

“The Indispensable Inclusive Role Of Counselors In Supporting Parents With Autistic Children In Kumasi In The Ashanti Region Of Ghana”

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ABSTRACT

This article is a case study from two autistic parents in Kumasi, Ashanti Region of Ghana. The purpose is to critically look into the total lifestyle and presumably challenges that parents with autistic children go through and the best support that professional counselors could offer. The questions were; Do parents with ASD children go through stress? Do they have challenges as to how to nurture their children? Do parents with ASD children need counseling at all and counselor support? Do ASD children have extreme temper tantrums? These questions brought in so many answers which unveiled many possible suggestions and solutions to the ASD parents, supposedly challenges. Ethical consideration was highly exercised, bringing cordiality to both parents and the researcher. This work was purely qualitative since the researcher used a qualitative approach to solicit data collection. The researcher adopted a grounded theory methodology to guide the structured interview and the data analysis. The researcher prepared structured interview questions to be used. In all, two autistic parents were interviewed extensively and two siblings so ASD children were also interviewed. It was established that parents with ASD children encounter challenges every day in their children's upkeep, which sometimes push them to do unhealthy things and also put up some uncalled-for behaviors, they experience stress and sometimes, become depressed, one even said, thinking of ending her life is most of the things some parents go through as such, these parents need the services or support of professional counselors to attend to their needs as how to cope with their numerous challenges and how to offer the best care to their special children.

Keywords: Autism, spectrum, indispensable, inclusive, parents, counselors

Introduction

Autism spectrum disorder is a neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by difficulties in social interactions and communication, often resulting in manifestation of behaviors characterized with challenges, (Haakonsen Smith et al., 2017). It is reported in Ghana autism awareness, care and training (GAACT), that about 1 in 100 children in Ghana experience ASD. It is estimated that about 150,000 Ghanaian children have autism. It is however, believed that the number of children with ASD can be more than the number estimated since not all parents would report their children's predicaments to the medical centers for diagnosis. Research has established that, in

2019, the journal of Autism and Development Disorders posited that the prevalence rate of ASD in Ghana was pegged at 1.4% with children around 2 years.

In like manner, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), projected that about 120,000 were children living with autism. It is a worrying situation as the Ghana Health Service (GHS), has added that, (ASD), happens to be one of the common childhood disabilities amongst children under eighteen years in Ghana with a prevalence rate of 1.2%.

Parents supposedly experience significant challenges due to the demanding tasks that autistic parents go through. Therefore, it is very prudent that professional counselors should have extra specialty to provide training professionals to provide effective counselling services to autistic parents, Bitsika& Sharpley, 2004, for better attachment and adjustment to prevent maladjusted behavior.

Unfortunately, research has shown that there is limited research on counselors who are competent to provide on-time services to parents who are nurturing autism. Counselors who assist autistic parents are few and as such, need to double up for effective services to be done. It is perceived that parent with autism go through challenges which needs to be addressed. Trained and professional counselors need to provide timely therapy for parents with ASD to sensitize them on therapeutic centers where the ASD parents can access counseling where needs be.

Counselors’ role is to provide proper guidance to parents with autism to prepare their general wellbeing for the work ahead of them.

Counselor knowledge on using multiculturalism approach and highly ethical abilities, effective tactics in supervision, and advocacy for integrative health care are very essential. These methods are thoroughly explained.

The route of raising a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is paved with special difficulties and victories. In the middle of the challenges associated with having a child with ASD, parents frequently find themselves exploring unfamiliar ground in need of direction, comprehension, and support.

Along the way, counselors proved to be useful allies, providing a wide range of services to empower parents and improve the quality of life for them and their autistic children. It’s important to teach family members how to prove support as well. This long essay delves deeply into the various ways that counselors assist parents of children with ASF covering topics like advice and psych-education. Among the crucial support programs are mindfulness training, emotional support, advocacy, skill-building, self-esteem and self-embrace activities, caregiver burnout prevention, and crucial cop9jg methods that would promote simple collaboration and appropriate adjustment.

