

# ADHD Parent Readiness Education Program (PREP)

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# ADHD and Parents

- ▷ Accepting the Disorder
- ▷ Impact on the Parents

# ACCEPTING THE DISORDER



## Stages of Acceptance of the Disorder

- ▷ Parents will likely go through emotional stages after hearing a diagnosis – similar to the stages of grief
- ▷ This is totally acceptable and expected

### Some Stages:

- ▷ Disbelief, denial and confusion
- ▷ Disappointment, anger and fear
- ▷ Bargaining
- ▷ Guilt, powerlessness, depression
- ▷ Relief and Acceptance
- ▷ Stages may not all occur, be in a particular order, or occur at the same level of intensity



## Disbelief, Denial, Questioning and Confusion

- ▷ Disbelief and Denial - “There is nothing wrong with my child” and/or “This disorder is not real”
- ▷ A parent may relate too closely with the child due to their own symptoms “Chip off the of block?”
- ▷ Blaming Others - “It is due to my spouse’s inadequate parenting or the lazy teacher”
- ▷ Confusion – a parent may be very confused, wonder how their bright child can have a disorder, have lots of questions but be afraid of challenging the doctor
- ▷ Questions and expression of dismay and disbelief are normal and should be encouraged



# Disappointment, Anger, Fear

- ▷ All parents have dreams for their children, this may make them feel that their dreams have died – “Welcome to Holland” – need not be the case
- ▷ Anger can be directed at many sources, medical staff, teachers, spouse and child – channel into advocacy
- ▷ Blaming self – more often mothers or spouse who also has ADHD – channel into advocacy
- ▷ Fear can often be masked as anger – parents concern for their children’s happiness and success can easily turn into fear when exposed to negative comments and statistics



# Bargaining

- ▷ This stage may or may not occur depending on the resistance to the diagnosis
- ▷ Often seen in attempts to just try harder as parents or make the teacher's change what they are doing
- ▷ Caution - parents who feel that they simply need to be stricter on the child could lead to abusive situation
- ▷ This can also be seen as a parent trying any and all types of therapy or treatment even if not supported by scientific data – the search for the “magic pill” or treatment that will just make this go away.



# Guilt, Helplessness, Depression

- ▷ Parents may feel guilty that they did not spot something earlier
- ▷ Guilt at the past way they handled situations
- ▷ Guilt on passing on the disorder
- ▷ May feel powerless especially if the child is old enough to deny the ADHD and not buy into treatment
- ▷ Powerless to advocate for child if other family members and /or the school does not understand
- ▷ Maternal depression common
- ▷ May start to feel that the situation is hopeless
- ▷ May be unsupported by spouse or extended family





# Relief and Acceptance

- ▷ Parent(s) might feel relieved immediately if they have worked through some stages prior to the diagnosis
- ▷ They may have known there was an issue for some time and now feel relieved that they have an answer
- ▷ True acceptance of the disorder has to also include hope for the future
- ▷ Most parents need to be educated about ADHD before true acceptance and understating occurs
- ▷ Next steps – how to move forward – implement strategies and accommodations at home and school and improve family functioning



# Group Discussion

Have you experienced any of these emotions?

What stage do you think you are currently in?

- ▷ Disbelief
- ▷ Denial
- ▷ Confusion
- ▷ Fear and Anger
- ▷ Guilt
- ▷ Bargaining
- ▷ Helplessness and depression
- ▷ Parents who are at two different levels

# IMPACT ON THE PARENTS



## Impact on Parents

- ▷ More stress on parents and between spouses
- ▷ Disagree on diagnosis, treatment and parenting
- ▷ This leads to inconsistent parenting
- ▷ More discord than families with learning disorders even when ODD is taken out of the equation
- ▷ Less family and marital satisfaction especially for spouse with ADHD
- ▷ Family, friends and even strangers give unsolicited advise and judge parenting and treatment decisions
- ▷ May feel the stigma of their child having a disorder



## Additional Stressors

- ▷ Child's mood dysregulation - more moody & irritable can be stressful for parents
- ▷ ODD is particularly stressful for parents
- ▷ Doubt their parenting
- ▷ There may be increased financial stress if mother cannot work due to school or behavioural issues



# School Related Parental Stress

- ▶ Continuous calls from the school
- ▶ Adversarial rather than team approach
- ▶ School blaming the parents for lax or bad parenting
- ▶ Educators lack of knowledge about ADHD
- ▶ Educators lack of good proactive school strategies
- ▶ This can result in reactive punitive strategies that do not work
- ▶ Wrong rather than right medical labelling of the child by educators, classmates and their parents
- ▶ School using consequences such as sending the child home, excluding their participation in class trips or social events



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# ADHD THE CHILDREN AND FAMILY

