

COUNSELING CORNER

NEWSLETTER— MARCH 30, 2020

Dear Parents,

With school closures due to COVID-19, we, as parents, have become educators overnight as we are homeschooling our children. As we are teaching our children, understanding some of the academic struggles they go through is imperative to helping them learn. The goal of this newsletter is to journey with you in the process of educating our children by discussing specific topics of mental, social, and emotional health.

Our topic these next few weeks is: Understanding the ADHD and supporting the ADHD child.

In this issue:

- Understanding the ADHD Brain
- Practical Tips

Next issue:

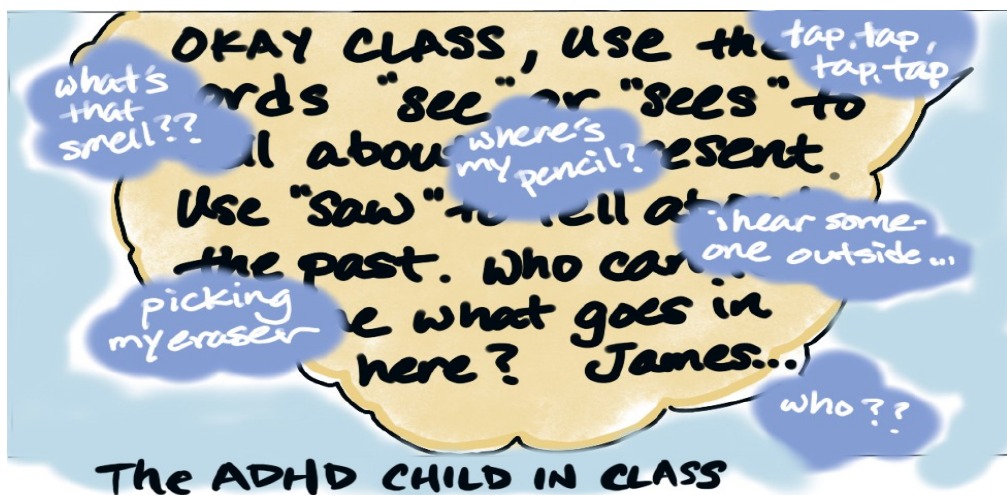
The ADHD Child; Behaviors & Friendships

Understanding the ADHD Brain

Imagine that you are the CEO of a Fortune 500 company, and as amazing as that sounds, here is the scenario. You have no receptionist, no secretaries, or no personal assistants, and you, as the CEO, receives ALL the incoming calls to your company. You wind up having to address and dictate very trivial and simple things, like transferring calls to your other departments and making sure the janitorial staff cleans the bathrooms, to making executive decisions, like merging with another company or starting a new product line. You can imagine that if you were the CEO of a company like this, you wouldn't be able to get a lot of executive tasks done, because you would constantly be bombarded with very menial issues that demand your attention. This is the ADHD brain.

“Neurologically, the ADHD brain has difficulty filtering the important vs. non-important thoughts and sensations that the body is sending up the channel. We would typically ignore impertinent information outside our current range of focus, but the ADHD child has no such differentiation.”

To put simply, neurologically, the brain has difficulty filtering the important versus non-important thoughts and sensations that the body is sending up the channel. We would typically ignore impertinent information outside our current range of focus, but the ADHD child has no such differentiation. For example, the brain of an ADHD child may first start out listening to their teacher giving them instructions, but then the pressure sensors on their legs is sensing the hardness of their chair and urges them to kick their legs. Their attention flick back to their teacher's voice at the front of the room, but then momentarily focuses on the sound of the air conditioning switching on in the classroom. The cold air breezes through the room, and the child smells the glue on their desk, leading them to touch the sticky substance, and so on and so forth. All this could happen in the span of one minute, and when we are able to understand this, we would realize that our ADHD student had only caught 15-20 seconds of their teacher's instructions!



Reframing the Issue...

In our current educational setting, we may see ADHD as a hindrance to learning in the classroom, but let's take a different perspective. In a wilderness challenge, which kid will not only survive, but thrive in such an environment — the ADHD kid, or the classroom focused kid??

My bet is on the ADHD kid. Surviving or thriving in the outdoors is totally the ADHD kid's forte. Their brains are more aware and more in-tuned to processing all the sights and sounds of the forest that they will most likely respond quicker to a threat than the average kid. For example, if both kids are trying to set up their tents, I think the ADHD kid will hear the wandering bear first. The focused kid will be concentrating on setting up the tent so much that they might not be aware of the bear until it's too late!

So, another way to see this is...**ADHD is also a SUPERPOWER!** We just need to learn when to turn it on and off.



PRACTICAL LEARNING TIPS FOR THE ADHD CHILD AT HOME

- Set up an area away from distractions to do homework or to learn.
- Provide a schedule or structure to what is expected during work.
- If your child is the wiggly (hyperactive) type, allow your child to stand, kneel, sit on an exercise ball, or etc, when working. Instead of trying to suppress their jiggling limbs, give them an outlet while simultaneously learning.
- Stagger or chunk the work into more manageable or “bite size” increments. For example, if 3 pages of work is given, break it up into 3 separate increments of work time.
- If your child is still spending too much time on homework, consult your teacher on perhaps decreasing the amount of work.
- Help change your child's narrative on ADHD. Help them to identify it, be aware of it, and most importantly, see it as a positive superpower (see above). This transforms the guilt, shame, or anxiety they might feel from their ADHD, reinforcing the integration of strengths and weaknesses into their life.
- Do you have any other thoughts or tips? I would love to hear them!!

If you have any thoughts, questions, ideas, or input, please feel free to email me at:

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I would love to hear from you!

Take care and be safe,

Jonathan Hsu, LMFT

BUSD Mental Health Support Specialist