

**Article:** Changes in caregiver outcomes following participation in the Engaged Eaters Program

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**Key Points:**

- The Engaged Eaters Program is a six-month program for families with autistic children. It includes 24 visits (over computer programs such as Zoom) and eight training sessions for caregivers
- This study looked at stress level, self-belief, caregiver responses to the intervention, and caregiver confidence

**Glossary:**

**Interventions:** A specific set of steps taken to help improve a situation

**Quasi-experimental pre-post-test:** A research design without random assignment to groups used to test the changes by measuring variables before and after the experiment

**Self-efficacy:** Self-belief

**Telehealth:** Health services delivered through video meetings instead of in-person sessions

**Why this article matters:**

There is a lack of research into the results of parents/caregivers participating in programs that help improve family routines and practices. This article looks at outcomes including stress, self-belief, positive program outcomes, and confidence of one such program called the Engaged Eaters Program.

**Description of the Study:**

This study looks at stress, self-belief, positive program results, and confidence in parents/caregivers after participating in the Engaged Eaters Program. It measures the relationship between the seriousness of autistic children’s challenges with mealtime and the outcomes for the caregiver after going through the Engaged Eaters Program as well as how different caregivers reacted to the intervention. This study measures caregiver levels of stress, self-belief, positive program outcomes, and confidence before and after the Engaged Eaters Program to get the results. The Engaged Eaters Program is an in-home program designed to help parents with autistic children during mealtimes. The program involves 24 visits with the family during mealtime by a trained occupational therapist, eight

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training lessons for the caregivers. Thirteen caregivers and children were part of the study.

**Research Questions:**

What are the outcomes for stress, self-belief, positive program outcomes, and confidence caregivers after the Engaged Eaters Program? What is the relationship between the level of a child's difficulty during mealtimes and the outcomes or feelings of the caregiver?

**Important Results:** Caregivers felt more confident in themselves and mealtimes with their children after the program. There were no significant changes to the levels of stress or belief in self after the Engaged Eaters Program but caregivers who started with low self-belief showed the most improvement after the program.

**How the results will be used:** The results will be used to show that the Engaged Eaters Program is able to help caregivers use effective strategies for mealtimes and make a positive difference with how a caregiver feeds their autistic child. The results also show how programs involving an occupational therapist teaching caregivers' strategies for feeding autistic children can improve mealtimes for both the caregiver and the child.

**Full Article Reference:** St. John, B. M. & Ausderau, K. K., (accepted). Changes in caregiver outcomes following participation in the Engaged Eaters Program. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*.