Impact on the Child

Impact on the Siblings

Impact on Family Functioning



# Impact on the Child Preschool to Adolescence



# Preschool Years

- ▶ Even though high levels of activity and impulsiveness common at this age children with ADHD can still be recognized
- ▶ These children are perceived as difficult to control
- ▶ Delayed development, increased activity, and poor social skills
- ▶ Out of their seats more, wandering, talkative, noisy and disruptive
- ▶ ADHD seen at this age tends to remain chronic and severe
- ▶ Girls had more severe symptoms of inattention, but also showed a steeper decline when treated
- ▶ Stress in parents already begins to show



## Primary School Years

- ▷ Stand out from peers in academic functioning
- ▷ Often rejected by their peers
- ▷ Poor self esteem becomes evident
- ▷ Comorbid disorders may become apparent
- ▷ Sleep issues can become more apparent and decrease behavioural functioning during the day
- ▷ This is the age when most assessments occur
- ▷ Family functioning issues become evident



# ADHD in Adolescents

- ▷ Outward activity may decrease and move inward
- ▷ Due to increased demand on attention and EF skills milder cases of ADHD may now become apparent
- ▷ Issues with peer group may become a concern at this time
- ▷ Issues with driving become an issue at this age
- ▷ Abuse of substances can become an issue
- ▷ Aggressive and antisocial behavior may develop especially if ODD present



# Impact on the Child

- ▷ Negative messages, unfair labeling and lack of academic success leads to low self esteem
- ▷ Sometimes the child will take on the role of the class clown or “bad” child rather than being seen as stupid
- ▷ Children may be isolated with few or no friends and excluded from social functions and sports teams
- ▷ Children may be drawn to a poor peer group to gain acceptance
- ▷ Children may develop coexisting disorders especially if ADHD has gone untreated
- ▷ Children may self medicate when older



# Working with Children with ADHD

- ▷ Inform children about their ADHD – Or others will
- ▷ Educate children about ADHD, EF and how it impacts them
- ▷ Do not expect these children to fix themselves
- ▷ Avoid sending a message of “If you only tried harder”
- ▷ Do not lower standards – kids with ADHD can be successful
- ▷ Try and involve children and adolescents in extracurricular activities they can succeed in - boosts their self esteem
- ▷ Focus on the positive to help boost self esteem
- ▷ Don't rely on medication to be the “cure all” and don't give the child the message that the pills will fix everything
- ▷ Focus on EF impairments, teaching them, practicing them, and putting external reminders in place



# Group Discussion

- ▷ Have you informed your child about ADHD and how was this done?
- ▷ What was the outcome?
- ▷ How might you shield your child from negative messages?
- ▷ How have you been able to help to bolster their child's self esteem?
- ▷ What could your school do to assist with this?
- ▷ What strategies could you use to increase the inclusion of the child in social and recreational activities?
- ▷ What can you as a parent do to prevent a child engaging in a poor peer group?

# Impact on Siblings





# Impact on Siblings

- ▷ They may become a victim of their sibling's aggression and temper
- ▷ Their needs receive less attention
- ▷ May be asked to become a care taker of their sibling
- ▷ They have more sadness, worry and anxiety
- ▷ They may be embarrassed by their sibling's behavior or lack of academic success
- ▷ They may feel stigmatized by other's judgment of ADHD
- ▷ This may impact their friendships and functioning
- ▷ May be torn between loving sibling and resenting them



# Group Discussion

- ▷ How have you dealt with the resentment of the child with ADHD by the non-ADHD child – how might we model empathy?
- ▷ How might siblings be included in the process, learning and treatment in a positive way?

# Impact on Family Functioning



## Impact of ADHD on Family Functioning

**Child, parents and siblings are all under more stress for the same or different reasons**

- ▷ More parent / child conflict
- ▷ Increased sibling conflict
- ▷ Increase of child non compliance
- ▷ Need for more specialized parenting
- ▷ More likely that one or both parents have ADHD which further complicates parent/Child interaction

### **Coping Strategies**

- ▷ The feeling of lack of control of the stressors increases stress
- ▷ Knowing that they have coping strategies can reduce stress



## Long Term Family Consequences

- ▷ Chronic Disability – no respite
- ▷ Increased maternal depression and other mental health problems including alcohol abuse – Why?
- ▷ Increased divorce and family breakups – Why?
- ▷ Increased runaways
- ▷ Family can become isolated due to stigma of child's behaviour and lack of understanding
- ▷ Extended family may need to be educated to decrease judgement and build support



# Group Discussion

- ▷ What do you and your family find the most stressful?
- ▷ Is your family experiencing isolation?
- ▷ Does your family have a support system in place?
- ▷ Do you as a parent get periods of respite?



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