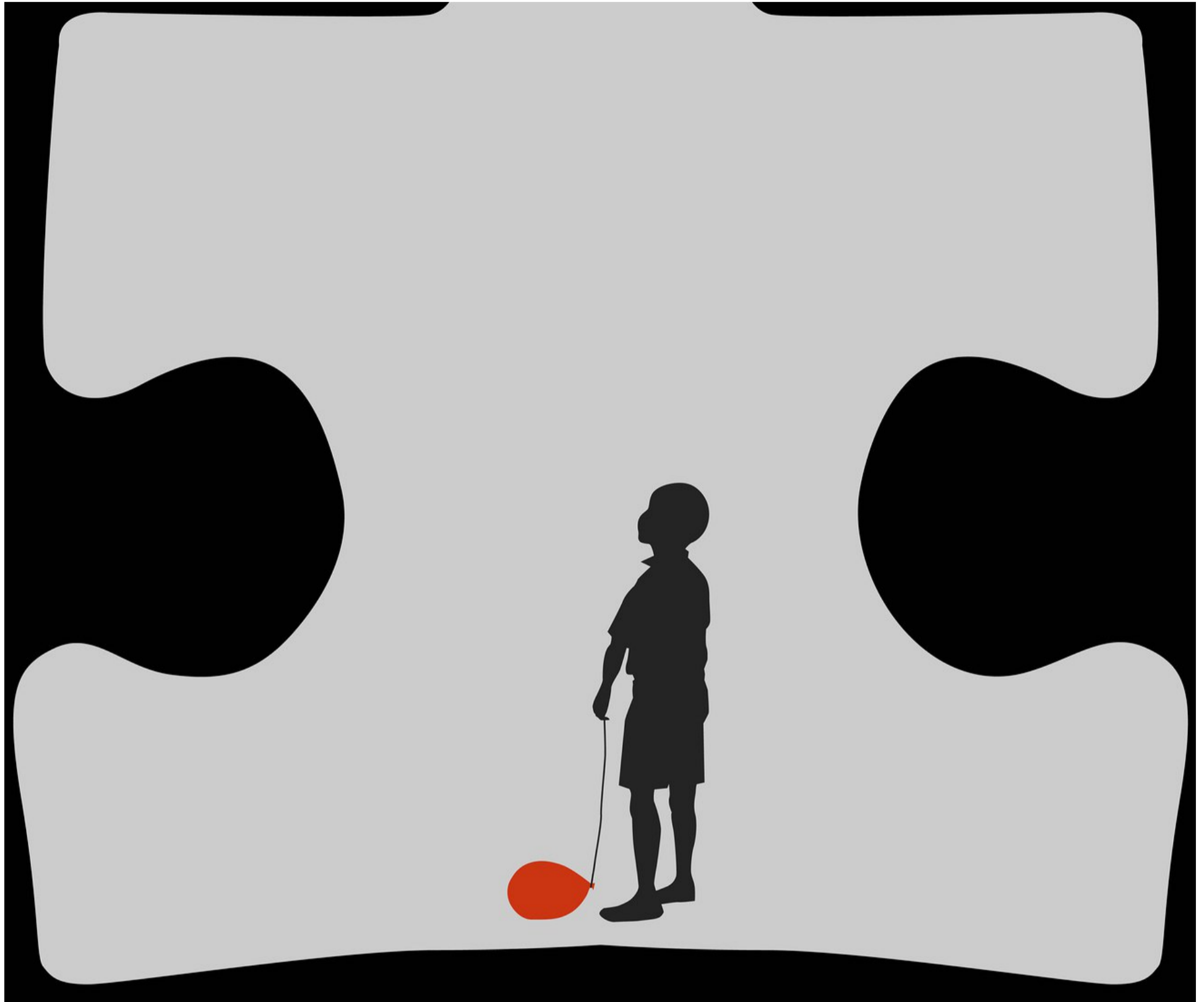


# The link between parental stress, parenting style, and autism

[Onaiza Qwais](#)

Published at 06:43 pm October 14th, 2018



It's not easy □BIGSTOCK

## How hard is it to parent a child with autism?

Bringing up a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can be overwhelming and challenging. As it is often the case that children with autism are not able to play, communicate, behave similarly to their neurotypical peers, the behaviours displayed by a child with autism can be confusing and frustrating for their parents.

This is due to the fact that autism is globally considered to be one of the most complex developmental disorders. The diagnosis and prognosis of autism is still not well understood.

As a result, parents are thrown into a sea of uncertainty. It has been shown to be viewed as a tragedy that is worse than death in South-Asian communities (Tripathi, 2015). Therefore, it is not surprising that coming to terms with the diagnosis of autism is not easy for parents. Parents go through a range of emotions such as guilt, frustration, anger, shame, anxiety, resentment, depression, inadequacy, and have questions such as “why me?”

Moreover, as autism can't be immediately visually perceived, other parents tend to view the tantrums and social

95  
Shares

level of helplessness in a parent.

