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Ask the Expert Chat Series

Tuesday, April 14 2010 – Coaching for Adolescents with ADHD

Moderators – NRC Staff

Expert – Jodi Sleeper-Triplett, MCC, SCAC

Moderator 1: Thank you for joining us today. We will begin shortly. Just to remind everybody, this is a moderated chat. All questions go to the moderator for review. We will do our best to post as many of your questions as possible.

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett, MCC, SCAC is a Master Certified Coach and Senior Certified ADHD Coach. As president of JST Coaching, LLC, Jodi has spent the past fourteen years providing coach training and coaching services focused on youth with ADHD. JST Coaching offers a coach training program focused on the intricacies of coaching teens and college students with ADHD. Her first book, *Empowering Youth with ADHD*, will be released later this year (2010) through Specialty Press.

Jodi has completed coach training with The Coaches Training Institute, Success Unlimited Network, and The American Coaching Association. She is currently the Director of Training for the Edge Foundation, an organization devoted to providing coaching for children, adolescents and young adults with ADHD. She is the co-chair of the coaching track for the CHADD annual conferences and is a co-founder of the Institute for the Advancement of ADHD Coaching.

Moderator 1: Welcome Jodi! Are you ready for our first question?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Yes.

Lynne: How is ADHD Coaching for teens different than for adults?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Great first question! When coaching teens we use similar coaching techniques, with the differences being the amount of involvement with parents and the topics teens bring to coaching. Building a rapport with teens also takes longer.

Agwhite: Is face to face interaction between a teenager and a coach more important than with adults and their coaches?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: I find that it varies by teen. First thing one wants to check is the learning style of the client. Can that person talk on the phone with ease or are they in need of a visual connection? For some teens, if the coach does not meet with them, issues can be unresolved such as organizational and planning tasks that can't be seen on the phone.

Agwhite: At what age do you think teenagers are typically ready to have a meaningful coaching relationship that is self directed versus directed or heavily influenced by parents?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Chronological age is not a good indicator of readiness. Each teen needs to talk with the coach and allow the coach to determine readiness. In my experience, high school students are ready to learn how to be more independent and WANT to disconnect from parents, but the readiness varies.

Gail: Is this type of coaching ever covered by insurance? Is there a way for me to maximize the chances of that occurring?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Life coaching and ADHD coaching are not covered by insurance. The only way I have found for families to get reimbursed is through flex spending accounts (FSA). There is nothing one can do to change this since we are not licensed mental health professionals.

Amill: How do you find an ADHD coach for a freshman college student?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: I am smiling at this question! There are a number of ways to find a coach for a freshman in college. Here are a few:

1. Go to the CHADD professional listings
2. Go to www.edgefoundation.org
3. jstcoach.com
4. Ask at the college
5. Ask your doctor or high school.

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: There are lists on most ADD websites listing coaches. Just be sure to check that the coach has training and experience with coaching young people.

SRG: As a parent, I know that coaching would help my son, but how do you get buy-in from the teen that this is a good idea?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Buy-in, that's the tough part. I recommend finding out what your son wants, whether that be good grades, more time with friends, less pushing from you etc... When you/we find out what the young person wants, it can be easier to get them to agree to coaching. For example, when I explain I can help a teen have more free time by working more effectively, that is a great motivator.

Ali: Which teens do you think are NOT suitable for coaching?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Teens NOT suitable for coaching include those with severe behavioral problems, substance abuse issues, co-morbid conditions that are getting in the way of daily life, those who are resistant to talking with a coach even for a brief introduction and who don't understand the concept of coaching even after it has been fully explained. One last piece - teens who think coaches will tell their parents what to do are not ready!

Saulte: Our 17-year-old will start college in the fall. She has been resistant to coaching in the past as she says she tends to rely on the coach instead of on actually organizing herself. But as parents we know a coach will be essential to her success. What can you suggest?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Your daughter seems to have learned what does not work for her in coaching. My suggestion would be to have her interview other coaches and clearly state that she wants to be more self-reliant. A well-trained coach will hear that and leave room for your daughter to grow. Ask her what she liked about the coaching and see if that sparks her interest again.

Please know that often times, it takes frustration and some failure for young people to come to coaching or to come back to coaching. They fall and realize they want help getting up again.

Laurie: My daughter will be 19 in May, but as with most who have ADHD, she is 2-3 years less mature than that. She doesn't yet have her driving license, doesn't want to get it, so she's socially isolated without regular school. Would a coach help her for social skills and getting on with her life? Since she's 19 what type coach should I look for and how?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Some coaches will definitely be able and willing to work with your daughter on social skills and ideas for moving forward with her life. At 19, she is technically an adult. So, it is advisable to have her involved in the search for the coach and make the final selection.

