

SURVIVE AND THRIVE **Managing Life with Adult ADHD**

Abigail's Podcast Cheatsheet
#029

ADHD and Relating to Family

ADHD Parents with ADHD Children

Due to the heritability of ADHD, if you or your spouse has ADHD it is likely that your child will be affected by it as well. To help your child manage, you'll want to set up routines in your household that aid your child or children in developing their executive function skills. You'll then want to participate in some way with those routines as a family.

These can be routines to help your child finish their homework, get chores done, get in and out of the house with everything they need, and manage their room clutter. The list could go on.

Just as team members support their teammates, as a family you support one another around ADHD. After these routines have been successfully established and tweaked to work well for your child, it is time to integrate yourself and the rest of the family into those routines. In this way routines, which are necessary for everyone to function effectively, become a team effort.

Having your family participate also allows your ADHD-affected child to no longer stand out as the one who needs the extra help. The reality is that you, and possibly others in your family, need structure too. When you all work on new habits and routines, your child isn't the only one getting extra reminders.

How does this work in practice?

One example is creating and posting a chart to help the ADHD child remember their household responsibilities. On this chart include all family members' responsibilities as well. This then becomes a reminder for the whole family and not just about "the one" with ADHD.

(Hint: Once the chart is up, remind everyone to check the chart for their tasks rather than tell them what they need to do. Let the chart tell them.)

Those with "special needs," whether their disability is visible or invisible, are particularly sensitive to reminders and accommodations that others don't need. Making habits and reminders a family or team activity doesn't make the stigma go away completely, but it suggests that everyone needs a little support, and everyone makes mistakes and forgets things at times.

It may also help the ADHD child realize when they become an adult affected by ADHD that they really are not the odd man out. Everyone has something they are contending with, whether or not it is a "disability."

We do what is best for the team as a whole or the family as a whole. It can be lonely, embarrassing, and frustrating to be "the one" in the family, even if more than one of you is affected by ADHD. Make sure everyone in the family is on the same team. While each of you may be playing different positions or roles, this allows for dealing with ADHD to become a group effort. It also gives "the one" the opportunity to help his or her teammates, even if it is mommy or daddy. Actually it is more fun if it is mommy or daddy. And by becoming responsible for the other teammates "the one" learns that everyone in their family, on their team has strengths and weaknesses. More important, the feeling of being singled out may diminish because they feel as if they are contributing to and supporting others on the team.

I cannot suggest highly enough for the family to have a weekly team meeting. It should be brief but cover anything special coming up that week, especially changes. Last minute changes are hard for those affected by ADHD. The weekly meeting gives the opportunity to offer a "heads up" on anything out of the ordinary that is going to happen the

coming week. May I re-iterate that the weekly meeting should be brief in length of time.

Also it is better that it is held on the same day and time every week so that each family member knows that they have a commitment to be there regardless. If the meeting needs to be changed one week in must be done in advance. This teaches respecting each other's time and schedules.

Siblings and ADHD

When one sibling has ADHD and the other doesn't it can be difficult for both parties. The non-ADHD affected sibling can get frustrated with the extra effort the family has to go through to help the ADHD affected sibling. For the ADHD affected sibling there is shame and a feeling of being less than the non-ADHD affected sibling.

This is why I like to emphasize cultivating a team approach. Members of a team watch each other's back and the team is only successful when everyone arrives at the finish line. This can be a hard atmosphere to cultivate but worth the effort.

Relating to Your Parents as an Adult Affected by ADHD

Adults who were and adults who still are affected by ADHD can feel a lot of shame. It gets compounded as an adult when the parents still treat the adult child based on their behavior as a child. This is a hard transition to make for the parents and for the adult child. The parents have to break away from their experience and assumptions about that child. The adult child has to work on not regressing to behaviors of the past when around their parents.

Let me repeat, this is hard stuff. But you can have a healthy and positive relationship in your adulthood with your parents no matter how you were or they were in the past.

I think it is always important to remember each party did the best they could at the time based on their maturity and the situation. Most likely

neither party deliberately acted with malicious intent. If that is the case, I believe forgiveness on both sides is in order.

Keep the lines of communication open. Remember it is never too late to establish a new relationship with a family member.

Resources

Books

Alexander-Roberts, Colleen. ADHD & Teens: A Parent's Guide to Making It Through the Tough Years. Lanham: Taylor Trade Publishing, 1995.

Barkley, Russell A. Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents. New York: The Guilford Press, 2013.

Cooper-Kahn, Joyce and Laurie Dietzel. Late, Lost, and Unprepared: A Parents' Guide to Helping Children with Executive Functioning. Bethesda: Woodbine House, 2008.

Dendy, Chris A. Zeigler and Alex Zeigler. A Bird's-Eye View of Life with ADD and ADHD: Advice From Young Survivors, 2nd Ed. Cedar Bluff: Cherish the Children, 2007.

Ford, Anne. On Their Own: Creating an Independent Future for Your Adult Child with Learning Disabilities and ADHD. New York: Newmarket Press, 2007.

Heininger, Janet E. and Sharon K. Weiss. From Chaos to Calm: Effective Parenting of Challenging Children with ADHD and Other Behavioral Problems. New York: Penguin Group, 2001.

Moraine, Paula. Helping Everyday Students Take Control of Everyday Executive Functions. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 2012.