**Transforming Behavior**

**by Exploring the Mind of a Child With ADHD**

*Presented by Katelyn Mabry~ Author of the children’s book, “Hi, It’s Me! I have ADHD,” Early Childhood Educator, and Reading Specialist*

***“A child is like a butterfly in the wind.***

***Some can fly higher than others, but each one flies the best it can.***

***Why compare one against the other?***

***Each one is different. Each one is special. Each one is beautiful!” ~Anonomous***

**Fact #1: 5-11% of children ages 4-17 are diagnosed with ADHD**

* **13.2% of boys are more likely then 5.6% of girls to be diagnosed**
* **Often girls go undiagnosed until adulthood due to symptoms being misunderstood**

**Fact #2: ADHD demonstrates itself on a spectrum of mild to severe and can present either impulse control and hyperactivity, attention struggles, or a combination of both. It is a developmental delay/difference in how our brains are wired…**

**Fact #3: The ADHD brain functions differently and “Executive Function” is highly affected.**

* **Children on average are 3-5 yrs. behind in different areas of executive function. ~Thomas E. Brown, Ph.D.**
* **“The way I describe it is like having a Ferrari for a brain, but with bicycle breaks!” ~Dr. Hollowell**

**Fact #4: Children with ADHD struggle with Emotional Dysregulation and maintaining relationships due to misinterpreted or negative interactions with others.**

**Fact #5: ADHD does not equal bad parenting or teaching…children with ADHD are on average highly intelligent, but**

**simply struggle with demonstrating “negative behaviors” due to the way their brain works…How can we help?!**

**“The best thing I ever did was welcome ADHD into our relationship as a friend!”**

**\*Get to know it \*Learn the struggles \*Identify the strengths \*Love it**

**Find the student’s “Hyperfocus” and channel it!**

* **Interest inventories/interview**
* **When a child is visibly struggling with a concept, incorporate interest to teach the skill at hand.**
* **Help student identify their “hyperfocus” so they can learn to utilize this super power when possible!**

**What are Executive Functions**? The Processes of the brain, including higher-level thinking and behavior, that are affected by ADHD. Children who struggle generally need training in how to plan, predict and self-monitor.

**Children with ADHD have delays in one or more of these areas and the struggle may look something like this…**

**Attention Control:**

**Difficulty differentiating what to pay attention to and what to ignore**

**How can we help:**

* Acknowledge the struggle and love them through it.
* Give grace in the moment and the gift of reminders and tools for success.
	+ - Build curiosity
		- Ask questions
		- Identify learning styles and adjust activities accordingly
		- Create emotional attachments

**Cognitive Inhibition: Struggles to tune out stimuli that is irrelevant**

**to the task at hand.**

* Struggles with mood regulation
* **(i.e. experience sudden high anxiety with high levels of stimuli)**
* Perseverative negative thoughts
* **(i.e. “What is wrong with me?! Why can’t I do this?! I hate myself,” etc.)**
* Struggles with completing schoolwork at home
* Struggles with completing in-class work independently due to the inability to tune out stimuli. **We can help by…**

**developing coping methods with each child:**

**B**eaware of needs

* + - * Fidgets, weighted vest, chew necklace, doodles to focus, kinesthetic learning, etc.

**B**reaks from Busyness

**B**reaths to calm body and mind

**B**lanket mind with positive thoughts

**Inhibitory Control:**

**Inability to control or stop an impulsive reaction to an activity or responding to others.**

When a child with ADHD displays an impulsive behavior, how do you respond?

**Some food for thought…**

**Direction vs. Discipline-** Although discipline is necessary at times; be mindful of responding vs. reacting to behaviors.

**Verbalize**…” I see in you” statements that speak to the child and not the behavior…

**Remember**…They beat themselves up internally more then you know!

**Verbalize**…” How can I help” so that they feel you are on the same team of toward growth.

**Remember**…They often feel as though something is “wrong with them” and that they don’t know how to ask for help.

**Develop an active classroom for the active brain:**

**Schedule exercise breaks into your daily routine...**

* Begin the day with stretching/movement, mid-day dance party, and end the day with a yoga session!

**Be mindful of student’s exercise needs…**

* Consider time of day, type of exercise and change it up to keep child’s interest



**Working Memory:**

**Children with ADHD are…**

* *4x more likely to struggle with working memory then a typical child.*
* *Given information that gets disorganized or lost in the process.*
* *Losing information before being able to use it.*

**Struggles to retain information given and therefore appear forgetful**

* + - * Help them create a place for everything.
			* Create an individual checklist for the student to use during the scheduled day. Use images and/or words.
			* Have the student repeat what the expectation is…

**Cognitive Flexibility:**

**The brain struggles to transition from thinking about one concept to another.**

* **Task Switching**: Unconsciously switching from one task to another…
	+ - Often, when children with ADHD are asked to think about more than one concept, they tend to shut down.
* **Cognitive Shifting**: Consciously shifting from one task to another.
	+ -  Many children with ADHD are unable to shift gears to complete a cognitive task presented in different ways.

**Emotional Dysregulation-**

**Struggles to regulate emotions at an age appropriate level**

* Children with ADHD are often hyper-emotional and struggle with the act of controlling how they feel.
	+ - They don’t feel different emotions then peers, only more heightened emotions, with more intensity.
* Mood swings often take on another diagnosis but are simply a symptom of ADHD.

**The Relationship Struggle: Building Lasting Friendships**

**We need to…**

* Educate students on mental and emotional differences…
* Empower students to unconditionally value friendships…
* Encourage students to connect to the similarities they see in peers and give grace to the challenges…

**Questions?**

**Tips while teaching a child with ADHD…**

**B**e flexible with lessons

**E**ncourage curiosity

**A**dvocate for students when they need assignments adjusted

**W**arm up the student to complex concepts (break into pieces)

**A**lways engage students in taking risks during learning

**R**emind students that using their imagination will exercise their brain

**E**ducate peers that every child is unique and has different learning needs.

**Here is a fun acrostic poem that has homework tips for parents of children who are diagnosed with ADHD…**

**A**lways plan a study schedule so they know what to expect

**D**etermine best time of day to study

**H**ave breaks implemented early and often

**D**evelop ways to include your child’s strengths and interests

**I**ncorporate fun and words of affirmation for working so hard

**S**tudy with them at using a variety of methods until the concept sticks

**A**n acronym can be used to help remember the tough stuff

**G**ive tips on how to find answers in a storybook/textbook

**I**llustrate the use of color coding to recall different concepts

**F**orm a fun practice test after studying

**T**ake time to praise the study efforts of your child!