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**“JUST DOING THE BEST THAT WE CAN”**  
**The Experience of New Zealand Parents Conducting**  
**A Home Based, Early, Intensive, Intervention**  
**Programme for their Child with**  
**Autism**

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements  
for a degree of Master of Arts in Psychology,  
at Massey University, Palmerston North,  
New Zealand.

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*This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory  
of my mum, Margaret, who taught me  
that I could do anything if I  
believed in myself,  
and to my little miracle Sesilia  
who rekindled that belief.*

## **Abstract**

The ever increasing number of children being diagnosed with Autistic Spectrum Disorders, has led to a prolific body of research highlighting the effectiveness of and examining variables associated with, early and intensive intervention programmes for children with autism in both home based and school settings. Utilising grounded theory methodology, the primary objective of this research was to explore the complex experiences of New Zealand parents who employed a home based early intervention programme for their child with autism.

The sample group consisted of seven primary caregivers of children with autism currently enrolled in a home programme in the greater Auckland area. Participants completed The Life Stressors and Social Resources Inventory and Becks Depression Inventory II and in depth interviews were conducted.

The findings indicate that parents choosing to implement such a programme are forced to take action and develop various strategies to ensure that available resources are fully utilised. The belief that they were doing the best they could for their child with the information and resources available to them at this time ensured continuity of the programme and aided acceptance of their child's condition. Adjusting their goals and expectations to fit plays an integral part in helping these parents to maintain balance in their own and their families lives.

The implications of these findings for future research and for professionals working with this population are discussed.

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