

COUNSELING CORNER

NEWSLETTER— APRIL 20, 2020

Dear Parents,

In talking about the impact of ADHD in the past few weeks, we have not addressed how ADHD impacts the self-esteem of the student. How we PERCEIVE children who struggles with ADHD directly correlates with how the child begins to understand and perceive themselves. Kids derive their self-esteem, self-perception, and identity from parents, family, peers, and the community.

We have heard many stories of adults, who struggled with ADHD throughout their childhood, that grow up thinking that they are “stupid,” because they’re unable to pay attention in class, or they are “behavioral issues” and are “unlikeable,” because of their hyperactivity and impulsivity. As parents and educators, we want to change this narrative. We want to walk along side of our students who struggle with ADHD and begin to alleviate the shame and self-blame they feel. We need to communicate that we are all strugglers on this journey of life and that all we need is a bit of grace, empathy, and love in the face of challenges and difficulties.

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Understanding
Anxiety in Children

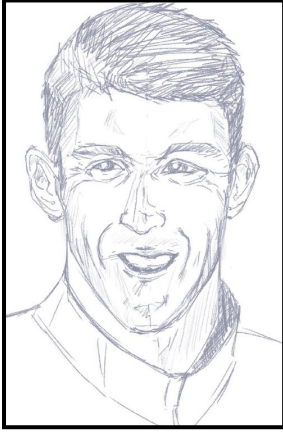
ADHD’s Impact on Self-Esteem

Erik Erikson, a famous developmental theorist in the field of psychology, wrote about the various life stages a person goes through that contributes to their self-esteem and identity. With elementary aged children, Erikson stated that they are going through a stage where being productive, or being good at something, contributes to a healthy self-confidence and self-esteem. If the child DOES NOT feel like they are productive, or good at something, they will begin to feel inferior and have low self-esteem.

So, how does this apply to kids who struggle with ADHD?? Consider the chart below:

TYPICAL (NEGATIVE) MESSAGE	HEALTHIER MESSAGE
Kids with ADHD often say, “I hate school! I’ll never be good at it.” They feel powerless when it comes to academics.	ADHD is a neurological issue that is making school hard. We can learn about what happens when we have ADHD, understanding ourselves better, learning to control it, and use it to our advantage.
Kids with ADHD often hear, or feel, that they ARE FAILURES. It’s not unfounded. Past experiences of struggling with reading, or paying attention in class, have led them to conclude this.	Churchill said once, “Failure is never fatal. Success is never final... [in the end] it is COURAGE that counts.” Parents, if you haven’t already, NORMALIZE FAILURES. Failing is a part of learning process. If we don’t fail, we don’t learn. Review the above box. Having ADHD does not equate to failing in life.
Kids with ADHD often say, “I’M NOT GOOD AT ANYTHING!”	Parents if you hear this, help your child to find something they are good at. School is not the only thing they can be good at. Find a sport, find a hobby, invest in a musical talent or artistic ability, or find a extracurricular activity that they love doing. Being good at something will build their self-esteem, and will also build their resiliency (grit) in life.

HEROES w/ADHD—fact&fiction



MICHAEL PHELPS — OLYMPIAN

With 28 Olympic medals, 23 of them gold, Michael Phelps struggled with inattention and hyperactivity since he was in kindergarten. He was known as an attention-seeking trouble maker, and when he was diagnosed with ADHD in 6th grade, he began channeling his energy into swimming. He had to learn to overcome his struggles, and still continues to do so everyday.

PERCY JACKSON— OLYMPIAN

Percy is the protagonist from Rick Riordan's famous *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* book series. ADHD was an issue that caused much trouble for Percy in school, but when he found out he was the son of Poseidon, and that ADHD was a part of his superpower as a demigod, he begins to learn to use and manage this ability as he grows and matures.



PRACTICAL TIPS TO HELP ADDRESS SELF-ESTEEM

One of the biggest hurdles to self-esteem and personal growth is SHAME. Shame is the unarguable belief that you are bad, defective, or a mistake. Shame is the un-washable chocolate stain on our conscious that doesn't go away no matter how hard you try. Shame is the proximity barrier to intimacy and acceptance, because "If anyone were to find out my problem, they would never love me."

Guilt, on the other hand, is a healthier feeling that is like a flashing light that sirens in our conscious when something is wrong. Guilt is productive and problem-solving in nature. Guilt addresses the issue head-on, because the **ISSUE OR THE MISTAKE WILL NEVER DEFINE US**. Guilt silences in the face of positive reflection and encouragement, and is not the voice of self-hate and loathing.

In light of this, which feeling do you think a child with ADHD feels the most?

I would say SHAME.

Let's take what we've discussed in the past few weeks, and begin to change the narrative. **IF WE CAN BEGIN TO CHANGE OUR CHILDREN'S NARRATIVE OR UNDERSTANDING REGARDING THEIR STRUGGLES WITH ADHD, THEY WILL BEGIN THE JOURNEY OF BECOMING HEROES IN THEIR OWN WAY.**

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! The next issue will be on the week of May 6th.

Take care and be safe,

Jonathan Hsu, LMFT

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