Return to School 2021: Preparing for the Challenges

CHADD Webinar for Educators

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Overview

- Review of the impact of COVID-19 and steps to cope with its appearance on children

  - In general

  - With ADHD, in particular

- Suggested guidelines to be applied individually

Documented Mental Health Issues during COVID

- Increased levels of anxiety with concerns about health and safety, mostly for other family members – especially true for young children

- Increased irritability which impacts and is impacted by sleep

- Reluctance to return to school with increased frequency of separation concerns

- The emotional impact of isolation resulted in increased feelings of loneliness

- Children may have had a reduced sense of purpose and focused on play

  - Reduced opportunity to develop grit and capacity to engage

- Children may have had less practice in problem-solving skills

  - Reduced capacity to interact effectively during good and difficult interactions

- Increased social skills deficits

- Increased negative responses to increased levels of internet use

  - Increased depression and decreased self-esteem

- Increased exposure to violence and increased incidence of abuse

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ADHD and Other Mental Health Trends

- Parent ratings of 241 6 to 15 year olds in China

  - More problems with Attention (55% a little worse or very much worse)

  - More problems in Anger Frequency (75%)

  - More problems Keeping a Routine (55%)

- At increased risk for each of the concerns listed for children in general

  - Children with neurodevelopmental disorders were reported by parents to have a higher prevalence of emotional problems, conduct problems, and reduced prosocial behaviors (UK study)

  - Problems with sleep hygiene

  - Increases in inattention, sluggish cognitive tempo, depression, anxiety, and oppositional responses when in lock-down but lifted with opening up – more problematic if a high level of symptoms and low emotion regulation prior to COVID-19 (US study in 2020)

  - Kids with ADHD that reacting traumatically to COVID and lockdowns (i.e. they experienced intrusive worries and avoided the topic or situations) had increased levels of irritability that contributed to family conflict (Turkish study)

Documented Academic Issues during COVID

Kids in general

- Reductions in growth in math and reading

- Impairments in behaviors required of a receptive learner

- Impairments in organizational skills or trouble adapting to varied demands

Kids afflicted with ADHD

- Further reductions in growth of knowledge, math, and reading

- Increased likelihood of having organization, time management, and planning difficulties

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Learning and Re-Learning Skills

- Behaviors and behavior chains can become tied to specific cues from the environment
  - For example, memory research indicates that learning and recalling information can be tied to a particular location
- This fact can influence, the skills children and teens use for coping with ADHD in the classroom
  - For children starting 2nd grade, they may have not learned how to cope with inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity in a full classroom setting or a classroom setting at all
  - For children and teens, that are older, they may have become well-practiced in coping with these core symptoms during virtual learning, but may have to bring back skills that have become dormant or less fluent

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Online schooling vs In person schooling

- Online schooling

  - Students were often able to set their schedules

  - Students could choose a variety of locations

  - Students received significant parental monitoring and support- child to adult ratio is low

  - Students had limited interaction with peers

  - Students had limited interaction with teachers

- In-person schooling

  - Teachers generally set the schedule

  - Teachers and school demands select the location of the student and the length of time in that location

  - Teachers monitor and support a large number of students – child to adult ratio is high

  - Peer interactions are more frequent

  - Teacher interactions are more frequent

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Both methods and their differences have advantages and disadvantages based upon individual differences

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  - Students could often choose a variety of locations

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  - Students had limited interaction with teachers

  - Students did not have an educational expert guiding all of their school-related activity

- In-person schooling

  - Teachers generally set the schedule

  - Teachers and school demands select the location of the student and the length of time in that location

  - Teachers monitor and support a large number of students – child to adult ratio is high

  - Peer interactions are more frequent

  - Teacher interactions are more frequent

  - Students have an educational expert guiding their school-time activities

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Suggested Guidelines for Educators

- General guidelines

  - Some children afflicted with ADHD will be identified, many will not be

  - As with other children, be on the alert for indications of emotional distress especially anxiety and dysphoria

  - Be prepared for early conduct difficulties

  - Be prepared for early reductions of attention

  - Be prepared for early problems in getting organized and adapting to the school routine

  - Be prepared for social problems

- For administrators:

  - Provide as much guidance and support as possible for teachers

  - Help teachers be primarily educators and monitors of mental and behavioral health

  - Petition for increased mental health support

- For teachers:

  - Use best practices at a high octane level

  - Foster predictable routines and help students get and stay organized

  - Engage in appropriate positive behavior supports

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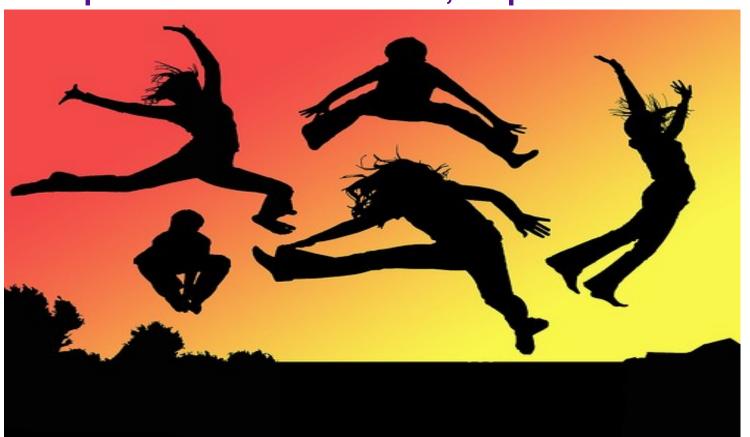# Best Practices for Coping with ADHD

- Attend to the desired responses
  - Prompt them often and praise them often – even in high school
- For problem behaviors fueled by emotional distress (e.g. frustration, anger, anxiety, discouragement)
  - Validate the child for having difficulty
  - And, state expectations for appropriate reactions
- Facilitate an organized classroom
  - Make assignments clear and provide the time for students to record information on the details
  - Provide easy access to instructional materials and materials for assignments
  - Provide students with ideas on the expected amount of time to complete assignments
  - Help students develop a schedule for completing all assignments – coordinate with other teachers
  - Help students develop a plan for responding to long-term projects and test preparation
  - Provide referrals for students that need more support
  - Adhere to the guidelines on evaluations and supports for students with suspected attention disorders provided by the U.S. Department of Education in July, 2016
    - https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201607-504-adhd.pdf

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Resources

- U.S. Department of Education – ED COVID-19 Handbooks
  - Volumes 1, 2, and 3
    - https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening.pdf
    - https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening-2.pdf
    - https://www2.ed.gov/documents/coronavirus/reopening-3.pdf
- UCLA School Mental Health Project
  - http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu
- The Child Study Center at NYU Langone Health
  - COVID-19 resources and 2020 Mental Health Resources for Families
    - https://nyulangone.org/news/covid-19-mental-health-resources-families/covid-19-mental-health-resources-families-2020

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Prepare for the Worst – But, Hope for the Best

Thank you