Parents with autism children sometimes become dejectedpsychologically, most especially, the autistic mothers. Some of the fathers refuse responsibility and do not want to go near their autistic children, and that abandonment alone from some husbands leave the mothers in a state of distress. (Soloman &Chung,2012).

Parents who experience stress may resort to maladaptive coping strategies like self-criticism, emotional outburst, and possibly diverting their attention from problem-solving (Dunn, Burbine, Bowers, &Tantleff-Dun, 2001; Lai, Goh, Oei, & Sung, 2015).A specific study discovered a correlation between elevated stress levels while parenting

and elevated depressive symptoms. High level of depression compels some ASD parents to stop seeing a psychotherapist (Beer, Wards, & Moar, 2013).

Most parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), believe there is no treatment available, depression might develop (Farrukh & Anjum, 2020). Developing a personal connection with these parents to pinpoint the precise source of their concerns and offer the required counseling services is one of the counselor’s most important tasks.

Studies have revealed several problems for kids with ASD. The type of support that would improve the general well-being of parents of children with ASD, and, consequently, their relationship with the children themselves, has not yet been identified. To close the gap, this study is being carried out in this context. Crucially, the research would provide counselors with the necessary resources to accelerate the development of relationships between parents and children with ASD. This suggest that the research will contribute to the development of a harmonious coexistence environment for ASD victims, parents of ASD children, and society at large.

What is the autism spectrum condition? Why, irrespective of their circumstances, do parents of ASDC need counseling support?

The complex neurodevelopmental illness known as autism spectrum disorder (ASDC) is typified by ending difficulties with behavior, speech and social interaction. The term “spectrum” refers to the great range of symptom types and intensities that people with ASD may encounter (Goncalves, & Monteiro, 2023). ASD is divided into two main categories by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5): social communication impairments and constrained, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or activities.

How does autism spectrum disorder manifest? Why do Counselors offer counseling and assistance to parents, no matter what their circumstances.

Persistent difficulties with behavior, speech, and social interaction are hallmarks of autism spectrum disorder (ASD), a complicated neurological illness. According to Gonzalves and Monteiro (2023), there is a broad range in the kind and intensity of symptoms that people with ASD encounter, that is why the name “spectrum” was chosen. ASD is classified by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5) into two basic domains: confined, repetitive patterns of behavior, interests, or hobbies and social communication difficulties.

1. Social Communication Deficits:

People with ASD frequently have trouble recognizing and interpreting nonverbal signs like tone of voice and facial expressions as well as gestures and social cues (Zhang, M., Chen, Y., Ding, & Shang, 2022). According to Shivers, Jackson, and McGregor (2019), they could struggle to build and sustain connections with peers and adults, have reciprocal conversations, and comprehend other people’s viewpoints.

2. Restricted, Repetitive Behavior Patterns:

According to Ghanouni and Jarus (2021) restricted, repetitive behavior patterns, interest, or activities are other characteristics of ASD. This might show itself as a variety of behaviors, insistence of doing one thing unceasingly, showing interest in particular subjects, items, or activities, and sensory sensitivity or aversions. Repetitive actions may be used by people with ASD as a coping mechanism for environmental changes, self-soothing or regulating sensory input.

Individual differences in how ASD manifests itself gave rise to the idea of the “spectrum” (Uljarevic, Philips, Schuck, Schapp, Solomon, Salzman, & Hardan, 2020).

While some people may have minor symptoms and function rather well in mainstream contexts when given the right help, others may face more serious issues that call for more extensive interventions and support services. The complexity of ASD is further increased by the prevalence of co-occurring illnesses in the affected population, including as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), seizures, anxiety disorders, and intellectual or language deficits.

To maximize results for people with ASD, early identification and intervention are essential (Eisenhower, Martinez Pedraza, Sheldrick, Frenette, Hoch, Brunt Carter, 2021). Applied behavior analysis (ABA), speech therapy, occupational therapy, and social skills training are example of early intervention therapies that can assist people with ASD learn necessary abilities and lessen the severity of their symptoms, even though there is no known cure. Individualized education plans (IEPs), educational supports, and accommodations in academic and community settings can also help people with ASD learn and feel included.

