Parenting a Child with ADHD

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CHILD, ADOLESCENT, AND YOUNG ADULT CONNECTIONS (CAYAC)
Learning Objectives – Part 2

1. Learn the order of impact regarding interventions
2. Learn how to assess for and build on your child’s strengths.
3. Learn how a mindfulness approach to parenting is beneficial for a child with ADHD.
4. Learn the guiding principles for parenting a child with ADHD.
5. Learn the ABC model for building executive functioning skills.
6. Learn the effectiveness of developing a routine for a child with ADHD.
7. Learn how to support building your child’s time management skills.
8. Learn how lifestyle changes can support your child’s success.
Order of Impact
Order of Impact

Supplemental Strategies & School

Parent Strategies (Scaffolding Supports)

Biological Factors (Neurotransmitters, Brain Development, Sleep, Exercise)
Places for Intervention

The Hierarch of Neurocognitive Functioning © 2013, adapted from the works of Miller 2007; Restak and Wolfson 2004; Hale and Fiorello 2004.
The Building Blocks of Brain Development © — further adapted by the CO Brain Injury Steering Committee, 2016.
Teach Skills

DO NOT ASSUME KIDS LEARN THROUGH OSMOSIS
Strengths-Based Approach
Assessing For Strengths

- Children with ADHD tend to exhibit behaviors that are disruptive or have a difficult time following directions.
- In turn... they often get attention for what they are doing wrong.
- Higher risk of
  - Low self-esteem
  - Developing a negative association with school and learning.
Strengths-Based Approach

- It WORKS!
- Focusing on the behavior you want to increase is more effective than focusing on the problem behaviors.
- Children’s well-being and resilience depends on adults emphasizing their strengths.
- YOU are the intervention.
Strengths-Based Approach
How can I do this?

1. **Measure strengths** *(handout)*
   - Help a child put words to and verbalize their strengths

2. **Notice and tell your child their strengths DAILY!**
   - Mention what he/she did well **and** acknowledge effort

3. **Bait for success**
   - Create situations in which your child can be successful
How can I do this?

4. Give options
   - Ex: different ways to complete homework that capitalizes on strengths
   - Increases autonomy and helps practice executive functioning skills!

5. Teach (and reinforce) collaboration
   - Encourage your child to ask questions when stuck
   - Help child recognize that no one is good at everything
Common Strengths of Individuals with ADHD

- Resourcefulness
- Approach problems with novel solutions
- Creativity
- High energy
- Adaptable
- Hyperfocused
- Willing to take risks
- Spontaneous
Capitalize Strengths
Identify and Support Weaknesses
Mindfulness Approach

“PAYING ATTENTION HERE AND NOW, WITH KINDNESS AND CURIOSITY, AND THEN CHOOSING YOUR BEHAVIOR”
Mindfulness Approach: 2 fold

- Bring mindfulness into parenting
  - Allows you to have more of a pause in your parenting style (making up for your child’s lack of pause button!)
- Responsiveness rather than reactivity
- You are your child’s first and greatest teacher
- Having a child with ADHD is HARD!
STOP

▶ **S** – Stop what you are doing
▶ **T** – Take a few breaths
▶ **O** – Observe what is happening in your mind and in your body
  ▶ What are your emotions? What are your thoughts?
▶ **P** – Proceed with intention
  ▶ What would be best to do next?
Parent-Child Fit

- Not a good EF fit
  - Acknowledge that we all have strengths and challenges, and we can use our strengths to help
  - Be creative in EF skills to help
  - Make a point of identifying your own weakness and your child’s strengths

- EF fit… the apple doesn’t fall far…
  - Work at connecting with your child – laugh!
  - Do some common problem brainstorming – you are both experts in the areas that are challenging!
  - Remind yourself that you have had the same struggles as a child and maybe today too!
Parent Training: Philosophy Shift
Self-Monitoring

- Being **consistent** is the most important way to modify behavior.

- Mixed messages between parents, grandparents, and/or teachers leads to confusion and behavior modification won’t work.

  - Child should have the same rules/expectations at school, home, with other caregivers, etc.
Externalizing Executive Skills
MOVING THE INTERNAL TO THE EXTERNAL .... AND BACK AGAIN
ABC Model of Executive Skills
A is for Antecedent

WORK TO ADJUST EXTERNAL FACTORS TO REDUCE PROBLEMS
Environment

- Reduce the number of distractions present
  - Homework in a quiet place
  - Limit (eliminate!) technology when trying to focus
  - Limit number of toys – reduces the complexity of organization
- Reduce opportunities for impulsivity
  - TV in the room
  - Limit internet access
- Provide organizational structures
- Reduce social complexity of an activity or event
  - Emotional control in complex situations can be hard
  - Avoid overstimulating, over scheduling
Tasks

- Make tasks shorter and/or break up tasks into a few EXPLICIT tasks
  - Cleaning a room:
    1. Put dirty clothes in the laundry
    2. Put books on bookshelf
    3. Put clean clothes in drawers
    4. Put toys in toy bin

- Create a schedule (see *routine*)
- Make tasks more appealing
All human beings do better with routines, but these are a critical support for individuals with ADHD because...

