

ADHD

Parent Readiness Education Program (PREP)

CADDAC

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Emotional Dysregulation



ADHD and Emotional Dysregulation

- ▶ Emotional regulation impairment is a core symptom of ADHD - traced back to Crichton 1798
- ▶ Not included in DSM possibly because it is difficult to quantify on rating scales
- ▶ Executive Functioning impairments greatly contribute to issues with emotional regulation
- ▶ Expressions are less moderated
- ▶ Expression of negative emotions are socially very costly – social issues and less friends are not due to inattention
- ▶ Impairments do not differ with ADHD subtype or presence of ODD



Symptoms of Emotion Regulation Impairment

- ▷ Feelings are normal, but regulation of emotion is not
- ▷ Therefore, expression of emotions are greater because the child is unable to moderate them
- ▷ Greater excitability
- ▷ Lower frustration tolerance and less able to cope when frustrated
- ▷ Quick to anger
- ▷ Less inhibition in expressing emotions
- ▷ Unable to control behaviour with strong emotions
- ▷ Inflexible – concrete thinking
- ▷ Slow return to emotional calm
- ▷ Motivation is regulated by emotional regulation



How Does this Differ from a Mood Disorder?

ADHD

- ▷ Emotions expressed are rational and understandable when examined, but are not being moderated or inhibited
- ▷ Emotions are provoked by an incident

Mood Disorder

- ▷ Emotions are irrational and excessive
- ▷ Emotions are not provoked by an event and are very out of context



Emotions

Four stages of Emotion

1. Situation →
2. Attention – paid to the event →
3. Appraisal – positive or negative →
4. Response – to the event

- ▷ These steps occur in rapid succession
- ▷ The person has a choice to shorten or lengthen duration of emotion
- ▷ Self soothing decreases intensity of emotions



Steps to Emotional Regulation

Four steps to Emotional Regulation

1. Inhibit inappropriate behaviour to a strong emotional response
2. Self Soothe – to decrease strong negative emotions
3. Refocus Attention – away from event
4. Organize emotions to serve long term goals / moderate emotions to be more socially acceptable



Impaired Emotional Regulation in Children With ADHD

Children, adolescents and adults with ADHD are impaired in all 4 steps

Step 1

- ▷ Unable to inhibit strong response + impulsive

Step 2

- ▷ Difficulty in moderating emotions, unable to self sooth to decrease strong negative emotions, or replace with positive emotions

Step 3

- ▷ Find it more difficult to leave a situation or distract themselves from the emotion

Step 4

- ▷ Harder to appraise the situation and appropriateness of emotions
- ▷ More difficulty in using long term goals to regulate emotions into socially acceptable ways of expression –socially costly in long term



EF and Emotional Regulation Fuel Tank

- ▶ Child only has a limited amount of control of EF and ER (think of a fuel tank) (R. Barkley)
- ▶ The longer EF skills are needed the more they become depleted and the less accessible
- ▶ If children are placed into an environment where regulation of emotions are required for long periods their skills will deplete
- ▶ Once depleted one finale thing even though minor may illicit a meltdown



Ways to Replenish the Fuel Tank

- ▷ Immediate and greater rewards to illicit positive feelings
- ▷ Pep talks by others and positive self talk
- ▷ Frequent breaks – 10 minute on and 3 minute break
- ▷ 3 minutes of relaxation exercise
- ▷ Visualization of goals
- ▷ Routine physical exercise
- ▷ Glucose ingestion – sports drink



Strategies to deal with Emotions

Proactive

- ▷ Keep child away from situations where they feel strong emotions
- ▷ If the child has to be in a situation where a particular person or thing annoys them, sit them in a different place or teach them to look away from the person

Reactive – not very effective

- ▷ Teach child to distract self, questions whether the situation is important enough to lose control, suppress emotions
- ▷ The earlier in the sequence the better



Steps to Developing Individualized Strategies

- ▶ Use the Behaviour Chart to help flag triggers
- ▶ Then look at what impairments might be causing those triggers
- ▶ Question whether expectations are reasonable and decrease if required
- ▶ Once impairments and triggers are apparent implement individualized strategies
- ▶ Review success of strategies and change when required – several may need to be tried



Using a Behaviour Tracking Chart

Using a Behaviour Tracking Chart (Revised ABC Chart)

If your child is having frequent “meltdowns” or exhibiting behaviours that are puzzling using this type of chart can be beneficial to pinpoint what situations or impairments may be triggering the behaviour.

Steps

- ▷ Record the date, time and place that this occurred and what the child was engaged in doing at the time.
- ▷ Record what happened right before the behaviour being recorded occurred (Antecedent)
- ▷ Record exactly what the behaviour looked like (Behaviour)
- ▷ Record what those around the child did, what happened as a result of, and/or what the child did right after the behaviour (Consequence)



CADDAC ABC Behavioural Chart

Date and Time	What occurred before the event - trigger?	What was the child's exact behaviour?	What was the parental or educator response?	What was the child's response to this action?



Questions to ASK

- ▷ Has the child been triggered by a specific incident?
- ▷ Is the child reacting to frustration?
- ▷ Does the child feel that they are not being heard?
- ▷ Do they have a “meltdown” when their fuel tank becomes depleted?
- ▷ Are they being asked to behave or do a task that is beyond them?
- ▷ Are they trying to avoid certain tasks that require EF skills that they lack?
- ▷ Which EF impairments are in play when these behaviours occur?
- ▷ Are their emotional regulation impairments being challenged?
- ▷ Is something in the environment triggering sensitivities?



More Questions to ASK

- ▶ How can the child's environment be changed to avoid triggers?
- ▶ What is causing the frustration? Can we reduce it or assist them to deal with it?
- ▶ What accommodations can we put in place to assist with impairments?
- ▶ Can we assist the child to adequately express themselves?
- ▶ How can we replenish their fuel tank or avoid depleting it?
- ▶ Can we decrease the load on the attention or EF skills?
- ▶ Can we put accommodations in place to assist with impairments?
- ▶ Can we assist the child with their self and emotional regulation?



References

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- Smoot DL, Understanding Oppositional- Defiant Disorder, http://www.smootpsych.com/uploads/2/9/0/6/2906704/od_d.pdf
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