It’s critical to acknowledge that people with autism have special talents, views, and capabilities. Many people with autism have extraordinary abilities in subjects like mathematics, music,creative arts, or technology. They can be of benefit to their communities and society at large as well as the creative arts industry. To create supportive environments where people with autism can thrive and realize their full potential, we must embrace neurodiversity and foster acceptance, understanding, and inclusion (Wilson & Dallman, 2024).

The thoroughfare of raising a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is replete with special difficulties and victories. Counselors are essential in helping parents navigate the challenges of raising a kid with ASD by offering support and direction. These specialists, who specialize in psychology and counseling, provide a range of services that are intended to empower parents and improve the quality of life for both parents and their autistic children.

Process of Counseling

A client or counselee and a counselor engage in a planned, structured discourse known as the counseling session or a therapeutic relationship. In this collaborative process, an experienced practitioner assists an individual known as the client in pinpointing the origins of challenges or worries they are facing. The process was:

- Relationship Building
- Problem Assessment
- Goal Setting
- Counseling Intervention
- Evaluation and Termination
- Or Referral

Challenges such as Anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, sleep disorders, back pain, chronic fatigue, digestive issues, autoimmune diseases weakened immune systems, cardiovascular diseases like hypertension and peptic ulcers, and overeating or undereating have all been linked to long-term exposure of psychosocial related stressof parents with ASD.

The purpose of counseling is to give people a sounding board, a safe space to discuss problems that are bothering them at work, and the opportunity to work with counselors to solve problems or create better strategies for

handling situations involving their autistic children. The goal is to give a parent a nonjudgmental, empathetic, and approachable tool to help them determine their path forward, rather than offering advice. Counselors are required to labor tirelessly to provide appropriate counseling services to an autistic parent at their place of employment. Counselors must have a thorough awareness of both the environment that the client will be returning to and the context in which the client works.

Services rendered in Counseling

Counseling services are intended to assist a person in self-analysis by connecting their interest, accomplishments, abilities, and style of adjustment to new choices they must make Gichinga (1995). These services are vital to people because they help them deal with issues of their studies, careers, relationships, psychological well-being, and employment. One’s living environment should have the time, space, and people necessary to enable them to receive expert aid in solving their problems.

The programs are intended to help people better understand themselves through one-on-one or group interactions. To support this, Kyungu (1994) notes that good guidance and counseling have become very important in places of employment and other organizations where parents of autistic children are involved in helping people understand the relationship between health and the environment, life-earning skills, and the knowledge and attitudes that determine success or failure in life. Good counseling services should provide a better life and help the client feel better about themselves.

Orientation services are offered to help people, including parents, better adapt to their new surroundings and support the school where their autistic children are being cared for. This is a result of their lack of access to friends, family, and other social networks for psychological support. Once more, the administrative structure, laws, and regulations in the new environment seem entirely different. Hence, orientation programs are intended to assist these people in acclimating to these crucial times of change.

Methodology

This work made use of a qualitative research approach. Two parents with children living with ASD were interviewed to assess their degree of perception, misconception, challenges, coping strategies they adopted, and worldview about the children living with autism. These interactions facilitated opinion, kind of support, and the required approach that might be followed in improving guidance and counseling services to parents nurturing ASD children.

Instrumentation and data gathering

Guided interview questions were designed and administered on – a one-on-one basis as clients were visited at their convenience time. Before that, appointment was booked on clients’ specified dates, times, and venues. Also, the interview questions were sent to the clients two weeks before the interview. As a result, the clients had ample time to prepare adequately for the interview.

Data analysis

As has been the practice in qualitative research, the analysis of the data included narrative analysis, content analysis, grounded theory analysis, and thematic analysis. Following these steps, the conceptual information and the required themes and patterns of the research were captured to answer the research question. Again, the needed actions were identified to facilitate counseling support for ASD parents.

