

Shining with ADHD by The Childhood Collective

Episode #189: Overcoming Resistance: Helping Kids with ADHD Accept Support

Mallory: Communicate to your child that these supports are not set in stone. This is a fluid process, nothing is forever. As Lori was just saying, we want to know how you're feeling. We want to know how things are going, if this is helping you.

Katie: Hi there. We are The Childhood Collective, and we have helped thousands of overwhelmed parents find joy and confidence in raising their child with ADHD. I'm Katie, a speech language pathologist.

Lori: And I'm Lori.

Mallory: And I'm Mallory. And we're both child psychologists.

Lori: As busy mamas ourselves, we are on a mission to support ADHD parents on this beautiful and chaotic parenting journey.

Mallory: If you are looking for honest ADHD parenting stories, a dose of empathy with a side of humor and practical tools, you are in the right place.

Katie: Let's help your family shine with ADHD.

Mallory: Before we jump into this very requested topic today, I want to drop in with a quick request for podcast reviews. If you're loving the Shining with ADHD podcast, will you please take a moment to leave us a review wherever you listen? Reviews are the best, best way for us to grow the podcast and release weekly episodes. So, while we kindly request and accept your reviews, let's talk about how to get our kids to request and accept help when they need it.

Katie: Yes. Okay, so this is actually a really common DM or email that we get from parents, and they say something like, okay, we set up a plan for my child at school, but is refusing the extra help or accommodations that the teachers are trying to give him. Or they might say something like, our doctor prescribed this specific medication for my child, but they are refusing to take it each morning.

Lori: Yeah. It's so, so hard for parents and we know that you are advocating and you're doing all this work to get your child the help and support that they need. And so, when you hit this roadblock of your kiddo not wanting to do it or not follow through on it, or not wanting to accept the help, it can be just really frustrating.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think this gets even more challenging as our kids get older because they become a little bit more socially aware. There's more social pressure to kind of fit in, not to stand out. And I think that there's many kids who have some very valid concerns about getting the extra help and we have to kind of step into the position of helping them work through that.

Katie: Yes. Which is, that can be a really, really tough spot. So today we're going to talk through some strategies that you can use to get your child to accept support. Maybe you're trying to get them to see a psychologist for some testing, or maybe you're trying to get them to work with a therapist or a coach to grow their executive functioning skills.

Lori: Yep. Or maybe you have a prescription in hand, but your child is refusing to take it. Or maybe your child has an IEP or a 504 plan at school, but they are really hesitant to go to those therapies at school or use those accommodations that they're given.

Mallory: Yeah. So, I think there are some underlying feelings and themes here that we can address most of these roadblocks with the four main tips that we have for you today. So, the first tip that we have for you, the first that you really need to do is to really listen to their concerns and acknowledge their feelings about the support, about what's going on. So, I want to start by just talking through some of the common things that we see kids feeling or the reasons that they're refusing this extra help. So, one of the main reasons that we hear, and maybe you're hearing this from your child, is that by accepting the support, by needing the support, they're feeling othered they feel different from other kids. And your first instinct may be to say, like, don't worry about it, no one's gonna know. Or, you know, they don't care that you need extra help. But sadly, that's often not the reality that kids really do notice these things. Again, especially as our kids are getting older, so we can't just dismiss the concern that other kids are going to notice, because a lot of times they do. Yeah. So, I do think this is a valid concern and we don't want to just dismiss it, especially if that's the main concern that your child has. Another thing you might be hearing from your kids, something that we hear from kids, is that they don't want to accept the help because they feel like in accepting that

help, they're kind of admitting or coming to terms with the fact that something is wrong with them. But of course, as we know, and we talk about all the time, nothing is wrong with your child. Their brain is growing and working differently. They have things that are going very well for them, but we all have areas of needs too. So, if your child is kind of explaining to you that they feel like somethings wrong with them, they don't like that, this is a really important time to do some education with them and work with them on the thought about how their brain is working and growing and it's not because something is wrong with them, it's that we all have different needs and we all need different types of support.

