AFTER THE DIAGNOSIS...
EMBARKING ON THE JOURNEY OF ADHD
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A word about me... and a thank you to you
■ Pediatrician in practice in Ottawa for the last 16 years
■ Focused area of practice in children and youth’s mental health and neurodevelopmental disorders (ADHD, Tourette syndrome, Autism, Anxiety, Depression etc.)
■ I have participated in over 10 research trials for medications to treat ADHD
■ I have had the privilege to speak around the world about ADHD ... and learn from my colleagues around the world
■ But most importantly, I have had 20 years of experience learning from children, adolescents and parents... I may have the medical knowledge but my patient’s teach me the most

ADHD.... the misperception
■ It is a fake condition
■ It is “just” bad behavior
■ Hyperactive kids
■ The teachers just want a quiet kid
■ “If only the parents would control their kids”

Unpacking the suitcase...
...there is so much more than meets the eye

What is ADHD: the medical diagnosis perspective
a lifelong neurobiological condition
1. Symptom criteria must be present x 6 months
2. Some symptoms present before 12 years old
3. Impairment from symptoms must be present in 2 or more settings (e.g. school, home, work)
4. The symptoms lead to significant impairment: social, academic or occupational
5. Symptoms are not due to another disorder

What is ADHD: a lifelong neurobiological condition

Symptoms of ADHD
- Inattention to details/careless mistakes
- Difficulty sustaining attention
- Seems not to listen
- Fails to finish tasks
- Difficulty organizing
- Avoided or requiring extended attention
- Loses things
- Easily distracted
- Forgetful
- Blurs out answers before question is finished
- Difficult avoiding turn
- Interrupts or intrudes on others
What is ADHD: the patient perspective

So much more

SO WHY ARE THERE SO MANY DIFFERENT PRESENTATIONS OF ADHD?

No one size fits all....

18 possible symptoms = over 116,000 different possible combinations of symptoms

And it Changes with Age:

A more clear way of understanding ADHD

- It doesn’t mean that you can’t focus OR that you are hyper
- ADHD means you have a hard time shifting, maintain and controlling attention, impulses and emotion because the part of the brain that handles self-regulation is wired differently
Understanding what ADHD is...

- Hyper-focused – can’t shift, rigidity in thinking
- Gears can’t stop turning – distracted, unable to focus
- Blurt out things – can’t control physical impulses
- “Freak out” – emotional impulsivity

Increased risk of addiction
2.5 times increased risk of problematic internet use

Underperformance at school or work
Social skill deficit
Developmental Coordination Disorder
Anxiety disorders
ODD
Depression
Autism spectrum disorder
Learning disability

SO HOW DO YOU EMBARK ON THIS JOURNEY?

1. Parent education
2. Be the expert on your child
3. Become your child’s advocate
4. Be a positive role model
5. Be patient
6. Find your child’s island of competence
7. Give unconditional love
8. Teach self-awareness
9. Teach resilience
10. Don’t be afraid to ask for help

Make a Plan – what can I do to help my child who has ADHD?

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Parent education

**DO**
- Learn about ADHD
  - Ask your doctor what ADHD is
  - READ
    - Attention Difference Disorder by Dr. K. Handleman
    - Taking Charge of ADHD by Dr. Barkley
    - My Brain Needs Glasses and My Brain Still Needs Glasses by Dr. A. Vincent
    - Fictional books: Focused add author
- Find reliable sources
- Reflect on your child's presentation of ADHD

**DON'T**
- Believe everything you read on the internet or the media
  - But do ask questions to reliable sources if you are wondering
- Listen to naysayers who try to blame you
  - But do be an "upstander" for your child - don't let him/her be bullied by society

Parenting programs work... but they work more often and better if there is an understanding of ADHD
- Triple P parenting
- 1-2-3 Magic
- Collaborative Problem Solving Approach
- Parent Management Training

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Be an expert on your child
- Reflect on how your child's ADHD symptoms present
- Try to understand the source of their actions
- Understand what they need help developing

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Become your child's
- Advocacy means
  - setting your child up for success
  - Helping others understand your child
- Advocacy doesn't mean doing everything for your child
- Advocate at:
  - School
  - Extra-curricular events

FAMILY LIFE

You Are the Expert On Your Child

Why Advocate?
"Unless someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not." - Dr. Seuss, The Lorax
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Process of parenting is to cause slight mismatches, so the child's abilities improve over time.

Child's Ability ≤ Expectations

- A child who never fails won’t have the opportunity to learn from that failure.
- You are not doing your child a favour by protecting them from ALL failures.
- Celebrate success and learn from failures but most of all... celebrate your child’s resilience to get up and try again.
  - Your child learning what they need to be successful will help them advocate for themselves.

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BACK TO WHAT DOES MY CHILD’S ADHD LOOK LIKE?

A word on the village...

- Books and resources
  - Executive function skill building - PLANNER – Smart but Scattered
  - Tutor
- Social skills programs
  - LDAO summer camp – Sunshine day camp & a number of other sleep away camps
  - Evening and weekend programs (EB building blocks and Steps and Strides)
- School - help your teacher understand your child - do a 1 page summary - strengths, areas of interest and challenges AND what works
Thank you