Ethical Consideration: This article was purposely for academic orientation; therefore, the anonymity, privacy, and confidentiality were critically observed.

The essential role of the counselor

The counselor is someone who has in-depth knowledge of counseling skills and techniques, can expatiate theories in solving individual’s challenges, and also someone who accords everyone an unconditional- positive-regard in all spheres of life. Counselors should be accommodative, be an active listener, be empathetic, etc. Counselors perform the following tasks:

Psychoeducation

According to the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP, 2020), seeking intervention early is very essential for children with ASD, as it can help improve outcomes and facilitate the development of essential skills. This means that one of the primary roles of counselors is to provide parents with a deeper understanding of autism spectrum disorder (Blesson, & Cohen, 2020). By offering psychoeducation and information about the characteristics of autism, counselors help parents gain insight into their child’s behaviors, communication patterns, and sensory-motor skills and sensitivities (Lenders, Owens, Wilting, & Videler, 2024). Understanding the nuances of autism spectrum disorder enables parents to respond their child’s needs with patience, empathy, and flexibility.

Building Emotional Integrity

Emotional integrity is building essential values that are very noble to one situating yourself with the high caliber of people. Having a positive effect on yourself, building trust, fostering meaningful relations, and promoting personal growth and wellbeing. Emotional integrity helps one to live in harmony with others and, with your emotions, values, actions, and inactions, leading to a more authentic and fulfilling life. Parents were asked to value and cherish their children as they were and adopt some coping mechanisms to support them.

Self-awareness: Recognizing and acknowledging your emotions. Knowing yourself makes you strong enough to embrace every challenging situation. Becoming aware of your strengths and your weaknesses prepares your mind for your capabilities which allows you to explore other avenues.

Honesty: Expressing emotions genuinely and transparently

Authenticity: Being true to yourself without doing things under pretense. Do not fake your feelings as if nothing is happening. /Be honest always and in all ways.

Responsibility: Owing and taking full charge of your actions, your inactions, and your emotional experiences.

Wholeness or wholesome: It is the integration of all valuable aspects of yourself such as working on your emotions to easily match every situation.

Emotional Support for Parents: Compared to parents of usually developing children, parents of children with ASD report higher levels of stress and psychological suffering (Weiss, 2002). Counselors therefore provide parents with emotional support in addition to instruction as they manage the difficulties of raising an autistic child. Many other feelings, such as concern, guilt, and irritation can arise from raising a child with ASD (Reddy, Fewster, & Gurayah, 2019). Parents can communicate their emotions and worries to counselors in a secure and accepting

environment (Farr, Ed Brooke-Childs, Town, pietkiewiez, Yound, & Stapley, 2021). Through active listening and empathetic understanding, counselors validate parents’ experiences and offer guidance o coping strategies to manage stress and maintain emotional well-being (Tustonja, Stipic, Skoko, Culjak, & Vegar, 2024).

Advocacy and Resource Navigation

According to the National Autism Center (NAC, 2015), access to appropriate educational and therapeutic interventions is critical for the optimal development of children with ASD (Young, Hollingdale, Absoud, Bolton, Branney, Colley, & Woodhouse, 202). What this means is that counselors also play a pivotal role in advocacy for parents and their children with autism. Navigating the complex system of services, therapies, and educational resources can be overwhelming for parents. Counselors assist parents in accessing appropriate support services, such as referring hem to where parents can have well resource centers, connecting them with community resources, and advocating for their child’s needs within educational and healthcare settings (Baughman, Coles, Feinberg, Newton, 2021). By serving as knowledgeable guides and advocates, counselors empower parents to become effective advocates for their children with autism.

