

Brewer JF, Chapman EM, Lester GM, O'Beirne CE. GRIT, SPIRITUALITY, AND RESILIENCE IN PARENTS OF CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS. Hardin-Simmons Department of Physical Therapy, Abilene, TX.

INTRODUCTION: Research exploring the internal motivators of grit, spirituality, and resilience in parents of children with special needs is limited. **PURPOSE:** 1) Analyze how each construct presents in parents of children with disabilities; 2) Examine if a short-term Family Retreat impacts each construct; and 3) Discuss how the findings can be applied to these families. **SUBJECTS:** A sample of convenience was attained using parents of children with disability who attended a five-day Joni and Friends (Joni and Friends International Disability Ministries©) Family Retreat in Navasota, TX. **METHODS:** Subjects completed a SurveyMonkey™ link before the retreat, upon completion of the retreat, and 4 weeks after returning home from the retreat. The survey was comprised of questions from the 12-Item Grit Scale (5-point Likert scale), the Spiritual Assessment Inventory (SAI) measuring on a 5-point scale subfactors of Awareness, Disappointment, Realistic Acceptance, Instability, and Grandiosity, the 4-point Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale 25 (CD-RISC-25), and the 4-point Family-Centered Program Rating Scale (FamPRS). The researchers were among the faculty and students (n=32) from Hardin-Simmons University Doctor of Physical Therapy program who were trained and served families alongside other volunteers during the retreat week. A Related-Samples Friedman's Two-Way ANOVA compared surveys over time for changes between variables. Pearson correlations identified relationships between demographic variables, spirituality subfactors, resilience, and grit scores. **RESULTS:** Demographic results: return rate- 67% (n=66), included caregiver age range (\bar{x} =45-55), relationship (87% mother, 13% father) religious standing (100%), and number of children (\bar{x} =2.67). Medical diagnoses of the special needs children included: Autism (n=14), Down Syndrome (n=8), Cerebral Palsy (n=6), and other developmental/genetic disorders. Related-samples Friedman's Two-Way ANOVA on resilience (\bar{x} =2.91, SD=0.57) and spirituality (\bar{x} =3.62, SD=0.49) pre and post scores yielded no statistically significant changes except for the SAI Disappointment construct (p=0.009). Pearson correlation comparing resilience and grit scores (\bar{x} =3.86, SD=0.58) were significant (r=0.578, p=0.001), and number of children and resilience scores were negatively correlated (r=-0.319, p=0.04). When assessing retreat satisfaction in the post survey, the FamPRS received responses that all ranged from good to excellent (\bar{x} =3.3-3.9, SD=0.36-.69). **CONCLUSION:** There were no overall significant changes in the participants' internal motivator factors of grit and resilience when comparing pre and post retreat surveys. The significant decrease in the Disappointment component of spirituality suggests the Family Retreat allows for shared experiences related to disability and therefore, a decrease in "disappointment with God" may result. The significant negative correlation findings suggest that parents with more children may have less resilience which may be due to the increased demands of a larger family. The FamPRS had positive responses commenting on the support families received from time spent together and the acceptance they gained amongst the Joni and Friends community. **CLINICAL RELEVANCE:** The lack of statistically significant change within many of these variables did not affect the perceived benefits of the social and respite care provided at retreat. Family Retreats and resources should be developed to support not only the therapy-related requirements of families who have children with special needs, but the emotional and spiritual well-being of the caregivers.