Teenage Girls with ADHD: Proactive Steps To Turn Turmoil into Smooth Sailing

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Secrets for Parenting Healthy, Happy Daughters

Raising Girls With ADHD

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• Provides parents with specific action steps to help their daughters
• Includes strategies for helping preschoolers through teenagers
• Gives parents hope and encouragement for their child's success
Presentation Goals

- Identify how to help a teenage girl with ADHD gain an understanding of strengths and weaknesses.
- Discuss various strategies for strengthening or accommodating weaknesses.
- Explain some changes that can be expected in school, family, and community in adolescence.
- Identify some strategies for handling social issues.
- Develop an action plan with specific steps to assist steps girls with ADHD to become more independent.
GIRLS WITH ADHD:

- Are diagnosed with ADHD at an older age.
- Are more frequently diagnosed with Inattention and have less Hyperactivity and Impulsivity.
- Have more emotional comorbidities during the teenage years.
- Have a greater likelihood of internalizing problems and difficulty regulating emotions which can lead to self-esteem issues.
- Have increased feelings of guilt and self-doubt.
- Have more hormonal issues, specifically estrogen and its effects on medication.
- Can have greater risk of early sexual activity.
- Experience more friendship difficulties.
- Have greater turmoil in the mother-daughter relationship.
- Struggle more with societal expectations for girls, which traditionally have expected girls to be more nurturing and accommodating.
- May be held more accountable for poor organization and sloppy papers in school, which may be excused as typical "boy" behavior in males.
Girls with ADHD con't:

- May work harder to compensate for or hide their symptoms in an effort to meet parent/teacher expectations.
- May be misdiagnosed with other forms of psychopathology – for example, inattention and poor peer interaction may be misdiagnosed as depression.
- Have differences in brain structure and development.
- Have lower levels and different manifestation of Oppositional Defiant Disorder and Conduct Disorder than males - girls may be more likely to have covert behaviors like lying whereas boys may have more overt, aggressive symptoms like physical aggression.
- Based on ratings by same sex peers, are more disliked - or have higher peer rejection rates - than boys with ADHD.
- Are more likely to self-harm, cut, and self-mutilate.
- Exhibit more excessive talking.
HELP GIRLS WITH ADHD BY:

- Surrounding them with the right people
- Maintaining a positive attitude
- Accepting strengths and weaknesses
- Instilling confidence
- Nurturing natural abilities
- Educating yourself about ADHD and its impact on adolescent girls
- Getting outside help when needed
Independence & Self Sufficiency

- Understand ADHD
- Own ADHD
- Identify Hurdles Ahead
- Identify Strategies & Create Action Plan
- Advocate for Self
- Monitor & Revaluate
- Know Personal Strengths & Challenges

Advocate for Self
UNDERSTAND ADHD AND IMPLICATIONS

- **How?**
  - Support people – Pediatricians, therapists, coaches, teachers, mentors, others with ADHD
  - Books – Magination Press, authors like Patricia Quinn, M.D. or Ned Hallowell, M.D.
  - Introspection - Encourage time to think about strengths and weaknesses, set goals and make plans

- **Implications? –**
  Executive Functioning Weaknesses – Planning, organizing, focusing, holding back impulses, monitoring, remembering, managing time, and modulating emotions
KNOW PERSONAL STRENGTHS & CHALLENGES

- **Strengths**
  - Creative thinker, good negotiator, willing to take a risk to obtain a goal, intuitive, able to focus intently on a topic of interest, sees solutions quickly, and/or energetic.

- **Challenges**
  - Executive Functioning weaknesses - Difficulty with attention, inhibition, organization, memory, task initiation, self-monitoring, attending, and recovering from setbacks
Know Personal Strengths & Challenges

- Mindset Matters!
- Possible avenues
  - Use questioning rather than lecturing
  - Psychoeducational testing
  - Input from others
  - Self Directed Search (PAR)
  - Interest- Skill inventories
  - Books- *Strengthfinder 2.0*
- Challenges – distinguish can’t vs. won’t
OWN ADHD

- Encourage strength based view of ADHD
- Know how ADHD affects her.
- Is best predictor for success
- Needs to feel valued and supported for who she is
- Remember ADHD does not define the girl; the girl defines her ADHD.
- Create an ‘elevator speech’
IDENTIFY HURDLES AHEAD

- Physical
- Emotional
- Social
- School related
- Family
- Discipline
- Self-esteem
Strategies for Physical Hurdles

- Proper diet and exercise critical
- Quality of sleep related to overall functioning
  - Reasonable bedtime
  - Calm-down time becomes routine
  - End electronics at least 30 min. before bed
  - Optimal school schedule
  - Monitor impact of hormones, especially if taking medication
Strategies for Social Hurdles

- Promote Social Clubs & Sports
- Choose wisely – don’t overload schedule
- Develop and follow passions
- Open your home to friends
- Know her friends and their parents & the degree of parental supervision provided
- Keep lines of communication open
- Use a coach - therapist for skill deficits
SOCIAL MEDIA

- Source of much teenage angst
- Family decisions about privacy necessary but most professionals believe some monitoring required, especially if your child is impulsive, a risk-taker or a target of bullying
- Staying current on types of media and parental controls is critical
- Guidelines for your student must be developed and followed
**CYBERBULLYING**

- Defined as sending or posting mean, embarrassing, or threatening text or images over the Internet via computer, cell phone or iPad.

- To prevent cyberbullying, make sure you and your child are educated about what it is and its ramifications, keep lines of communication open and encourage your child to tell you or a trusted adult at the first sign of it, and keep up to date on and use filtering software.