Lori: Yeah, I think a lot of times this comes up when, maybe families haven't taken the time to really open up that dialogue. And I say dialogue because it's not just one conversation about your child having ADHD, but it's like a constant and continual dialogue about it. Just really educating them on what that means and that it's not something deficient in them, that we all have those strengths and challenges, to really talk about how it, how their brain is different from other kids and how those supports are important because of those differences is just, is really critical.

Mallory: And I think that leads into another thing that we often hear that kids are feeling, one reason they're refusing help is they just don't understand why that help is going to be beneficial for them. They don't. Why am I, why do I need that support? Why do I need that accommodation? Why do I need that medication? They just, they don't understand the why behind it. And I think so then if you don't understand the why behind it, it's very valid to not want that help if you don't understand 'why' you need that help. So as Lori is saying, like we need to be having these ongoing conversations, this ongoing dialogue about ADHD. What is ADHD? How does it, what does it mean for your brain? And what does it mean you need to truly succeed in these different situations? Cause it might look different from the person sitting next to you in class.

Another thing that we hear from kids too is that they feel like they should be able to manage these struggles on their own. They feel like they should just be able to pull it together. They feel like if they just tried a little harder they could make it happen. So, they're feeling maybe some shame about needing help to do the things that maybe their peers don't need help to do. They're shoulding all over themselves, like we say, they feel like they should be able to

manage it on their own. They don't want to have to accept help because they want to just be able to do it all by themselves.

Lori: Yep.

Mallory: And I think another reason that they're refusing this help or something they're feeling is they just don't feel equipped to self-advocate. So, what if they get in a situation where they've accepted this help but they don't like it or it's not working. So, they might be in a position where they just feel like they can't speak up if it's something they truly don't like, so they don't even want to try it, they don't even want to start it. So, it's really important to kind of get to the root of your child's refusal. Maybe it's easy to identify it's one of these things, maybe it's several of these things. But when it comes down to it, there's some heavy emotions behind a lot of these things. Things like shame, maybe your child is experiencing low self-esteem, we see that a lot in kids with ADHD and all of these underlying feelings are really going to affect their willingness to accept help. And I want to point out that in kind of getting your child on board with these supports, it's really important not to meet your child's shame with more shame. So, something we might hear from parents as like, well, if you didn't keep losing your stuff, if you didn't keep forgetting your stuff at school, your teacher wouldn't have to initial your agenda. So, we don't want to meet that shame with shame. Like most of our kids with ADHD are already feeling enough shame about struggling with things and feeling different, so we want to make sure that we're really framing these supports positively and not shaming them for needing the support and like putting all of the burden on them, if that makes sense.

Katie: Yeah, that definitely makes sense. Even just hearing you say that, like, if you didn't keep forgetting your stuff, it immediately makes me feel so defensive and I'm like, no, that's not. But I think we've all had those moments, you know, where we're just trying to help them understand, okay, this is why we need this. But it's all about the way that you frame it, right. Because talking about that and saying, yeah, I forget my stuff, you forget your stuff, this is just something that really helps us is to write down a list is a totally different way of saying it as opposed to the way that you sort of said it, Mal where it's like well, if you didn't struggle with this, you wouldn't need this kind of support, right? So, you're still, the message is still there and that's okay. I think parents have a fear to talk about a lot of times where their child is struggling because they don't want to cause that low self-esteem or that shame. But when

we talk about it in much more of a matter-of-fact way, it's not judgmental and it's actually can be really helpful to be like, gosh, I'm really curious. Like I forgot, and this is great for me because I actually do forget things, I'm like, oh man, I forgot my water again. I wonder what would help me? Maybe if I put it next to my purse so that my water bottle is just sitting there and I will talk through it with my kids. Then, it's just a totally different conversation than when we kind of say it in a way that feels shaming.

