LD/ADHD and Anxiety

It’s time to get help when a child begins to avoid daily activities, withdraws socially or otherwise limits his or her life.
Processing Deficits

- Make the environment feel overwhelming
- The unfamiliar can be a nightmare
- Abrupt changes leads to too anxious feelings: too much noise, feeling of being trapped, panic
- Anticipation of the worst
- Withdraw mentally due to fear of failure and inconsistent performance
NEUROTRANSMITTERS: EMOTIONAL SYSTEM IN TURMOIL

• Cortisol is produced during stress
• “Fight or Flight” response
• Excessive amounts of cortisol when a child is stressed many related to increased depression or anxiety
• The body can be both relaxed and tense at the same time
Dealing with Anxiety

- Reframe negative thoughts
- Work to enhance self-esteem and mastery
- Not every child with LD will automatically experience anxiety
- Children who face daily frustrations and failures would be most likely to worry

- Unrelenting state of worry
- Panic attacks
- Sudden bursts of fear
- Thoughts of going crazy
- Increased heart rates
- Shaking
- Stomach or chest pains
- Avoidance
The anxiety of not being able to keep up

Early childhood

* Students reported feeling “stupid” and like “damaged goods”
* No longer the sparkle in his parents eyes
* Compares to others: anxiety of feeling different
* Minimum coping skills
* Limited means of dealing with stress

Parent’s anxiety

* Not certain of extent of learning disability
* School phobia; separation anxiety
* The stress of having a learning disability is the worst in elementary school
* Becomes less stressful as they move beyond elementary school
* Teasing and victimization
Can evolve into depressive symptomology

- Chronically anxious, cannot feel good about tackling the day
- Withdrawal
- Anger/Externalize blame
- Bullying others/fights
- Child feels incompetent
- Can even blame parents
DEVELOP PERSISTANCE

- Help to identify small, concrete steps to reach learning goals
- Recognize accomplishments along the way
- Motivate from the inside out by encouraging self-sufficiency
- Success is 1% inspiration, 99% perspiration
- Accept, connect and support no matter what
Parents, not peers, are the number one influence in the lives of their children

Researchers at the University of Minnesota found that parents contributed the most toward decisions that their children made about whether to take drugs and have sex

The relationships with parents are the best indicators of the decisions that will be made

Children need to feel connected to their peers
Self-esteem

- Self-concept is neutral
- Implies what one thinks about oneself
- It is what one learns about his/her gifts from other people

- Self-esteem implies confidence and satisfaction in oneself
- It is a good opinion of oneself
- “I measure up in the areas that matter most to me”
Self esteem stems from a sense of belonging-connectedness with one’s peers

- Sons and daughters are more than a diagnosis or a label
- They are an amalgamation of many characteristics and gifts
- A diagnosis does not define the entire individual
Loss of self-efficacy for learning results in problems

- Poor Academic Achievement
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alienation
- Rebellion
Other conditions resulting in poor academic performance

- ADHD
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- Anger Management
- Executive Functioning Deficits
False Praise

* Children need encouragement, not false praise
* Toddlers are testers of our responses
* Encouragement for evolutionary progress, not revolutionary
* Content specific, not evaluative: “You did this so well. Now try this...”
* They require parental support as they mature through each developmental phase- physical and psychological
* They need to know what parents really think
Low self-esteem: feeling inadequate

- Seven in ten girls believe that they are not good enough or do not measure up
- A girl’s self-esteem is more strongly related to how she views her own body shape and body weight than how much she actually weighs
- One of the main factors in teen promiscuity is self-esteem
- Current research suggests that boys are experiencing an increase in body dysmorphia
- Boys tend to act out with negative behaviors - externalize
- Girls manifest higher rates of depression and anxiety - internalize
Evidence of low self-esteem

- Low tolerance for frustration
- Reluctance to try new things
- Self-critical and irritable to others
- Fear of failure
- Not abnormal to experience short periods of being down in the dumps
- Overly concerned with perfectionism and not feeling adequate to live up to expectations
Girls are outperforming boys in all subjects except math and science; they are closing the gap

There has been a steady 25-year decline in boys’ participation in extracurricular activities; girls do not want to disappoint

For every 100 girls with learning disabilities, there are 276 boys

For every 100 women graduating college, there are 77 men
MASTERY-ORIENTED PARENTING: AVOID CO-DEPENDENCE

- Foster an internal locus of control
- Adopt an incremental view of success, praise effort
- Recognize that ability is changeable depending on how hard the individual is willing to work
- Help them thrive on the challenge itself
- Teach them to endure setbacks
- Build resilience
- Recognize your child’s learning curve (ADHD/LD)
External v Internal Locus of Control: Faulty Messages

- Ability is predetermined
- Performance-centered in goals
- Often gauge success by materialistic measures
- “Have-it-all” image
Positive Messages

* **Messages to Avoid:**
  * You must be smart!
  * Did you win?
  * Success at all costs!
  * You are only as good as your last success!

* **Messages to Instill:**
  * You are a quality person of integrity!
  * You conducted yourself with honesty!
  * You were compassionate and respectful!
Two influences on self-esteem

Competency in a specific area

* Areas one values in which one is skilled
* Area in which one desires to perfect ability
* Area in which one discovers enjoyment

Positive social feedback

* Children need positive social acceptance, but they should not become dependent upon others for validation and self-worth
* Positive internal values reinforce self-esteem
An increasing number of teachers are weaning themselves away from empty praise—focus on effort.

A growing body of research shows that easy, unearned praise does not help students but interferes with learning opportunities.

New buzzwords: persistence, risk-taking, and resilience.

This implies more sweat and stain than fuzzy, warm feelings.

High self-esteem does not always equal achievement.
Alfie Kohn: “Punished by Rewards”

* Most praise encourages children to be “praise junkies”
* Children become dependent on outside feedback rather than cultivating their own judgment
* U.S. student’s were more likely than higher performing students from other countries to report that they “usually do well in mathematics”
* Praise should be directed to encourage effort
* Learning from mistakes in the classroom- makes way for invention, creativity, and resilience
FOSTERING RESILIENCY

* Allow children to analyze their thoughts and behaviors in order to form an identity

* Youth should not be permitted to swallow someone else’s ideas whole

* The fastest answer isn’t always the best answer- a mistake-free paper isn’t always the best paper
Self-esteem and self-efficacy are enhanced when children are mastery-oriented.

An internal locus of control is present.

Adolescents have room to explore values and master their own family values that are clearly taught to them.

Sensitive and Structured Approach

- Build task motivation by interspersing work and play periods
- Offer choices to the extent possible: autonomy is motivating
- Find the sparks, passions
- Temper the use of technology and social media
What constitutes successful, emotionally competent students?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal Setting</td>
<td>Optimistic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Competence</th>
<th>Social Competence</th>
<th>Self-Regulation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-awareness</td>
<td>Conflict management</td>
<td>Anger Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiative</td>
<td>Empathy</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>