

# Comparisons of Grief, Stress, and Coping Response of Mothers and Fathers of Newly Diagnosed Children with Autism

By

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The following is an abstract to a thesis which was completed by Sara Kelley as part of her masters in Social Work at ASU:

The purpose of the present study was to compare the grief, stress, and coping responses of mothers and fathers of children newly diagnosed with autism. Using a sample of 12 (males=5, females=7) individuals with a child diagnosed with autism, this study sought to explore current gaps in literature about mothers' and fathers' grief, stress, and coping responses after their child receives the diagnosis. Additionally, grief, stress, and coping responses were also compared between parental involvement in support groups. A survey requiring a range of agreeability or disagreeability to fourteen statements about grief, stress, and coping was used. Participants, additionally, provided three self-reports about experiences with grief, stress, and coping. Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to analyze the data. Results indicated practical significance for outcome measures and gender as well as outcome measures and program type. Fathers demonstrate their grief through anger whereas mothers engage in depression, denial, and guilt about the disability while mothers and fathers equally experience stress regarding their child's future. This study also indicated mothers engage in emotion-focused coping behavior whereas fathers engage in problem-focused coping behaviors.

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