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FROM CHAOS TO CALM
Ages & Stages of Learning and AD/HD
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If you treat a child who does not have ADHD as if he has ADHD, it can only be beneficial. If you treat a child with ADHD as if he does not, it can be a disaster. The level of organization and independence expected often exceeds the capabilities of the child with ADHD. What these children need is increased structure and predictability.

One of the first steps in reducing household chaos is to establish routines and make life predictable. That means we have to determine what situations occur regularly and then establish a structure or sequence to be repeated every day.

Three things that your child must perform daily, but may have trouble doing consistently: get up and get dressed; eat; and go to sleep. If only these three events went more smoothly, you'd have a far calmer household.

Summary of Process for Establishing Routines

- **Include the child in discussions whenever possible.**
- **Identify situations that occur on a frequent basis.**
What do I want him to do instead of what he's doing?
- **Determine 1 to 5 things (depending on child's age) that need to be accomplished as part of that routine. Decide what tasks must be included.**
- **Separate the desirable from the truly essential.** Ignore the unessential—you can expand the routine once your child has fully mastered the essential tasks.
- **Prioritize the important tasks**
- **Discuss and decide on number of reminders needed.**
- **Determine time frame for completing steps.**
How can I put expectations and progress in a visual format?
- **Develop documentation (chart, checklist).**
What would make it worth his while?
- **Decide on reinforcer for successful completion of routine within specified time.**
- **Review steps of routine, tools (checklists, timers) and rewards with child.**

Develop a routine that a child could accomplish by himself with the aid of some form of reminder – a visual cue - to tell him to "get back on track." Parents have to stop being the cues that say, "Get Going".

The process for establishing a routine or changing a specific behavior requires answers to three questions:

- *WHAT DO I WANT HIM TO DO INSTEAD OF WHAT HE'S DOING?*
- *HOW CAN I PUT IT IN A VISUAL FORMAT SO HE DOESN'T HAVE TO RELY ON ME TELLING HIM WHAT TO DO?*
- *WHAT WILL MAKE IT WORTH HIS WHILE?*

To Change Behavior:

Define expectations in advance. Determine the schedule and define behavioral expectations. Teach to behavior before you need it.

Look for trends. Learn to recognize when the child does behavior better than he did last time. That's progress !!

Be realistic in your expectations for change. Behavior does not occur in absolutes

- never and always do not apply to behavior. Expect ups and downs.

Realistic goal of behavior change is that negative behavior occurs:

- 1) With decreased frequency
- 2) At lower intensity
- 3) Lasts a shorter duration

DON'T TAKE BEHAVIOR PERSONALLY. Don't attribute negative motives to your child's actions. When you do, you react (or overreact) rather than respond to his behavior.

What Works To Support Behavior Change:

-Solicit child input. Have your child/adolescent suggest ideas for change – the number of prompts, how much time is needed. Make him part of the solution.

- Use tools that establish structure:

- Timers
- Schedules
- Checklists
- Calendars
- Bins/boxes for organization

- Reinforce improvement - Use an activity he likes to do and does all the time to reinforce a behavior or activity that is less desirable to him. Make sure the reinforcer is not available at any other time, for any other reason. Don't expect perfection.

Improvement is success.

Be aware - punishment has been tried before and it rarely changes behavior because it does not teach to appropriate alternative behavior.

Obstacles To Change

- Parents take on the responsibility, child doesn't have to change
- Unrealistic expectations for change
- Frequently changing approaches
- Too many rules, too many behavioral goals

Pointer for Effective Parenting: Behavior change in your child starts with you.

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