Building Positive Parent-Child Relationships

Research by Kasari et al. (2006) found that parent-mediated interventions can improve communication and social skills in children with ASD. Therefore, counselors need to work with parents to strengthen parent-child relationships and enhance communication skills. Effective communication is essential for building trust, understanding, and connection between parent and their children with autism (Hurt, Langley, North, Southern, Copeland, Gillard, & Williams, 2019). Counselors provide parents with practical strategies and techniques for improving communication, managing challenging behaviors, add fostering positive interactions with their children (Twum-Antwi, Jefferies, Ungar, 2020). By empowering parents to offer peer-counseling to themselves and with effective communication skills, counselors facilitate the development of strong, nurturing parent-child relationships.

Addressing Caregiver Burnout

A study by Estes et all. (2009) highlighted the prevalence of caregiver burnout among parents of children with ASD and the need for support services to address their well-being. Addressing caregiver burnout is another critical aspect of the counselor’s role in supporting parents of autistic children. The demand of caregiving can take a toll on parents’ physical, emotional, and mental well-being (Fong, Mclaughlin, & Schneider, 2023). Counselors help parents recognize the signs of burnout and provide them with strategies for self-care and stress management. By encouraging parents to prioritize their own needs and seek support, when necessary, counselors help prevent burnout and promote resilience among parents (Sanchez-Hernandez, Barkavi-Shani, & Bermejo, 2022).

Furthermore, counselors help parents identify and utilize support systems, such as respite care services, support groups, and professional counseling, to alleviate the stress and burden of caregiving. By promoting self-care and resilience, counselors empower parent to providing the best possible care for their child with ASD while maintain their well-being (Gentile, Messineo, La Guardia, D., Arrigo, Citta, Ayala, & Allegra, 2022).

Results And Discussion

Factors Contributing to Parental Stress

Parenting a child with ASD presents a unique set of challenges that can contribute to heightened levels of stress for parents (Prata, Lawson & Coelho, 2019). Several factors contribute to parental stress in families with autistic children, including:

- a. **Challenged in communication:** Difficulty in understanding and interpreting their child’s communication cues and language delays can lead to frustration and stress for parents.
- b. **Behavioral challenges:** Managing challenging behaviors such as tantrums, meltdowns, and repetitive behaviors can be exhausting and overwhelming for parents, leading to increased stress levels.
- c. **Social Isolation:** Parents of children with ASD may experience social isolation and withdrawal from social activities due to the demands of caregiving and the challenges of socializing their child.
- d. **Financial Strain:** The cost associated with therapeutic interventions, specialized education, and medical treatments for children with ASD can place a significant financial burden on families, contributing to stress and anxiety. Over-burden financial demands always put ...
- e. **Navigating Service and Resources:** Accessing appropriate services, navigating the healthcare and educational systems, and advocating for their child’s needs can be complex and overwhelming for parents, leading to feelings of stress and uncertainty.

Impact of Parents’ Physical and Mental Health

The chronic stress experienced by parents of children with ASD can have profound effects on their physical and mental health (Staunton, Kehoe, & Sharkey, 2023). Research has shown that parental stress in families with autistic children is associated with a range of negative health outcomes, including:

- a. **Increased Risk of Mental Health Disorder:** Parents of children with ASD are at a higher risk of experiencing mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, upset, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) compared to parents of typically developing children.
- b. **Physical Health Problems:** Chronic stress and over-thinking can weaken the immune system, increase the risk of cardiovascular disease, and exacerbate existing health conditions such as hypertension and diabetes.
- c. **Impaired Parenting Functioning:** High levels of stress can impair parents’ ability to effectively parent their child with ASD, leading to decreased patience, emotional reactivity, and less consistent discipline.
- d. **Impact on Family Dynamics:** Parental stress can strain family relationships and dynamics, leading to marital conflict, broken homes, fault accusations, sibling rivalry, and decreased family cohesion and support.

Support and Coping Strategies

Given the significant impact of parental stress on parents’ well-being and family functioning, it is essential to provide support and resources to help parents cope with the challenges of raising a child with ASD (Papadopoulos, 2021). Some effective strategies for supporting parents and mitigating parental stress include:

- a. **A professional emphasis Counseling:** Parents can express their concerns, process their emotions, and create coping mechanisms for stress and anxiety management in a safe and encouraging environment by participating in counseling or therapy.

