**Introduction**

- Although prior research has focused on the effect of the child with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) on the parent, few have investigated the interaction between the child and the parent. The parent may influence their child's behavior through their parenting technique.

- **Emotion coaching (EC):** the ability of the parent to use emotional situations to help his or her child label their emotions, validate their emotional experience, problem-solve coping strategies to deal with their emotions, and/or understand their emotions.

- Emotion coaching may help the child develop emotion regulation skills, which could in turn decrease problem behaviors (Gottman et al., 1996, 1997; Ramsden & Hubbard, 2002). To date, however, this research has focused exclusively on typically developing children.

- Mothers with higher self-efficacy may show greater levels of emotion coaching because of their confidence in their parenting skills.

- **Primary Hypotheses:**
  - Mothers of children with greater coaching will show lower levels of conduct problems. Levels of emotion coaching will have higher levels of parenting self-efficacy.
  - Child conduct problems will not have a direct effect on maternal self-efficacy, but parental self-efficacy may moderate the relationship between emotion coaching and child conduct problems.

**Methodology**

- **Participants:**
  - N = 134 mothers of children (aged 3-16) diagnosed with an ASD
  - Age: M\(_{\text{mother}} = 39.01, \text{SD}_{\text{mother}} = 8.01; M_{\text{child}} = 9.2\) (3-16 years)
  - **Child Diagnoses:** Autism (56.9%), PDD-NOS (22.0%), Asperger’s Disorder (21.2%)

- Approximately 50% of the children were diagnosed with another disorder (i.e., ADHD, ODD, Bipolar disorder, cognitive impairments, speech impairments and sensory disorders).

- **Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)**
  - Conduct Problems subscale: assessed child conduct problems
  - Parent rated child on 25 attributes on scale of 1 (not true) to 3 (certainly true)
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .72

- **Parent Emotional Styles Questionnaire (PESQ)**
  - Emotion Coaching subscale: assessed self-reported use of emotion coaching. Also, provides emotionally dismissive (ED) parenting style (e.g., lack of emotion coaching).
  - 45-item scale rated from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .71

- **Parenting Sense of Competence (PSOC)**
  - Self-efficacy subscale: assessed parental self-efficacy
  - 16-item scale rated from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree)
  - Cronbach’s Alpha = .69

**Results**

- A significant negative relationship between conduct problems and emotion coaching emerged, r(133) = -.228, p < .01.

- Parental self-efficacy was marginally associated with child conduct problems, r(133) = -.154, p < .10.

- No relationship was found between parental self-efficacy and child conduct problems; therefore, there was no evidence for a mediating role of parental self-efficacy between child conduct problems and emotion coaching.

- The potential role of parental self-efficacy in moderating this relationship was assessed.

- The interaction (conduct x self-efficacy) was probed at the mean and one standard deviation above and below the mean.

- Post hoc probing, one SD above the mean, suggests that there is a positive relationship between conduct problems and emotion coaching in mothers with high levels of self-efficacy, t(133) = 3.119, p < .01.

- There were no main effects one SD below the mean.

**Discussion**

- Results suggest a positive relationship between child conduct problems and maternal emotion coaching for mothers with high self-efficacy. No relationship was found for mothers with low parental self-efficacy.

- It is unclear whether or not parent emotion coaching is directly affecting child conduct problems or whether it may be influencing other child characteristics that may also influence conduct problems. Therefore, it may be less of an issue of emotion coaching affecting change on child externalizing behaviors but on emotion regulation, which influences the externalization of behaviors.

- It is also possible that mothers who use more emotion coaching have children who are higher functioning. Thus, using an emotion coaching parenting style more closely matches the needs of the child.

- Future research should attempt to examine emotion coaching in parents more holistically to determine qualitative differences in how this parenting approach may be different or similar to that of parents of typically developing children and may vary across child characteristics, such as symptom severity, cognitive functioning, and emotional intelligence.