Lori: Yeah. And I feel like I, I interview kids all the time, that's just a part of doing evaluations and I do lots of those, and it's amazing to me how when you sit down with kids and really ask them these questions, you can really get at these like core beliefs that they have about themselves. And we all have these core beliefs and a lot of them are negative. That we kind of are all of our behaviors and our actions are associated with these like core beliefs. And I remember talking to a kid once recently, you know, I was saying well why don't you participate in class or why don't you raise your hand? And he was like, well if I make a mistake, they'll know I'm stupid. And it's like this feeling of like this core belief that I'm, I'm feeling stupid all the time and I'm changing and shifting my behaviors because I don't want to reinforce that idea even though other people aren't thinking that. But that's kind of the belief that he has. And sometimes again you really dig deep into those things, if I accept this accommodation, I'm saying to myself that I'm stupid, right. And that's a hard thing to talk about with a parent and you know, for parents to address, but we have to get at those like feelings that they're having underneath of what it says about them and really start to challenge those beliefs that they have about themselves or beliefs, underlying beliefs about what that means.

Katie: Yeah. I love that example that you gave Lori, because in that case that child was able to really articulate that. And I'm thinking about parents who might be listening, who have much younger kids or even my youngest who's 8, but I don't know that he would be able to articulate all of that as clearly. And so there is sometimes a little bit, you know, we're talking to a wide range of parents with a wide range of ages and language levels. And so, thinking about your own child, you know, those conversations might look a little bit different for a younger child. But again, you might have a five-year-old who's really precocious and can just really self-evaluate. But don't be discouraged, at the same time if your child does struggle to articulate it, you know, you might have to help them and kind of talk through it in a slightly

different way because again some kids are so much more self-aware than others and that's just kind of part of this process.

Lori: Yeah, and I think, you know, something that's really important as you're trying to work on these skills is role playing and practicing, like we said you know, earlier, dismissing and saying like kids aren't, aren't going to notice that. Well, they do. I mean, I have kids come in all the time that are like, hey, I used a calculator in class and kids were like, well, why does she get to use a calculator and I don't? Like they get irritated by that if there's a support that someone else is getting and they're not getting and having them practice, what am I going to say to that other kid? Because a lot of times their initial reaction is, oh, I'm never going to use a calculator ever again because I don't want to draw attention to myself, right. And this is like a high school student I'm talking about, right. But role playing and practice what do I say in that situation? Like, do I say, hey, you know, like I have dyscalculia and I have a hard time with math and this helps me to be successful and be able to show what I know and like, be very matter of fact with it. But they're different, again, your child might not be able to say that and they might be young and they might not use those terms or whatever help that, have them kind of say something that they feel comfortable with saying, right. Sometimes it does help to be kind of really matter of fact and practical about it.

Mallory: Yeah.

Katie: Yeah. My, my daughter had a situation where she was, she's a little bit slower in math. Like she still does pretty well in math, but it's harder for her, she is in terms of just the way she does her work. And she had a boy sitting next to her and he's so good at math. I mean this kid, I've helped out in their class and I'm just, but he would comment to her like, wow, you're only on question eight. And hmm, you're only on question 10. And you know, so she's telling me about this and I immediately want to be like, will you tell him that I saw him not be able to kick the soccer ball at recess. You know, so it's like you have to, you have to temper it. But what was great about that is she started laughing, you know, and then we were able to talk about it and, and we did. We actually had to roleplay it and say, okay, what could you say? And to your point, Lori, it was something like, hey, math is kind of hard for me, but I'm doing my best. Or basically like mind your own beeswax. Do they still say that? I don't know if that's a thing, but I feel like...

Lori: No, probably not.

Katie: Probably not since like 1990, but I think that it's really important to empower our kids. And that is a perfect example of the different language levels that our kids have. And when you're role playing, you're gonna obviously help them come up with words that make sense for them, right, and their personality and that sort of thing, but it is such a lifelong skill. So, I get that that's something that is, can be really hard and it's great to give your kid those tools to help them.

