Ready for Take-Off: Preparing Teens with ADHD/LD for College

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We will discuss:

- College experiences of students with LD/ADHD
- Factors that may lead to transition challenges
- Ways for adults to interact that empower teens
- Ways to better prepare teens with ADHD/LD for transition to college
  - A college readiness plan
  - A critical look at accommodations
  - Deciding on the next step after high school
...there were two freshman with ADHD/LD: Emily & Lisa.

- Emily was better prepared for college and had a smoother transition.
- Lisa was not well prepared and her adjustment was rockier!
College and Students with ADHD/LD: The Good News!
College and Students with ADHD/LD: The Not So Good News!
Reasons for Challenges: Student Factors

➢ Academic issues
➢ Executive Functioning challenges
➢ Co-existing emotional and physical challenges
Reasons for Challenges:
Environmental Factors
Differences Between High School & College

- Adult supervision/support
- Daily life
- Academic expectations
- Social adjustment
- Laws & available services
Ways to Better Prepare Teens for College

1. Determine if your role in their success is helpful or not.
2. Assess teen’s college readiness skills & develop a personalized college readiness plan.
3. Evaluate and slowly fade any accommodations & modifications that won’t be available in the future.
4. Make a wise decision about the next step after high school and have a plan for success.
1. Determine your role-helpful or not?
A real life scenario: How would you respond?

Your teen/student comes to you: (parents) after dinner on a school night. (professionals) in your office...

He/she is quite upset and asks you to contact the history teacher. Apparently he/she has not completed a paper that is due tomorrow at 9:00 am.

For those of you familiar with such things...
Assume that he/she has an IEP or 504 Plan that allows for extensions on assignments.
Your Role: Helpful or Not?

Supportive and Overinvolved-Enabling Responses/Patterns:

- “Dysfunctional behavioral patterns intended to resolve a problem but may exacerbate it. Another party with the best of intentions shields the individual from awareness and consequences of actions and the need to change (by preventing, fixing, rationalizing).” Wikipedia

- “Enabling is doing something for someone that (s)he should do for her/himself.”

  How to Stop Enabling and Start Empowering Kids” Hazelden Foundation
Enabling Responses

- Immediately drop everything and email/text the history teacher.
- Send teen to bed and reassure that you will drive him/her to school tomorrow and talk to the teacher (remind of IEP/504 plan).
- Stay up late with him/her and help write the paper.
- Write a note and let your teen stay home tomorrow.
- Write the paper yourself; send him/her to bed.
Your Role: Helpful or not?

Supportive and Collaborative-
Empowering responses/patterns:

► “To give someone authority or power to make someone stronger and more confident especially in controlling their lives.” Wikipedia

► “Means actively teaching children (teens) to take responsibility for making their own choices and being accountable for their actions. Allowing failure and learning from mistakes”

How to Stop Enabling and Start Empowering Kids” Hazelden Foundation
A Coach Approach to Parenting: Naturally Supportive & Collaborative

- Borrowed from sports coaching model
- Empowering beliefs
- Collaborative practices
Empowering Responses

- **Listens fully:** How stressful. I can see how worried you are about this.
- **Stay on the sidelines:** While, I’m not willing to contact your teacher, try not to panic. I’ll help you problem solve your options.
- **Ask questions to help plan and learn:**
  - What options do you think there are for handling this? What did you do last time?
  - What can I do to be of help? (You can say “no” to enabling requests!)
  (Ask later with curiosity not judgement):
    - What lesson did you learn from this? How do you think this happened?
    - What strategies/resources etc. will allow you to prevent this next time?
    - What can I do to support you with the next paper?
- **Offers suggestions (not mandates, no attachment)**
  - I see you have some outlines how can these be used? What about using that dictation app that you like?
  - I have a thought, could you send an email to your teacher? I’m happy to help you decide what to say or edit it with you.
  - Would you want me to join you before school tomorrow to talk with the teacher?
Enabling versus Empowering

- Learn what leads to enabling? When is it okay?
- How to explain the changes you’re making?
- What is the impact of each approach? Short term? Long term?
- What do you need to use a coach approach?
- When is a coach approach not appropriate?
Ways to Better Prepare Teens for College

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3. Evaluate and slowly fade any accommodations & modifications that won’t be available in the future.
4. Make a wise decision about the next step after high school and have a plan for success.
2. Assess Your Teen’s College Readiness Skills and Develop a Personalized Plan
Assess College Readiness

Checklists in “Ready for Take-Off” and “On Your Own”

- **Self Determination Skills:**
  - Self-Knowledge, **Self-Advocacy**, Self-Management

- **Daily Living Skills:**
  - Self Care (**Meds**), Organization, Time Management (**sleep**, balance, be on time)