- b. **Parent Support Group:** Making connections with other parents who have one through comparable things can offer understanding, validation, and useful assistance. Parent support group help people feel less alone and isolated by providing a sense of connection.
- c. **Respite Care Services:** By providing professional caregivers to look after their kid wit ASD, parents can take breaks, relax, engage in self-care, and improve their economic activities while temporarily feeling less stressed, anxious, or phobic.
- d. **Educational Workshops and Resources:** Providing parents with access to educational workshops, cyber counseling, online resources, and informational materials about ASD, parenting strategies, and available psychosocial support services can empower them with knowledge and skills to better cope with the challenges they face.
- e. **Mindfulness and Stress Reduction Techniques:** Teaching parents’ mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques, relaxation exercises, and stress management strategies can help them cultivate resilience, reduce emotional reactivity, and improve overall well-being. Living with a sibling who has autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can present unique challenges and opportunities for siblings (Viswanathanm Kishore, & Seshadri, 2022). While many siblings of children with ASD develop strong bonds and compassionate, understanding, others may experience stress and emotional difficulties due to the demand and complexities of their sibling’s condition (Leedham, Thompson, & Freeth, 2020). This section will delve into the factors contributing to sibling stress in families with autistic siblings, the impact of sibling stress on emotional well-being and family dynamics, and strategies for supporting siblings of children with ASD.

In summary, parental stress is a significant concern in families with autistic children, with numerous factors contributing to tis developmental and exacerbation. The chronic stress experienced by parents can have detrimental effects on their physical and mental health, as well as family functioning (Postorino, Gillespie, Lecavalie, Smith, Hohanson, Swiezy, & Scahill, 2019). However, with appropriate support, resources, and coping strategies, parents can effectively manage stress, enhance their well-being, and provide the best possible care for their child with ASD. It is crucial for professionals, communities, and society as a whole to recognize the importance of supporting parents of children with ASD an to provide them with the necessary tools and resources to thrive in their caregiving role.

1. Factors Contributing to Sibling Stress

Siblings of children with ASD may experience stress and emotional challenges due to various factors, including

- a. **Disruption of family Dynamics:** The presence of a sibling with ASD can disrupt family routines, dynamics, and attention allocation, leading to feelings of frustration, resentment or neglect among siblings.
- b. **Social Isolation:** Due to responsibilities of caregiving, feelings of embarrassment about their siblings’ actions, or difficulties in communication their siblings’ conditions to others, siblings of children wit ASD may suffer from social isolation and withdrawal from peers.
- c. **Emotional Adjustment:** Siblings may struggle to understand and come with their sibling’s unique behaviors, communication difficulties, and sensory sensitivities, leading to feelings of confusion, anxiety, or sadness.
- d. **Parental Stress:** High levels of parental stress and caregiving responsibilities can impact sibling relationships and dynamics, as parents may have less time, energy, and attention to devote to their typically developing children.

2. Impact on Siblings’ Emotional Well-being

Sibling stress in families with autistic siblings can have significant implications for siblings’ emotional well-being, including:

- a. **Increased Anxiety and Depression:** Siblings of children with ASD become anxious in dealing with other. They are extra careful in their engagement with people. Depression, and emotional distress compelled the siblings to shun people’s company. Typically, taken care of their sibling also posed challenges for them. To stop working was one saddest story for them. (Shivers, Jackson, & McGregor, 2019).
- b. **Lower Self-esteem:** Siblings may struggle with feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, or low self-esteem due to comparisons with their sibling with ASD, societal misconceptions about autism, or challenged in navigating social relationships (Lu, Liu, Pang, Peng, Liu, & Wen, 2023).
- c. **Guilt and Resentment:** Siblings may experience feelings of guilt for harboring negative emotions or thoughts about their sibling with ASD, as well as resentment towards sibling for the attention and resources they receive (Chiu, 2022).
- d. **Social Difficulties:** Sibling stress can impact siblings’ social relationships and interactions, leading to difficulties in forming friendships, maintaining peer relationships, or engaging in social activities.