- Routines free up the brain to spend energy (RE: Focus and creativity) on complex tasks
- Routines can make a habit stick
- The **mental to-do list** is difficult for individuals with ADHD, so build a routine to support the challenges kids have
Routine

- Consistent morning, afternoon, and bedtime routines will help your child learn what to do

- Small steps = Prioritize!
  - Planners
  - Family calendar
  - Reminders of the routine around the house
Interactions with Adults

- Prepare your child for what will happen and how they can handle a situation
- Use verbal prompts and reminders
- Cue your child for the skills!
- Praise for good skills!
- Debrief when done
Problem Solving Routines – Supporting Executive Functioning

- For older children (10 years +, although planting the seeds earlier too)

- Goal-Plan-Do-Review method
  - Goal setting: What do I need to accomplish?
  - Self-awareness of strengths and weaknesses: How easy or difficult is this task or goal?
  - Organization and planning: What materials do we need? Who will do what? In what order do we need to do these things? How long will it take?
  - Flexibility and strategy use: When or if a problem arises, what other ways should I think about reaching the goal? Should I ask for assistance?
  - Monitoring: How did I do?
  - Summarizing: What worked and what didn’t work? What was easy and what was difficult, and what will I do next time?
B is for Behavior

EXPLICIT TEACHING OF SKILLS - SCAFFOLDING
Identify the Problem: Prioritize Your Goals

- **Pick your battles**
  - Ex: Is your child cleaning their room an important priority?
  - When modifying behavior **focus on what is essential**

- **Practice forgiveness**
Goal setting

- Set realistic goals
- Break goals up into small, manageable chunks
  - How long it takes to do a task?
  - How many reminders does your child need?
  - How many times does the target behavior occur?
- Outline the steps to achieve the goals
  - Turn into a checklist
Supervision

- Provide supervision throughout the process
  - Positive support throughout the process
  - Celebrate successes!
- Fade supervision and scaffolding
Provide JUST enough support for your child to be successful
Time Management
Time Management is HARD!

- Routines are the starting point!
- When completing tasks, talk about how long it takes to do things!
  - This helps with estimation skills
- Have analog clocks available for your child – bedroom, in the house
Family Strategies

- Have multi-step activities planned for the weekend or vacation days (low stakes)
  - Gives opportunities for learning about time and the relationship between time and tasks
- Have a family calendar
  - Visual effect
C is for Consequence

MOTIVATING YOUR CHILD TO LEARN AND USE EXECUTIVE SKILLS
Initiating and Persisting in Tasks

- Modify tasks to leverage your child’s strengths
- Utilize rewards!
  - ADHD brains need more positive reinforcement and rewards
  - For younger children, rewards should be more timely
Effective Praise & Incentives

Praise

1. Deliver praise immediately (5:1!!)
2. Specify the exact behaviors you want to continue to see
3. Provide information about why this accomplishment is important related to goals
4. Emphasize the hard work that has gone into targeted behavior

Incentives

- Menu of incentives that is co-developed with your child
- Have a plan for larger rewards
  - Marble jar
  - Point system
Lifestyle Changes – Supplementary
Exercise
The Essential, The Beneficial, and the Optional

Free Play: Essential – for all
Unstructured time for play
• Developing coping strategies
• Social connections
• Imagination
• Self-directed learning

Exercise: Essential – for all
• Fitness is associated with
  • Better working memory
  • Behavioral inhibition
  • Learning
• Impact is about half of what medication can do

Sports: Optional, Beneficial
• Compensatory strength
• Area to build self-esteem
• Organized to promote social connections
• Decide based on...
  • How vigorous (heart rate)
  • How much your child enjoys it
Exercise – Beginning of the Day

- Aiming for exercise at the start of the day is even better!
  - Walk/bike to school
  - Walk the dog
- 60 minutes a day!
Sleep
Sleep is Essential

- **Sleep hygiene is essential to executive functioning!**
- Children who are sleep deprived exhibit symptoms of ADHD – **treat the sleep!**
  - Inadequate sleep leads to:
    - Inattention, moodiness, disorganization, irritability, and health problems
  - Ages 3-5 years: 10-13 hours (including naps)
  - Age 6-12 years: 9-12 hours.
  - Age 13-18 years: 8-10 hours.

- Proper sleep is even more important for a brain with ADHD
A consistent bedtime and routine is important:

- No screen time **at least an hour** before bedtime
  - Beds are only for sleeping – no TV/Phone in bed
- No large meals or exercise **at least an hour** before bedtime
- **Co-develop** a routine with your child
  - Glass of water, brush teeth, read a book together, sing songs/say prayers, etc.
Nutrition
Growing research indicating that there is a gut-brain connection

- Support for Omega-3 supplements reducing symptoms of ADHD (speak with your family doctor)
- Some small evidence re: food additives contribute to symptoms of ADHD

Balanced blood sugar, healthy balance of protein, fats, fruits, vegetables

- If the battery is on low, there is even less capacity to accommodate related to ADHD symptoms
- IF your child has sensory sensitivities and has a limited diet already – check blood levels (iron, vitamin D, etc.)
Technology
Technology – Reality and Grace

- Technology is a necessary part of life and important for so many reasons
- It also consumes a lot of time and mental energy
- Capacity issue
  - With only so many hours in a day
  - Prioritizing sleep, exercise, free plan time
- An ADHD brain is more likely to be enticed by dopamine inducing video games
  - Harder to shift away
- Clear, consistent limit setting
- Impulsivity and risk for children on the internet
Resources

- Smart But Scattered by Peg Dawson & Richard Guare
- The Family ADHD Solution: A Scientific Approach to Maximizing Your Child’s Attention and Minimizing Parental Stress by Mark Bertin
- Mindful Parenting for ADHD: A Guide to Cultivating Calm, Reducing Stress, and Helping Children Thrive by Mark Bertin and Ari Tuckman
- The Kazdin Method for Parenting the Defiant Child by Alan Kazdin
- Your Defiant Teen: 10 Steps to Resolve Conflict and Rebuild Your Relationship by Russell Barkley, Arthur Robin, & Christine Benton

- www.CHADD.org
- www.adhdlectures.com
- How to ADHD – Youtube Channel
Questions?
THANK YOU! WE WILL SEE YOU IN DECEMBER!

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