So, our second point is to normalize needing help. And we've kind of touched on this, but, just really to go deeper into it because it's such an important piece. And so, the main idea here is that we want to normalize or teach our kids from a very young age that everybody needs help with something and that's okay, right. So, we can give our kids real life examples of ways that I might have different needs than my husband or my daughter might have different needs than my son. When we're talking about our brains, every brain is different. And so just normalizing this from a very young age. And there's some great books that talk about, you know, how our brains all work differently, but just bringing it into everyday conversation. Like, I might say, wow, I really get so, I get so overwhelmed by all the noise at Costco. Like, it's just so loud for me. And I might even point out, like, you seem to really like all the noise at Costco, you know. And another example is really talking to our kids about areas that we need help and the things that we do to help ourselves. So, I have to use a calendar and write things down or I will forget to take you to your extra dance practice. And that can be really helpful for them to see that and see that we're all doing things to help ourselves.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think we, like Katie is saying we can model ways that we help ourselves, but we can also talk through ways that we're getting to know our child's brain and how we can best help them too. Like, we're a family team and you're, going to, you know, I want you to accept this type of support, like taking this medication or this extra help at school. And I'm also learning the best way to parent you and the best way for, to help you with homework at home or like, we're all working together and just normalize that we're all working together to kind of change the way we're doing things to help things go better in our house and help you feel happier and more successful.

Katie: Yeah.

Lori: And I think another thing to talk about too is again, just normalizing ADHD in and of itself or, you know, for letting our kids know that one in five kids have a thinking or learning

difference. So that means that like at least five or six, sometimes more kids in your class are getting some kind of accommodations too. It's not just you. This isn't, you're not the only one in the classroom that is getting or needing some support. So trying to kind of normalize those things. Even looking around the classroom and say, who has glasses? You know, those kids have vision differences. Like their vision is they can't see in certain aspects, not all aspects, but maybe it's from far away, so they use glasses to correct that. It's the same thing for ADHD, it just sometimes isn't as clear to see.

So, the next kind of thing that we want you to think about is making plans with your child, not just for your child. We talk about this all the time. That the best way to get buy in from our kids and to get them on board with doing things is a lot of trying times trying to get them to think that it was their idea in the first place. We, and I remember in grad school, like when we were learning about consultation with teachers, you know, we do the same thing with trying to get teachers on board with following through on doing behavior plans for students or plans in the classroom for our kids, or using those accommodations for kids in the classroom to get teachers to feel like it was their idea and they came up with that plan. We have to get their input in it, otherwise if we just make a plan and give it to a teacher, make a plan and give it to our child, there is so much less likely to follow through on it. So, whenever a parent comes in and kind of talks to me about, I want to, I want to have more accommodations or more supports at school for my child, I'm always in my interview asking them, what do you think you need help with at school? And I will get varying ranges of responses within that from, I don't need any help, everything's going great too, you know, kids actually, you know, really being able to reflect on some of the things that are hard for them or areas that they feel like they're not getting enough support where they can articulate that. So again, there are ranges to that. Some kids are like, hey, it's great, everything's amazing, I'm good. But sometimes we can dig a little deeper into that. So, we really want to start even, even with going to school meetings or IEP meetings or 504 plan meetings, like, your child can start going to those meetings if they're able to talk about those things. I mean, fourth, fifth, definitely in middle school and high school should be going to those meetings to talk about their accommodations. And I will say again, some kids, and I will see this a lot in middle schoolers or high schoolers are going to just throw stuff out. I don't need an IEP, I don't want it anymore. And sometimes the schools will be like, great, okay, let's try it.

Katie: Perfect's, just adjourn the meeting.

Lori: Yes. And you as a parent know, okay, we're going from elementary school to a transition to middle school, and things are probably going to be harder, if anything, with that transition. We're not just going to, like, throw the baby out with the bathwater. Again, that's where we have to go back to some of that education where and kind of looking at why are kids wanting to do that in middle school, is it because of the social piece to that? But I think when we start to include them in the process of, maybe there are accommodations that we think that they need, but, you know, you talk in a meeting with the teacher and the kiddo, and they're like, hey, I don't really need extra time to finish the test. Like, I can get the test done as fast as everyone else, but it's actually like the noise that really bothers me. And so maybe there's some way to kind of work around that if that's like I put in my loop ear plugs or I, you know, go to another classroom to kind of finish certain assignments that require a little bit more focus. So again, sometimes we think that our kids need an accommodation that they don't think they need, and we really need to take some time to kind of listen to that.

