Teaching Mindfulness Strategies to Parents of Adolescents with Executive Functioning Deficits to Support Caregiving Skills
Kimberly S. Mollo, OTD, OTR/L • Thomas Jefferson University, Philadelphia, PA

**SETTING & BACKGROUND**

### Health Horizons
- Suburban private medical practice located in suburbs of Philadelphia
- General, integrative, and holistic medicine; psychiatry
- OT referrals contracted to Kimberly S. Mollo’s private homecare practice
- Population: child, adolescent & young adult (ages 7-25)
- Dx: ADHD, ODD, LD, NVLD, anxiety, & co-morbid executive dysfunction
- OT sessions in home; parents are present to provide carryover
- Fee-for-service pay structure

### Executive Functioning
- Defined: complex neurological processes necessary for purposeful activity
- Skills emerge, combine, and mature during teenage years
- Lack of skill attainment:
  - Leads to difficulties in all areas of occupation
  - Predictor of level of occupational dysfunction in adulthood
- Parents are ill-equipped to facilitate skill development
- Mindful approach to parenting enhances caregiving ability

### SIGNIFICANCE TO OT

- Co-morbidity of executive dysfunction impacts occupational performance & participation
- Children & Adolescents
  - Lack independence
  - Experience decreased motivation
- Parents
  - Under or over-compensate
  - Inconsistent w/strategy delivery
  - Feel incompetent & stressed out
- Parental involvement is crucial for success!
- Mindfulness strategies can be a bridge!

**PICO QUESTION**

Does a therapist-facilitated training program using mindfulness strategies for parents of adolescents/young adults with executive functioning deficits increase parents’ caregiving competence when supporting their child during required occupational tasks?

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### Themes
- Longitudinal negative occupational life outcomes for adolescents w/executive dysfunction (Howe & Lussier, 1997)
- Importance of consistent parenting
- Mindfulness training alleviates parental stress (Veldhuijzen et al., 2000)
- Positive changes occur in parent-child relationships w/mindfulness practice (Veldhuijzen, 2009)
- Mindfulness influences attention
- Mindfulness improves executive functioning

#### Methodology Findings
- Intervention: few days to 7 months
- ~ 8 weeks w/~10-12 sessions
- Provision & consistency of homework necessary for carryover
- Intervention: delivered in-person by trained clinicians

**DESIGN & IMPLEMENTATION**

**IRB approval:** JSHP/17JUH
**Recruitment:** Health Horizons: Parents w/children ages 9-25: n=7
**Informed Consent:** n=4

**Pre- and Post-Measures**

- Before session 1 & between sessions 5 & 6: self-reports for demographics, mindfulness, parenting competence & relationships, parent stress levels, & program evaluation

**6-Week Group Intervention**

- Health Horizons conference room
- Parents private residence

**Session Activities**

- Seated meditations
- Breathing practices
- Mindful eating
- Body scan
- Yoga
- Walking meditation
- Gratitude practice
- Loving-kindness practice
- Rapture & repair practice
- Executive functioning training
- Goal-plan-do-check via daily routines

**SUMMARY**

- Consistency, Motivation, & Willingness to Change
  - Consistent mindfulness strategy practice:
    - Decreases stress and increases mindfulness
  - More influential than specific mindfulness strategy type
  - Increasing parent sense of competency requires > 6 weeks
  - Change takes time, skill, support, motivation, and awareness
- Family dynamics are fluid: willingness to change is important (resistance)
- Incorporate Transtheoretical Model & Motivational Interviewing techniques
- Goal plan, do, check: too complex to do without OT skilled intervention

**OUTCOMES**

- Parent Mindfulness
- Parent Stress
- Parenting Competence
- Parenting Skill
- Parenting Scale Domains
- Overt Conflict/Skill Deficits
- Triangulation Domains