- **Academic Skills:**
  - Self-Knowledge of Preferences, Use of Study Strategies, Time Management (track assignments, appointments, schedule, plan: short & **long-term**)

- **Teen rates self; parent /teacher rates**

- **Score? Compare ratings. Strengths? Areas to Develop:**
  - Where is teen over relying on parents/teachers?
  - How many skills? How much time? (9 months, 21 months, 33 months or 45 months)
  - How many skills each month? Or Week?
  - Use a less structured approach. Anything helps!
Developing A Personalized College Readiness Plan

1. Select a meeting time and a starting point.
2. Set SMART goals: teen’s and adult’s.
   - Wake self up by 7:00 am without an adult, be ready by 7:45am
   - Limit parent’s role to one reminder at night and in the morning
3. Discuss action plan: How will we/you get there?
   - What’s the next small step?
   - What support does the teen want/need? What support do you want/need?
   - How will you transfer controls (look at past experiences)?
     Co-pilot/coach approach gradually? Leave the cockpit- Go Cold Turkey?
   - Schedule an evaluation conversation?
     What data will you both collect?
4. Evaluate progress.
5. Select the next skill, repeat steps 1-5.

Get help now for any other issues (family, emotions, substance abuse, sleep, eating etc.).
Promoting College Readiness at School

- Raise awareness of the differences between high school and college.
- Shift communication to include teens.
- Coach teens to be their own advocates.
- Consider providing college readiness groups/clubs.
- Explicitly teach study skills.
- Model college level assignments & accommodations.
3. Evaluate and Slowly Fade Any Accommodations that Won’t Be Available In The Future.
Accommodations & Modifications

When providing accommodations we need to ask:
- Even if it’s possible, is it really helpful? Necessary?
- What is it teaching in the short-run? Long-run?
- Will it be available in the future?
  - How can we slowly fade accommodations that won’t be available in the future?
- How can we simultaneously teach a skill to help teens grow?
  - “Can’t” versus “Hard to”
  - Growth versus Fixed Mindset (Dweck)
- Are we involving teens in the process (like Emily’s mom) so they:
  - Grow in awareness?
  - Become independent?
Typical Accommodations Available in College

- **Testing**
  - 50%/100% extended time, low distraction setting, computer for essay, text to speech/speech to text software, spell check, breaks off the clock.

- **Notetaking**
  - Obtain professors’ notes before class, volunteer notetaker, notetaking technology (Livescribe Smart Pen, notetaking apps)

- **Reading/Writing**
  - Text to speech software for audio versions of book/assignments
  - Speech to text software to dictate written assignments

- **Priority Registration**
  - Register earlier to try to pick a class schedule that compensates for disability
Evaluate Accommodations & Modifications

Examples that can **backfire:**
- Blanket extensions for assignments; modified assignments
- Waivers or exemptions of course requirements
- Extreme exam accommodations:
  - Ability to retake exams or do corrections
  - Unlimited time for exams
  - Oral exams
  - Memory aids during exams
  - Spelling errors overlooked
  - Only one exam per day
- Some accommodations will/may not be available in professional school or graduate school
4. Make a wise decision about the next step after high school and have a plan for success.
Is College the Automatic Next Step?

- What behaviors are matched to “being ready” for college?
- College may not be the best next step now or ever.
  - Other talents, training experiences, work/part time
  - Gap Year: to grow, get help, clarify goals
  - Sometimes the older the better
- If yes, 2-year or 4-year college?
- Analyze the resources, class size, location, courses tied to teen’s interests/passions.
- Visit campuses, sit in on classes, meet resource staff & students.
- Main criteria for selection:
  - Which are the best option/s for student’s learning needs?
Set Up A Success Plan
First Semester

- Practice “college life” in high school; spring senior year.
- Consider enrolling in summer school - design your own “bridge experience.”
- Once accepted, coach teens to register for accommodations and learn process for accessing them.
- If teens are on medication; coach them to find out policies at campus health or referral to community.
- Prior to class registration, coach teens to meet with Academic Advisor.
  - Learn registration process; disclose disability, know deadlines for dropping /adding classes.
- Encourage teens to set up weekly meetings with available resource people (on/off campus); don’t “wait & see.”
- Design your plan for communication and support during transition; negotiate what type of communication you both want/need.
What is Your Action Plan to Help Your Teen Be Ready for College?

1. What are your top “take-aways” from today?
2. How might you apply these ideas in daily life with your teen or students?
3. What are your immediate next steps?
4. What support or additional resources do you need to help your teen be empowered & ready for college?
…and they lived happily ever after!

- Emily’s story.
- Lisa’s story.