Mallory: Yeah. And I think this is a really great opportunity to help them draw the connections between the supports that they're being offered and what they're struggling with, like, what they want to go better. So we, we need to understand, as Lori is saying, from your child's perspective, like, what they think could go better, what are they struggling with so we can help them see, like, oh, this extra time that I'm being offered to take this test is because I'm turning in my tests incomplete or I'm rushing through them. Like, help them draw these connections between this support is going to help with this thing that you're telling me is really challenging for you. So, we can help them kind of draw these connections rather than, again, it's not something that's just happening to them that they don't understand. We're drawing these connections for them, helping them understand why this is a particular support we've chosen for them and then even taking a step further, once they've been using that support, we can help them draw the connections between, like, hey, ever since we got you that extra time on the test, I've noticed that you're bringing home everything A's and B's and everything's complete. So, helping them draw those connections between the support is working, like, ever since we started doing this, this has been the outcome, and it's kind of addressed this area of need.

Katie: Yeah, I love that. And I think, again, just at home, you can also do this with all kinds of things, you know. Oh, wow, you, the backpacks were exactly where we needed them to be and we got out the door a lot faster today because we put them on that special hook that we

always need to put them on. And I will say that my son, if you've been around for a long time, you know that one of our earliest accommodations that we did for him was all of our shoes were in our laundry room. And he was pretty good at putting on his shoes, but the issue was that the socks were in his bedroom. And so, I would have, every time he would need his socks and shoes, I would say, okay, go grab your socks. And then he would disappear for a really long time. And it was really frustrating for me. He was still really young, maybe about four years old, I don't know. And so, one day we were talking about it, and I said, hey, buddy, you know, what can we do? Like, you just keep disappearing in your room. And he told me, he's like, my socks aren't by my shoes and it was kind of an aha moment for me. So, we got a little basket and put the socks in the laundry room next to the shoes. And it just really helped speed up our process. Okay, so fast forward four years, and we're in a new house, and we have, you know, a whole new laundry room flow situation. And I have this little basket with the socks right outside and right outside the door. And his friends were over the other day, and he actually showed them. He's like, this is my basket, the socks are right here because then I can just go out the door really fast. And so it is that like,

Lori: Love it!

Katie: I know this is part of the official tour, you get to see the sock basket. I'm sure the parents think I'm like, I put all the socks in the basket. But it really does help and I feel like, you know, it's empowering to him to know that this is what he uses and it's really helpful and he can kind of advocate for himself. He doesn't think it's weird to have the socks in a basket. He thought of it and now it helps him every time and he totally sees the value.

Lori: And it was his idea really, right? I mean he was the one that kind of helped create that. Yeah. Again, I think it's just so important that kids not see these accommodations as a punishment. Sometimes it's very easy to feel like it's a punishment because of something they did wrong. But we really want to talk about it in a way that is talking about how we're just making life easier for them, and just building strategies to just be more independent and successful in life and really tying it back to their own goals. Like what do they want for their life to be easier? What do they want to do well within school? You know, use those goals to then tie back, okay, well these are things that are going to help you meet these goals, to help them understand that.

Mallory: I think another great perk of involving your child in the process, know, making the plan with them rather than just for them, is it's going to give you the opportunity to debunk any myths or misconceptions that they may have about this particular type of support. So, for example, if your child is hesitant to take a medication that the doctor has prescribed your child, if you're involving them in all of these conversations, you're going to have the opportunity to hear if they have some myths or misunderstanding about this medication that they're being prescribed. Or if they have a myth or misconception about, getting speech therapy at school or whatever it is. It's giving you the opportunity to be able to debunk some of those often misconceptions about the help you're offering them.

Lori: Yeah, I was just talking with the fourth grader about this very thing because you know, they were talking about doing medication and he was like, well, my friend so and so took medication and he was like a zombie and he felt terrible. And so, it was really nice because I do think a lot of kids have other friends that have gone through this or they have personal experiences or they have heard things from parents or grandparents...

