, a new study finds.

About 70 percent of children with autism have emotional or [behavioral problems](#) and may turn to [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) to help with these issues.

Usually, while kids are with the therapist, parents are in a separate room learning what the children are doing, but not participating, according to researcher Jonathon Weiss.

"What's unique about what we studied is what happens when parents are partners in the process from start to finish. Increasingly we know that it's helpful for kids with autism, specifically, and now we have proven that it's helpful for their parents too," said Weiss, associate professor of psychology at York University in Toronto.

The study included 57 children between 8 and 12

years of age who were undergoing cognitive behavioral therapy. They had autism but no intellectual disability, and their parents took part in the therapy.

By the study's end, parents showed improvements in depression, [emotion regulation](#) and mindful parenting.

The study was published online recently in the *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

"The research showed that parents improved their abilities to handle their own emotions and to see themselves in a more positive light," Weiss said. "It helped them to become more aware of their parenting and all of the good they do as parents."

The findings show it's important for healthcare providers caring for children with autism to involve parents, he added.

"We know [parents](#) of [children](#) with [autism](#), in addition to all the positive experiences they have, also experience high levels of distress. So if we can do something to reduce that, we have a responsibility to try to do so," Weiss said.

More information: The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has more on [autism](#).

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