

Staying Active Together: Exercise for Parents and Children with Autism

Dr. Luis Columna

Professor

Kinesiology Department

Promotion of Health Equity and Adapted Physical Activity (PHEAPA) Lab

University of Wisconsin-Madison



Benefits of Physical Activity for Children with Autism

- Improves motor skills and coordination.
- Enhances social interactions and communication.
- Helps regulate emotions and reduce anxiety.
- Supports better sleep and overall well-being.



**SU Fit Families
Program: Autism**

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graph TD; A[SU Fit Families Program: Autism] --> B[Parents]; A --> C[Children]; B --> D[Sensory Motor Integration]; B --> E[Aquatics]; C --> F[Communication]; C --> G[Sports/PA]; D --- H[Children and Parents Practicing Activities Together]; E --- H; F --- H; G --- H;
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Parents

Children

**Sensory Motor
Integration**

Aquatics

Communication

Sports/PA

Children and Parents Practicing Activities Together

FIT Families Program: Visual Impairments and Autism



Fit Families APP



Resources

Equipment provided worth \$250-
\$300 to each participant





GAP

FIT FAMILIES

LACK OF PROGRAMS

PA PROGRAMS

Children's Fundamental
Motor Skills

Parents' Self-efficacy
& Attitudes

Parent's Stress

NO programs when
"kids" stop being cute

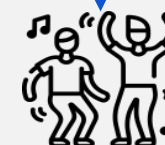
NO programs for
parents

Adolescents and Young
Adults with ASD and DS

Parents



Yoga

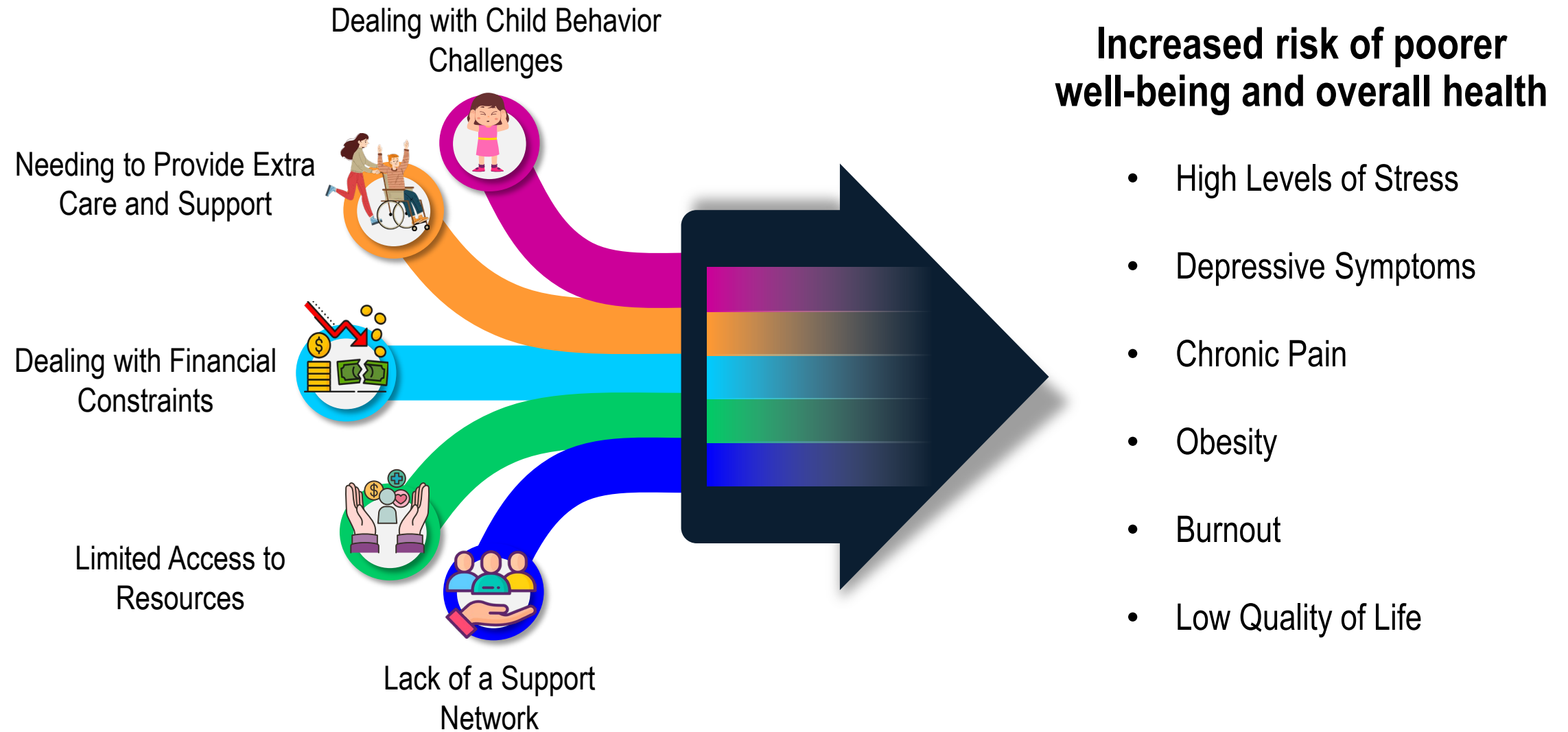


Dance



Strength Training

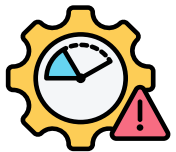
Parents' Challenges and Health Problems



Parents of Children with Disabilities' Physical Activity

- Not as physically active as parents of children without disabilities.
- Lower odds of participation in vigorous and muscle-strengthening exercise.

Common Physical Activity Barriers:



Time
Constraints



Lack of