Katie: Or TikTok.

Lori: Or TikTok, exactly. That have told them things that they are really believing. And we can kind of sit down and that's great because I was able to kind of talk with him about, yeah, that is like a concern that we have and I have seen that myself with some kids. And that's when we know that that medication is too much or maybe it's not a good fit. And that's why it's really important for you to be talking to your parents all the time about what you're feeling inside your body when you start taking these medications and communicating those things a lot to make sure, you feel like you're still yourself and your awesome personality, but it's helping you. It's not making things hard on you.

Mallory: And here's an example, Lori, of how you as a professional, we were kind of talking through one of your patients about this. And this is another thing that I want to encourage parents to do is lean on the professionals who are a part of this process. Lean on the professional who has given that ADHD diagnosis or the school psychologist who's helping you write this IEP like, lean on these professionals to also help get your child's buy in and explain these supports. I can't tell you how many times back when I was still practicing as a child psychologist, seeing therapy patients who I would make a recommendation and the kid would be 100% on board and then the kid walks out of the room and the parent is like, you

would not believe how many times I've told them to do that and they've denied it every time. You say it once and magically, it's the best idea ever and they're going to do it, right.

Katie: I feel like that's true for husbands too.

Lori: Oh yes, I know. For sure.

Mallory: Yeah, for sure. And also, I just want to take this opportunity to also comment on these families and these kids who are in a situation where their child is still very, very resistant, especially older kids. And you've done all of these things. You've kind of talked through the underlying feelings that are preventing them from wanting to accept this help. They've been a part of this plan. You've debunked all of the myths, right. But they're still saying, absolutely, under no circumstances am I going to do that. And in this kind of circumstance, you might need to be relying on professional help to get your child's buy in if it's something that really is very essential to your child's well-being.

Lori: Yeah. And especially with teens. You know, I used to do therapy, cognitive behavioral therapy for depression with teens and the first thing we talked about was medication. I mean and in identifying like what are the you know, thoughts and beliefs that you have around medication? Identifying and communicating like those side effects or symptoms that they were feeling and really trying to again help them identify what things were improving. Because sometimes it is easy to like forget about, you know, how you were feeling previously, and forget about like how much that medication is helping. We want them to kind of internally feel that motivation of like yes, this is helping me so that they can be independent with that as they're a young adult and they can see the, the need for it, and the help that it's providing them. So, it is definitely a part of when you're talking about with a teen, with medication, it is really important to kind of be working with a therapist to kind of help them start to internalize the importance of this.

Mallory: Okay. And so, for our fourth and final tip, this one's, you know, short and sweet, but just as important is just to encourage this ongoing open communication with your child about how these supports are going, what's helping them, what could be better. Just communicate to your child that these supports are not set in stone. This is a fluid process. Nothing is forever. As Lori was just saying, we want to know how you're feeling, we want to know how things are going, if this is helping you, so that we can adjust, if we need to adjust. And going along

with this, it's really important to work with your child on becoming their best self-advocate. Teaching your child and practicing with your child how to let someone know if they need more help. This can really build their self-esteem and help them feel more in control of the situation if they feel like they can adequately stick up for themselves and make a change if they need a change. And also, just communicating to your child when it comes to these supports, every support is just one tool in this bigger toolbox that they have. So not looking at one thing as the only solution, the only way, but again just encouraging that open communication, knowing that there's lots of pieces to this puzzle here and you're all working together to reach those things, reach those goals that are really important to them, things that they've said they want to go better. So, for your key takeaway today, we just want to remind you that a lot of times our kids have some very valid concerns about certain help and supports. But when we listen, we validate, we normalize, and we work not just for our kids, but with them, they're going to be a lot more willing to accept the help that we have to offer.

Katie: Thanks for listening to *Shining with ADHD* by your hosts, Lori, Katie, and Mallory of The Childhood Collective.

Mallory: If you enjoyed this episode, please leave us a review and hit subscribe so you can be the first to know when a new episode airs.

Lori: If you are looking for links and resources mentioned in this episode, you can always find those in the show notes. See you next time!