Inclusion of People with Autism in Faith Communities: A Literature Review

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Questions

Purpose was to survey what is known about methods of inclusion in church
1. Literature on autism and faith?
2. How to define inclusion?
3. What does exclusion look like?
4. What are benefits of inclusion?

Literature Review

Search Criteria
Keywords: autism, disability, church, inclusion exclusion, faith, 2010-2021
Excluded: school, international, limited relevance, focus beyond church, focus on commentary/review only, Pre-2010
17 resources (articles, guides, books,)
Disability -5 resources
Autism focused -12 resources
Fields Most Presented
Social Work
Nursing
Theology

Methods
Literature Reviews
Interview
Intervention

Conclusions

Gaps
Mental Health Outcomes
Successful intervention

Themes
People with autism value their faith
Exclusion increases negative religious coping
Avoidance of religious spaces
Inclusion increases positive religious coping
Congregation needs to be intentional about inclusion
Inclusion benefits both the people with autism and the church
Intervention include educating congregation

Implications & Future Directions
Make it easier for churches to quantify their level of exclusion
More information about how negative religious coping affect mental health of families
More research of effectiveness or intervention

Significance

What is already known
Families with children or adults with autism are often excluded from religious spaces for a variety of reasons. There are negative outcomes due to the exclusion.

What this review addresses
This review synthesizes information to better understand how churches can be intentionally inclusive. And explores possible consequences for mental health and stress management

References
To see resources, click here