- Be aware of signs your daughter may be bullied, such as withdrawing from activities, becoming moody and sullen, or being reluctant to use the computer or refusing to go to school.
Strategies for School Related Hurdles

- Close teacher communication
- IEP or 504 followed if in place
- Curriculum matched to skill level
- Self advocacy
- Attendance monitored
- Homework routine
- Use of support personnel
- Teachers-organized, flexible, & high interest
- Organizational strategies-technology
Use of Technology

- Tracking assignments and appointments on online calendar or smartphone
- Note taking — Evernote — IOS or Android app
- To Do Lists — Outlook, Astrid — Android exclusive
- Timer — focus in chunks, breaks built in
- Headphones with “white noise” application
- Audio books and reading software
- Working Memory Training
What is reasonable to expect?

- Shows up to class with materials
- Uses some strategy to keep up with assignments
- Completes homework on time without a struggle
- Does the best she can do which hopefully means getting acceptable grades
- Establishes and maintains communication with teachers
- Makes sure her teachers know what helps her and asks for help when needed
Possible support:

- Help her break down assignments into more manageable chunks with established timelines
- Make sure she has and uses a calendar system
- Provide an equipped, quiet place for homework and test taking
- Help her establish a system for monitoring deadlines
- Stay informed about any free tutoring
- Extended time and/or reduced assignments
Strategies for Family Related Hurdles

- Evolving parental role
- Needing but not wanting structure
- Allowing mistakes in a learning framework
- Giving more responsibility when she can handle it
- Increasing your patience
- Encouraging sibling & family understanding
- Teaching to be a team player
- Staying engaged
- Creating good family memories
DRIVING PRIVILEGES

- Make sure she gets plenty of practice behind the wheel. Don’t give her permission to take her driver’s test until you are convinced she meets the criteria for being a safe driver.

- Make sure she understands the long-term consequences of reckless driving, including death to herself or others, injury, property damage, and loss of her driver’s license.

- Make sure your daughter knows what to do in case of emergency, such as an accident or mechanical breakdown. Go over the scenarios with her not to frighten her, but to help her be prepared.

- Sign a safe driver contract with your daughter.
Your Responsibilities

- Begin to release control.
- Allow her to make some mistakes.
- Be patient.
- Trust her. When she demonstrates she can handle a little responsibility, allow her a little more.
- Get help for yourself when you feel overwhelmed.
- Seek specialists right away when needed — most serious problems don’t fix themselves.
Strategies for Discipline Related Hurdles

- Clear and consistent rules
- Natural consequences
- Losing car/ telephone privileges
- Consistent, mild consequences
- Grounding
- Negotiation
- Second chances
- Admit you don’t know it all
- The last word on the last word
Strategies for Self-Esteem Related Hurdles

- Reframe negative labels
- Success builds success
- Set small attainable goals
- Encourage volunteering
- Build islands of competence
- Provide unconditional love
- Listen when she speaks
- Don’t let your fears become her fears
- Don’t do for her what she can do for herself
- Identify skills that will serve her well as an adult
Signs of Healthy Self-esteem

- She believes she can identify and fix what is wrong.
- She tries and is willing to take some risks.
- She develops and maintains self-control.
- She acknowledges her own efforts and rewards herself for small steps.
- She accepts who she is — building on her strengths and seeking accommodations for weaknesses.
Creating a Dynamic Action Plan

- Long range planning
  - Involve daughter when appropriate
  - Fluid, revisit monthly, keep visible
  - Inclusive of all life’s aspects: school, family, etc.

- Short term planning
  - Should translate into intentional action daily
  - Prioritize need
  - Agree upon supports
  - Agree upon consequences and rewards
My Dynamic Action Plan

☐ In 5 years, I see my daughter doing
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________

☐ In 3 years, I see my daughter doing
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________

☐ In 1 year, I see my daughter doing
__________________________________
__________________________________
__________________________________

☐ In order for my daughter to accomplish these goals:

☐ Today I need to
__________________________________
__________________________________

☐ Tomorrow I need to
__________________________________
__________________________________

☐ Within 1 month I need to
__________________________________
__________________________________
ADVOCATE FOR SELF

- Action oriented culmination of previous steps
- Application of information
- Requires executive skills

- Roadblocks
  - Gap between knowing and doing
  - Motivation
  - Self-esteem
  - Verbal skills
  - Creating the opportunity
How Do You Teach a Teenager to Self-Advocate?

- Shared problem solving approach
- Clear expectations
- Multiple choices
- Scaffold—may need to lay the groundwork
  - Model-teach first
  - Role play
  - Transfer responsibility to teen
How Do You Teach a Teenager to Self-Advocate? (continued)

- Know your teen
- Reward - incentive
- Other
  - Self-determination curriculum
  - ADHD coach
MONITOR AND RE-EVALUATE

- Refer to Dynamic Action Plan goals
- Collect input & review data
- If things are not going well remember…
  - Consistently inconsistent
  - Don’t overreact
  - Monitor overall trend
- Be proactive
- If things are going well remember…
  - Stay engaged
  - Transfer responsibility
  - Notice
  - Celebrate
Remember to...

☐ Love her unconditionally
☐ Have fun
☐ Teach by example
☐ Praise her
☐ Don’t let your fears become her fears
☐ Listen when she speaks
☐ Be aware that ADHD is a chronic condition, requiring monitoring and support when needed
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The Secret Lives of Girls with ADHD. *Attention, 19, 18-20.*