

## “SHOP TALK” GROUP FOR FATHERS OF CHILDREN WITH AUTISM

Miriam Elfert is a mature graduate student at UBC and is conducting a study to learn about what it's like for fathers of children with autism to participate in a weekly discussion group with other fathers. You are invited to participate in this study.

### **What is Shop Talk?**

Shop Talk is a group developed specifically for fathers of children with autism to meet and talk about their experiences of parenting. Each group will consist of 6-8 fathers who will talk about different topics every week, including the challenges of parenting a child with autism, stress management, and how having a child with autism has affected their relationships with friends and family members.

### **Why should I join Shop Talk?**

The purpose of the group is to enable fathers of children with autism to talk to one other about their experiences and challenges. Fathers of children with autism must deal with a number of daily pressures and expectations regarding the support (financial, emotional, social, recreational) that they provide to their families. Many of these issues are unique to fathers, and can affect fathers in unique and important ways. Shop Talk will provide fathers with a supportive environment where they can talk about their experiences, exchange ideas and approaches, and help other fathers. Fathers can also learn new strategies and skills to cope with parenting a child with autism, and may increase their understanding of how to be a more effective parent and partner/spouse.

### **Who can attend Shop Talk?**

You are eligible to participate if you: 1) are the father of a child diagnosed with autism, 2) are currently married or in a common-law relationship, 3) are committed to attending all of the weekly group sessions, and 4) are **not** currently receiving psychotherapy or taking medication for mental health issues.

### **When, where, and for how long will Shop Talk take place?**

Participants will be assigned to 1 of 2 groups, which will run consecutively. Each group will consist of nine, 2-hour weekly group sessions, for a total of 18 hours. Sessions will take place at a central and convenient location and time for group members—the specific location, day, and time will be determined once enrolment has been achieved. In addition to attending the group, you will be asked to complete questionnaires at three different time points, which ask you to rate statements related to parenting-related stress, depression, coping resources, your relationship with your spouse/partner, and optimism. You will also complete a form about what it was like to participate in the group. Filling out the forms will require approximately 45-60 minutes each time and can be done in your home or another convenient location. In total, the time commitment for the study will be 18 hours for the group sessions and approximately 3 hours for completion of the questionnaires, for a total of 21 hours.

### **Who will lead Shop Talk?**

Miriam Elfert will guide the Shop Talk group. Miriam has experience leading similar groups for fathers of children with autism in the past. Miriam has worked with children with autism and their families for over 15 years, in many roles, including behavior interventionist in family homes and special education assistant in schools; currently, she works as a program manager and behaviour consultant at the Reach ABA program for children with autism. Miriam has master's degrees in both Special Education and Counselling Psychology, and is currently completing her Ph.D. in Special Education at UBC. She is also the mother of a boy and a girl, and the stepmother of a young adult male.

### **What is the cost to join Shop Talk?**

Shop Talk is offered free of charge to participants. To cover the cost of transportation, participants will receive \$10 for every Shop Talk session they attend, plus an honorarium of \$20 for participating in the study, for a maximum of \$110.

### **How do I get more information and/or sign up for Shop Talk?**

Please call Miriam Elfert at (604) 677-7911 or email her at [elfertmiriam@gmail.com](mailto:elfertmiriam@gmail.com).