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Yoga Program for Children at Risk for Trauma: Promoting Self-Regulation and Educational Participation

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Yoga Program for Children at Risk for Trauma: Promoting Self-Regulation and Educational Participation

Sydney Gonzales; Becky King, OTD, OTR

BACKGROUND

Experiencing trauma in childhood has a significant negative impact on self-regulation, educational participation, and future mental health. Children's yoga effectively improves self-regulation in an educational setting; however, there is a lack of occupational therapist-led programming for at-risk children (Razza et al., 2020; Sun et al., 2021; Whiting, 2018).

PROBLEM

Childhood trauma negatively impacts self-regulation and educational participation. Yoga is a cost-effective solution, but there is a lack of programming focused on occupation.

PURPOSE

To develop an adaptive yoga program within an early educational setting for at-risk children with disabilities.

Outcome objectives:

- Determine the need for improved self-regulation and educational participation in the classrooms
- Implement a series of yoga-based sessions for young children that incorporate self-regulation strategies
- Develop educational resources for teachers and caregivers

METHODS

Setting: 2 classrooms

Post-interview: Participants responded to semi-structured interviews post-program regarding children's self-regulation and educational participation and the feasibility of implementing yoga-based strategies in the classroom.

Themes:

- Positive engagement in pre-educational activities
- Positive development of self-regulation and self-image
- Effective and feasible movement and mindfulness in the classroom

PROGRAM

COMPONENTS

General Program Goals:

- Promote engagement in pre-educational activities
- Improve difficult transitions
- Improve compliance with expected classroom behaviors
- Decrease aggressive behavior
- Promote positive self-image

Theoretical Frameworks:

- Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) Model

Activities:

- Movement to songs during circle time
- Morning stretches and movement
- Individual exploration of yoga poses during play
- Breathing activities
- Animal yoga poses to music during story time
- Mindfulness techniques
- Engagement in activities that incorporate movement and self-regulation strategies in an environment that promotes positive self-image (Whiting, 2018)

Conclusions / Future Directions

- Incorporating mindful movement and yoga-based strategies in a classroom setting can promote positive development of self-regulation and educational participation
- Teachers can feasibly sustain yoga-based activities in the classroom without taking away from their typical classroom routine
- Occupational therapists can utilize yoga-based activities in school-based settings and advocate for their use in classrooms to promote the development of self-regulation and educational participation for at-risk populations