3. Supporting Siblings of Children with ASD

It is essential to provide guidance, counseling social support, and resources to help siblings of children with ASD to navigate their unique experiences and challenges. Some effective strategies for supporting siblings include:

- a. **Psychoeducation:** Providing siblings with age-appropriate information about autism, including its characteristics, causes, and treatment options, can help foster understanding, empathy, and acceptance and accord them unconditional positive regard.
- b. **Sibling Support Group:** Offering siblings the opportunity to connect with other siblings who share similar experiences can provide validation, support and a sense of belonging. Sibling support groups offer a safe space for siblings to express their feelings, ask questions, and share coping strategies.
- c. **Individual Counseling:** Siblings may benefit from individual counseling or therapy to address their emotional concerns, develop coping skills, and explore their thoughts and feelings in a supportive environment.
- d. **Group Guidance:** Providing pseudo-guidance to families with children with ASD which will allow them to share their experiences among themselves for effective and healthy compares as how to care for ASD siblings.
- e. **Quality Time with Parents:** Carving out dedicated one-on-one time with siblings can help strengthen their bond, validate their feelings, and provide opportunities for open communication and emotional connection.
- f. **Encouragement of Individual Interests:** Supporting siblings’ interests, hobbies, and talents can help boost their self-esteem, foster a sense of autonomy, and provide a source of fulfillment and enjoyment outside of their sibling relationship.

In summary, sibling stress is a significant concern in families with autistic siblings, with numerous factors contributing to its development and impact on siblings’ emotional well-being. However, with appropriate counseling support, resources, and intervention strategies, siblings of children with ASD can navigate their unique experiences, develop resilience, and thrive in their relationships and personal growth. It is crucial for parents, professionals, and communities to recognize the importance of supporting siblings of children with ASD and to provide them with the necessary tools and resources to flourish in their roles as siblings and individuals.

SOME INTERVENTIONS USED BY COUNSELORS

- Self-Talk techniques is used whereby an individual accepts and, used in the form of a coping instrument, will be talking themselves, encouraging themselves to move on with life irrespective of how life has been bitter or how challenging life has turned.
- Empty-Chair sensitization is a technique of placing an empty chair in front of you and being in the mood to communicate as if somebody is sitting on the chair. This technique eases of relives an individual form fear and another fearful encounter.
- Mirror conversation comes in when a person is facing some phobia situation, it looks like an empty chair conversation technique.
- Activity-based and Specific repeated writing is a technique of repeated actions being embarked on with the autistic parent and the child with ASD.
- Daily record keeping is where the parents keep records of the activities performed together with heir ASD children and monitor how the activities went to promote the performance of their children at home and in their school environment.
- Positive Reinforcement is used as a reward to ASD children by making them draw anything they think of without being judgmental and applauding them intermittently.
- Follow-up service is a mechanism adopted by the counselor to check on parent with autistic children to find out how they are coping with their children and their activities.
- Hypnotherapy- being hypnotized is a way of becoming conscious of your situation by deeply going through silent though whereby the hypnotist assists in offering mind relaxation. Hypnosis is used to relive the mind from unusual upsetting

Definition of Terms:

ASD – autism spectrum disorder

ASDC - autism spectrum disorder children

EM – emotional integrity

NAC – national autism center

Conclusion

In conclusion, counselors play an essential role in providing holistic support to parents of children with autism spectrum disorder. Through psychoeducation, effective emotional support, advocacy, skill-building, and caregiver burnout prevention, effective counseling strategies.Counselors empower parents to navigate the challenges of raising a child with ASD with confidence and resilience. By working collaboratively with parents, counsellors contribute to the general well-being especially, psychological wellbeing and financial wellbeing, and quality of life of both parents and their children with ASD. Together, they create supportive nurturing, and enabling environment where children with autism can succeedto achieve their dream and realize their full potential by unearthing their creative abilities as when parents are equipped fully to support their ASD children to be useful citizens in their communities and Ghana as a whole.

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