Success with Children with ADHD

Katrina Lee Hallmark, Psy.D.
Anna M. Lux, MS, LPC-Intern
San Antonio Counseling
What is ADHD?
What is ADHD?

• Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
  – Inattentive type
  – Hyperactive-impulsive type
  – Combined type
Symptoms

• Inattention. A child may often:
  – Fails to pay close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork
  – Difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play
  – Appears not to listen, even when spoken to directly
  – Have difficulty following through on instructions and fail to finish schoolwork or chores
Symptoms

• Inattention (continued)
  – Have trouble organizing tasks and activities
  – Avoids, dislikes or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require focused mental effort, such as homework
  – Lose items needed for tasks or activities, for example, toys, school assignments, pencils
  – Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
  – Forgetful in daily activities (to do chores)
Symptoms

• Hyperactivity & impulsivity. A child may often
  – Fidget with or tap his or her hands or feet, or
    squirm in the seat
  – Have difficulty staying seated in the classroom
    or in other situations
  – Be on the go, in constant motion
  – Run around or climb in situations when it's not
    appropriate
Symptoms

• Hyperactivity & impulsivity (continued)
  – Have trouble playing or doing an activity quietly
  – Talk too much
  – Blurt out answers, interrupting the questioner
  – Have difficulty waiting for his or her turn
  – Interrupt or intrude on others' conversations, games or activities
Diagnosis

- Medical exam
- Symptom checklists
- Psychological/Neuropsychological assessment
- EEG evaluation
- Effects of medication
Diagnosis

• Symptom checklists:
  – Parents
  – Teachers

• Context:
  – Home
  – School
  – Other
Neuropsychological Evaluation
Rule Out

- Cognitive/Processing Deficits
- Learning Disorders
- Auditory Processing Disorder
- Speech Language Disorder
- Visual Processing Disorder
Brain Characteristics

Normal brain

ADD brain before treatment
Different Pattern Types
ADHD Treatment
Medication
Medication

- Most common form of treatment
- Quick acting compared to other treatments
- Moderate improvements
- Some trial-and-error may be required to find the best medication and dose
Medication

ADD brain before treatment

ADD brain after treatment (Ritalin)
Medication

• Side effects
  – Decreased appetite/weight
  – Sleep problems
  – Can worsen anxiety problems
  – Rare: heart problems with stimulants
  – Rare: suicidal thoughts with antidepressants
Medication

- Difficult decision for many parents
- Weigh the benefits vs. side-effects
- Many side-effects can be managed
- In severe cases, may make other treatments possible
Behavioral Therapy
Behavioral Therapy

- Reinforce desired behaviors
- Coordinate approaches between home and school
- Strategies for impulse control
- Social skills
- Study skills
- Moderate effects
Neurofeedback
Neurofeedback

- Train brainwaves to correct problems
- Target affected area and individual brain characteristics
- Rare side effect: mild temporary headache
- Numerous sessions required (20-40)
- Moderate effect
Parenting Tips and Strategies
For home and school
Basic Principle:

Manage ADHD or it will manage you
Crisis of the day
Frustration & Chaos
Poor Self-Esteem
The ADHD Pyramid
ADHD in Control
Managing ADHD

The ADHD Pyramid

- Cope with upsets
- Manage daily activities
- Foundation of consistency
Consistency

• Consistent bedtimes, waking times
• Consistent limit-setting and discipline
• Consistent rewards for desired behavior
• Consistent attention and affection
• Consistent self-care for YOU!
Nutrition
Nutrition

- Adequate protein at all meals and snacks
- Moderate amounts of carbs
- Fish oil/omega 3
- Limit unhealthy fats
After School
After School

- Allow favorite activities as an after school buffer (15-30 minutes)
- Encourage exercise/play vs. screens
- Use screen time as a reward (brief)
- Keep a schedule
- Maintain bedtime ritual
Exercise

- Vital as part of school day
- Daily
- Huffing-and-puffing exercise (cardio)
- Opportunity to let it all out
Homework

- Avoid power struggles
  - Communicate clear expectations of time and rewards
  - Redirect power struggles
  - Firm limits
- Regular breaks—allow brief activities as a reward
- Limit the time, even if not completed
Family Dynamics

- Parents on same page
- Model mature resolution of disagreements
- Generous portions of love and respect
- Avoid exposing children to parental conflict
  - Grown ups can delay arguments to a more appropriate time
  - Behind closed doors; out of earshot
Harmful Parental Conflict
Harmful Parental Conflict

- Frequent
- Heated and hostile
- Verbal insults and raised voices
- Physically aggressive
- Withdrawal and silent treatment
- Threatens the family unit
- When it is about the child

Institute for Family Studies, ifstudies.org
Parental Conflict Effects
Parental Conflict Effects

- As early at 6 months
- Fear, anxiety and sadness
- Health problems
- Disturbed sleep
- Concentration problems
- Acting out: aggression, rule-breaking
- Depression
- Cognitive delays
Challenges
Challenges

• Parenting a child with ADHD is hard
• You will not always handle it well
• There will be days when you just have to make the best of it and hope tomorrow is a better day.
• Managing ADHD is a step-by-step, day-by-day, little-by-little process
Challenges

• The challenge of changing your own behavior
• ADHD is highly genetic. Are you ADHD?
• Managing your own frustrations
• Getting help when you need it
• Cultivate a support network
• Going to bat for your child’s needs for reasonable accommodation
Just remember . . .
Love Prevails!