At the same time, research has shown that parental stress, parenting style, and family function are associated with the behaviour of children with autism (Karst and Hecke, 2012). Therefore, parents need to be pro-active and have adequate knowledge to address the needs of the child.

For parents, counselling and participation in autism support groups have been shown to be helpful in reducing stress from child-related difficulties (Ferrara and Esposito, 2017).

Therefore, it is suggested to seek mental health support throughout this process. In addition to seeking help, it is effective to engage in training on positive parenting, behaviour management, and social skills.

Research shows that training on these particular subject areas has increased self-efficacy in parents, as, through these trainings, parents were better equipped to handle their child's behaviour (Sofronoff and Farbotko, 2002).

The increase in self-efficacy in parents leads to the reduction of parental stress and the child's behaviour. There is also evidence from multiple studies that parent-assisted interventions have been linked to decreased problem behaviour and increased social skills (Laugeson et al, 2012, Cohen et al 2006, Parson et al 2017).

This illustrates the importance of seeking mental health services and engaging in training for both the parent and the child.

In addition to a reduction in parental stress, parenting style has been shown to be an important factor affecting the child's development. As described by Baumrind (1967), there are three main parenting styles: Authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive. In an authoritarian parenting style, parents are highly controlling, have unrealistic expectations, and lack warmth in their responses to their child.

In this style of parenting, complete compliance and blind obedience is expected from their child. In contrast, authoritative parents are warm, nurturing, and attuned to their children and tend to reason with the child instead of expecting blind obedience whilst having control. Indulgent parents who are also referred to as "permissive" and "non-directive" are more responsive than they are demanding.

This form of parenting is non-traditional and lenient, allows self-regulation, and avoids confrontations. Parents who have children with ASD have been shown to practice authoritarian parenting, especially when the child has more severe behavioural problems (Gau et al 2010). However, authoritarian parenting is linked to deficits in communication skills, social skills, lower self-esteem, and higher levels of depression, and results in a dysfunctional parent-child relationship (Baumrind, 1989 as cited in Steinberg et al 2017).

In contrast, children with authoritative parenting have been shown to be more socially and instrumentally competent than children with authoritarian parenting. In permissive or indulgent parenting, there is an increase in problem behaviour whilst there is high self-esteem and social skills.

These findings suggest that it is important to be authoritative parents to ensure the optimal development of one's child.

Despite the barriers to parenting in autism, it is important to modify parenting approaches to the needs of the child. Since the strengths and abilities which children with autism have can only emerge when a parent is tuned-in, and is willing to engage with the child in a way that will benefit the child.

## References

- Karst, JS, & Van Hecke, AV (2012). Parent and family impact of autism spectrum disorders: A review and proposed model for intervention evaluation. *Clinical child and family psychology review*, 15(3), 247-277
- Karst, JS, Van Hecke, AV, Carson, AM, Stevens, S, Schohl, K, & Dolan, B (2015). Parent and family outcomes of PEERS: A social skills intervention for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 45(3), 752-765.
- Laugeson, EA, Frankel, F, Gantman, A, Dillon, AR, & Mogil, C. (2012). Evidence-based social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorders: The UCLA PEERS program. *Journal of autism and developmental disorders*, 42(6), 1025-1036.
- Parsons, D, Cordier, R, Vaz, S, & Lee, HC (2017). Parent-Mediated Intervention Training Delivered Remotely for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder Living Outside of Urban Areas: Systematic Review. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 19(8).
- Sofronoff, K, & Farbotko, M (2002). The effectiveness of parent management training to increase self-efficacy in parents of children with Asperger syndrome. *Autism*, 6(3), 271-286.
- Steinberg, L, & Darling, N (2017). Parenting style as context: An integrative model. In *Interpersonal Development* (pp. 161-170). Routledge.

Tripathi, N (2015). Parenting Style and Parents Level of Stress having Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (CWASD): A Study based on Northern India. *Neuropsychiatry*, 5(1), 42-49.

*Onaiza Owais founded and currently manages Inner Circle, Dhaka -- Bangladesh's first high-quality ABA-VB centre.*

RELATED NEWS



[Let them flourish](#)



[Are you a good parent?](#)



[The chemistry of attachment](#)



[Where Peppa Pig is not at home](#)



[Drama Mama](#)



[Do you have a spoiled kid?](#)

- [Parenting](#)
- [Psychology](#)
- [Child Care](#)
- [Autism Spectrum Disorder](#)
- [Behaviour Management](#)

LEAVE A COMMENT

Please read our [Comment Policy](#) before posting

0 Comments

Sort by



Add a comment...

[Facebook Comments Plugin](#)

WORTH READING



[The unforgiving Padma](#)



[Sex work: Children lost in the loop](#)



[In the Time of the Others](#)



['Youths choose protest traditional politics'](#)

- [Home](#)
- [About Us](#)
- [Advertise](#)
- [Subscribe](#)

Connect With Us



Copyright © 2012-2018. 2A Media Limited. All Rights Reserved.

8/C, FR Tower, Panthapath, Dhaka 1207, Bangladesh.

Kazi Anis Ahmed, Publisher