

Maternal emotional reactions and sense of self-efficacy towards children's hyperactive behaviour

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Emotions and parental sense of self-efficacy are central to the enhancement of proactive parenting which is associated with fewer behaviour problems and a decrease in these problems over time. This study aimed to investigate the kind of emotions child hyperactive behaviour evokes to mothers and the level of maternal self-efficacy towards such behaviour. Two questionnaires were used, composed by a vignette describing either an imaginary hyperactive boy or girl, followed by ratings of typicality and severity of the behaviour presented, the "Emotional Reactions to Challenging Behaviours Scales" (Mitchell & Hastings, 1998) and the "Difficult Behaviour Self-Efficacy Scale" (Hastings & Brown, 2002). The sample consisted of 118 mothers of normal pre-schoolers, enrolled in kindergartens in Athens, who were asked to imagine that the child presented was their own. According to the results, child hyperactive behaviour evoked emotions like concern and preoccupation but also emotions of anger, annoyance and embarrassment. Maternal sense of self-efficacy was reported to be relatively low, especially towards boys ($t=-3.00$, $p<.01$). Perceived severity of the behaviour predicted maternal sense of self-efficacy and negative emotionality. Maternal sense of self-efficacy also predicted negative emotionality but only towards boys. Maternal emotions and sense of self-efficacy towards hyperactive children are discussed as key elements for change in a cognitive-behaviourally oriented intervention program.