



STRENGTHS BASED INTERVENTIONS FOR ADHD WITH CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

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ABOUT HOLLY

- 2011: Master of Arts in Marriage and Family Therapy, Southern Nazarene University
- 2014: Licensed Professional Counselor
- 2014-2016: Private Practice—children, adults, couples, families
- 2016: LPC Board Approved Supervisor
- 2016-2021: Director, Deer Creek Public Schools Health and Wellness Program
- 2021-Present: Executive Clinical Director, Renew Counseling Center, Southern Nazarene University



OBJECTIVES FOR TODAY

- Understand ADHD Symptoms
- Understand ADHD Brain (prefrontal cortex)
- Explore life outcomes and prognosis
- Apply Strengths Based Treatment Strategies

SYMPTOMS

- Inattention
 - No attention to details
 - Doesn't follow through with tasks
 - Disorganized
 - Easily distracted
 - Loses things
 - Forgetful

SYMPTOMS

- Hyperactivity
 - Fidgets
 - Leaves seat
 - Runs/climbs inappropriately
 - Talks excessively
 - Blurts/Interrupts
 - "on the go"
 - Difficulty waiting turns

Must interfere with quality of social, academic, or occupational functioning

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE?

- Time Blindness
- Emotional Impulsivity
- Extra Sensitivity
- Difficulty Sustaining Effort
- Disorganization

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING

- Working Memory
- Self-Talk/internalization
- Emotional regulation
- Planning and problem solving

STRENGTHS

- High Energy=Engagement Potential
- Fast Responding=Creativity and Spontaneity
- Novelty Seeking=Innovation

THE ADHD BRAIN

- Prefrontal Cortex! (it's laggy)
 - Planning
 - Inhibition (self control)
 - Decision-making
 - Future thinking

WHAT CAN THIS LAG LOOK LIKE?

- Time-blindness + Impaired self control=

Difficulty linking present behavior to future consequences

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN THE BRAIN?

- Reduced Activation in the Prefrontal Cortex
- Differences in Dopamine Regulation

WHAT DO THOSE FEATURES LOOK LIKE IRL?

- “Knowing vs. Doing Gap”
- Inconsistent Performance (not lack of ability)

SO WHERE DO WE THRIVE?

- Brain—Optimized for “Now-Based” processing
- Also Rapid Response Environments
- Love High Stimulation
- Love Urgency-Driven Contexts

LIFE IMPACT

- Childhood: Academic Problems
- Adolescence: Academic Problems, risk-taking, emotional dysreg.
- Adulthood: Executive Functioning Problems persist

LIFE DOMAINS IMPACTED

- Relationships
 - Impulsivity
 - Emotional Intensity
 - Caregivers often misinterpret as lack of care

LIFE IMPACT

- Mood
 - Increased Risk for:
 - Anxiety
 - Depression

LIFE IMPACT

- Education
 - Underachievement?
 - Intelligence Mismatch?

VOCATION

- Can result in job instability
- Can result in difficulty with routine tasks

LIFE IMPACT

- Can have lower life expectancy (due to risky behaviors)
- Keep in mind—it's functional impairment, not knowledge deficits.

REFRAME—THERE ARE SOME STRENGTHS HERE

- Resilience
- Humor
- Crisis Performance
- Entrepreneurial Thinking

STRENGTHS BASED INTEGRATION

- Distractible → Highly Aware of Environment
- Impulsive → Action Oriented

- Where do we perform best?
- What environments energize you? Go from there!

STRENGTHS BASED INTEGRATION

- Skill Building
 - Time Management
 - Task Initiation
 - Breaking tasks into small steps

WORKING WITH PARENTS AND EDUCATORS

- Present as:
 - Performance disorder (not knowledge deficit)
 - Prefrontal cortex lag (not laziness)

WORKING WITH PARENTS

- We want to coach/educate (not correct)
- “We are co-therapists”
- Why do consequences not work?
- Acknowledge emotional impact on caregivers
- Consistency over Intensity
- Externalize Executive Functioning

WORKING WITH SCHOOLS

- Work to Understand School Lens
- Translate Clinical language to educational language
- What's the difference between an IEP and a 504?



QUESTIONS/COMMENTS?

