

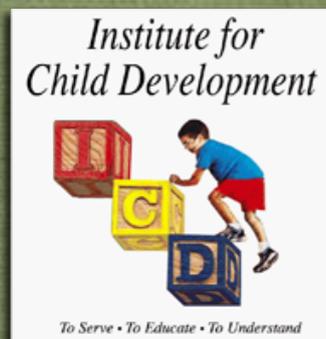


Autism Initiative Training Series

Module 2: Chapter 2.1:

Staff Stress and Stress Management

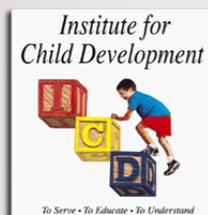
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Chapter 2.1 Part 1

Key Components of Stress and Burnout



Learning Objectives

- Define stress.
- Identify the 2 hormones involved in the stress response.
- Name 2 symptoms of stress.
- Identify 2 main causes of stress for people working with individuals with autism.
- Define burnout.
- Name 3 dimensions of burnout.

Stress

- Stress is a description for the body's response to demands or threats in the environment (Selye, 1978).



Physiological Response

(Tsigos & Chrousos, 2002)

- Your body releases hormones known as adrenaline and cortisol, which typically serve helpful functions in the face of true danger, such as increasing energy and repairing tissue.
- However, long-term release of these hormones can result in negative consequences including decreased immune resistance, digestive difficulty, and changes in areas of the brain that control mood, motivation and fear.

Symptoms of Stress

- Symptoms of stress can range from mild to **severe** (Myles, Ormsbee, & Simpson, 1991).
- Mild symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, and fatigue.
- Severe symptoms can include cardiovascular difficulties, ulcers, colitis, and migraine headaches.

Stress with Autism

- Caregivers and staff of individuals with autism report experiencing more stress than is reported by the general population.
- Specific sources of stress, such as behavior problems, are strongly associated with parent and staff member reports of stress (Bebko, Konstantareas, & Springer, 1987; Elfert & Mirenda, 2006; Hastings & Johnson, 2001; Lecavalier, Leone, & Wiltz, 2006).

Causes of Stress

- The following are common causes identified as sources of stress for caregivers and staff when working with individuals with autism.
 - **Challenging behaviors** (Bromley & Emerson, 1995; Hastings, 2002; Hastings & Brown, 2002; Lecavalier, Leone, & Wiltz, 2006).
 - **Role boundary confusion and work overload** (Elfert & Mirenda, 2006).
 - **Maladaptive coping methods** [Dunn, Burbine, Bowers, & Tantleff-Dunn, 2001; Elfert & Mirenda, 2006; Hastings & Brown, 2002; Mitchell & Hastings, 2001).

Consequences of Stress

- Burnout is a result of excessive stress over long periods of time which can lead to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and feelings of reduced personal accomplishments (Lee & Ashforth, 1990).



Dimensions of Burnout

(Lee & Ashforth, 1990)

- Emotional exhaustion is the overall term for symptoms of “blunted affect” that are linked to tension, anxiety, physical fatigue, and insomnia.
- Depersonalization is when the stressed individual begins treating individuals as objects or numbers due to lack of energy .
- Reduced feeling of personal accomplishment is the feeling of lack of control and self-efficacy.

Burnout and Autism

- Burnout rates among special education teachers have been reported to be between 48% to 70% over a 3 year period (Lawrenson & Mckinnon, 1982; Zabel & Zabel, 1982).
- Burnout is also a problem faced by many service providers. Extensive research has shown that burnout can lead to low morale, an increased amount of work days missed, and reduced quality of care for clients (Maslach & Jackson, 1986).