childcare



Insufficient
support



Benefits of Physical Activity for Parents



Improved Mental Health

- Stress reduction
- Better coping skills



Physical Benefits

- Increased energy levels
- Better sleep
- Improved fitness



Improved Family Dynamics

- Opportunity to role model
- Quality family time
- Reduce Caregiving Burnout



Increased Self-Care

- Personal well-being
- Balance life

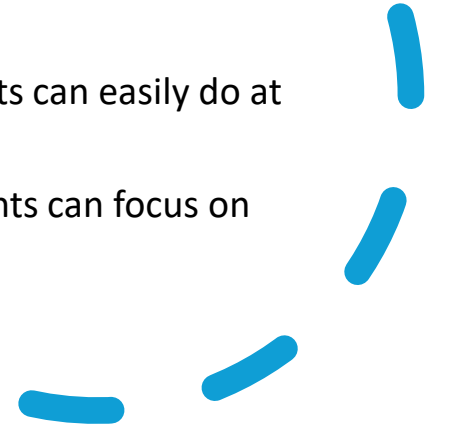


PHEAPA LAB

Promotion of Health Equity and Adapted Physical Activity

Looking Ahead – Exercise Programs for Parents

- We are developing exercise programs specifically designed for parents.
- Childcare will be available for those who need support.
- These programs will include practical activities that parents can easily do at home.
- Our goal is to create a supportive community where parents can focus on their well-being while staying active.
- **Stay tuned for more details on how to participate!**



Overcoming Barriers

- ❖ Schedule Short Exercise Breaks
- ❖ Include Kids in Workouts
- ❖ Utilize Online Workouts
- ❖ Walk Whenever Possible
- ❖ Wake Up 10 Minutes Earlier
- ❖ Use Resistance Bands or Free Weights at Home
- ❖ Take Advantage of Support Networks
- ❖ Find a Workout Buddy
- ❖ Make Chores Active
- ❖ Use Playgrounds for Workouts



Dr. Megan Macdonald's Research on Dogs & Exercise



- Having a dog can motivate regular physical activity by encouraging daily walks, playtime, and outdoor movement.
- Pet ownership can help reduce stress and create a structured routine through consistent care and interaction.



Don't Have a Dog? Get One!

- Explore creative ways to stay active, such as turning household activities into movement opportunities or finding enjoyable physical hobbies.
- Try alternative strategies like family walks, participating in community exercise groups, or partnering with a friend for motivation and accountability.



GRACIAS!

