Reducing problem behavior during care-giving in families of preschool-aged children with developmental disabilities.

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1.1 Aim

A unique feature of the present research is that it is the first study in child disability field which compares a standard behavioral parent training intervention (Stepping Stones Triple P-Standard/SSTP-S) to an enhanced adjunctive intervention (Stepping Stones Triple P-Enhanced/SSTP-E) and a waitlist (WL) control group. The present study expands on previous research as there has only been one previous randomized control trial comparing the efficacy of SSTP-S to a waitlist control group (Roberts et al., 2006).

2.1 Hypotheses

The hypotheses for the current study were that parents from the Enhanced condition (SSTP-E) compared to parents from the Standard condition (SSTP-S) would show:

1. At immediately post-intervention, greater reductions on observed and parent reported measures of child problem behavior (overall and related with care-giving). SSTP-E > SSTP-S > WL;
2. At post-intervention, greater reductions in observed parental negativity. SSTP-E > SSTP-S > WL In addition, parent-reported measures of parenting skills and competence would show better outcomes in both intervention conditions as compared with the WL control;
3. Similar pattern of results in relation to parental distress and adjustment; and
4. On all observed and parent-reported measures, changes at post-intervention would be maintained at 1-year follow-up. Better maintenance for SSTP-E as compared with SSTP-S.

3.1 Results

The results of the study generally supported the primary hypotheses:

1. SSTP-S and SSTP-E are associated with positive changes in child behavior,
2. Interventions results show more adaptive parenting skills and increased parental competence.
However, contrary to predictions:
3. Intervention doesn’t result in reduced parental distress and improved adjustment,
4. Only partial support for the hypotheses suggesting that SSTP-E would be superior to the SSTP-S on outcome measures.

4.1 Findings

Both the SSTP-S and SSTP-E are effective interventions to reducing negative child behavior, and these changes in behavior are maintained over time. Furthermore, the findings show that following intervention, parents are able to facilitate their child’s behavior across numerous care-giving tasks. It is assumed that by reducing child problem behavior, parent’s burden of care is reduced.

5.1 Summary and Implications

While we did not find that the enhanced adjunctive intervention was superior to the standard intervention, it has resulted in the development of a new intervention for clinical use with parents requiring support in relation to coping with their care-giving roles. Similar outcomes were achieved in fewer sessions with SSTP-S, suggesting that it is more cost effective than SSTP-E. The enhanced intervention appears to be a useful adjunct that should be reserved for either non-responders to the standard intervention or for families with additional risk factors that are not changed by the standard intervention.