A coach familiar with ADHD and life coaching can be great because it looks as if your daughter needs a coach who understands ADHD and also has the training and experience to help her see the big picture of her life, set goals for the future, etc. I recommend the same resources noted earlier to find a coach.

Amy: I am interested in finding a coach to help my son with his transition to high school. He has ADHD and ODD. We are relocating to eastern Washington in two months so I don't know where to look to find a qualified coach. Can you give me some guidance in this area? What questions should I ask prospective coaches to make sure they can handle what we need?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: First, with the ODD component, it is VERY important to find a coach who can handle this issue. I find it difficult to engage young people with ADHD and ODD in coaching and tend to refer to a therapist.

If you decide to search for a coach, ask about experience and training in ADHD and ODD and find out if the coach has strategies for handling the oppositional issues. There are coaches in Washington state and you can find those on the ACO website. I forgot to mention ACO to everyone. www.adhdcoaches.org.

Be sure to check out experience, get references, ask your local doctor or mental health professional for referrals.

Laurie: What's the difference between coaching and therapy?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Ah, the tough question of the day! There are many "theories" and opinions. I view coaching as a process that works on the present and does not dig into the past. Coaches do not go to the emotional core of a problem with a client and do not explore the pathology of the issues.

Therapists oftentimes use coaching strategies in their sessions, but have the training to dig deeper and work with the client's emotional history while supporting that client. I find that coaches are very effective moving a client forward with goals, dreams and aspirations in a manner that is exciting and fun.

This is not typical of therapy since most people go to therapy with a problem. One does not have to have a problem or even a diagnosis to work with a coach.

Karen: If lack of motivation is a significant problem for the teen, how helpful can a coach be?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: I am loving this! Motivation is the key to everything. When coaching a teen, I find that there is always something that motivates them externally. It is important to remember that internal motivation takes time, so meanwhile we are using external "carrots" to get the teens moving.

For example, many teens want their parents to stop nagging and will be motivated to make changes just to make that happen! Working on the internal motivation with medication, sleep, exercise, and whatever else is needed can be done as a part of the coaching. Coaches check in with the clients to see how they are doing in all life areas every day.

Bottom line is that motivation is a huge issue and can be a big obstacle. Consider the smallest place to begin and help the teen grow and become more motivated through small successes.

Saulte: What questions/qualifications should we consider when searching for a coach for a college student?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: When looking for a coach for a teen or a college student, the questions and qualifications are similar. Find out if the coach has training - life coaching and ADHD coaching. How long has that person been coaching? How many clients are in the teen/college age range?

What is the coach's process - how often does the coach talk/meet with clients, what is set up for accountability (e-mails, texts)? What is the level of understanding of ADHD and co-morbid conditions, EF, LD, and so on. Dig for experience and knowledge.

Take time to interview coaches and check references if you don't have a direct referral source.

Balto: How often is the personal coach in touch with the teen? How many in-person visits to help organize and get scheduling going, etc....on a weekly basis? And how often is the coach available for

talking on the phone to help the teen through a problem that is related to functions under the coach's guidance?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: These are good questions to ask the prospective coach. It varies by coach and according to the plan designed with the client/teen.

Some coaches don't do any in-person work and others will make a few visits at the start of coaching. Coaches who are more focused on organizational skills might visit every week. It is really varied.

The amount of time talking depends on client needs. My clients tend to e-mail me daily and we talk or meet weekly. If an issue pops up related to coaching, like "my exam is tomorrow and I am freaking out," my clients know how to reach me by phone, text, etc. Have Blackberry will travel!

Tere: Coaching with a professional is obviously the ideal, but if there is not enough money to afford it what is next best option? A doctor suggested we contact local teacher training college to get a young adult coach/mentor. With limited experience, what would be the most important thing they could do for the teen?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: That's a tough one. I would suggest finding a coach in training who understands ADHD and has a mentor vs. working with a teacher in training. If a teen needs tutoring and organizational help, that can be done with a teacher or even a grad student in special education.

The most important thing anyone can do for teens with ADHD is to provide support, encouragement, accountability and a sense of empowerment.

Bepeterson: What exactly will a coach do for impulsivity and inattention in a 16 year old?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Impulsivity - help the client understand when the impulsive behavior gets in the way and work with the client on strategies for decreasing the impulsivity.

Strategies might include learning to take deep breaths before acting, noticing what is going on around them before taking action impulsively, making notes of when it happens most and sharing with the coach.

Inattention - what is working or not working now? Are there times when the teen is focused and attending, like in a favorite class or activity? How might we work together to "translate" that attention and the feeling that goes with it to classes or activities that don't hold the same attention?

What other strategies might help - medication (for both issues mentioned), fidget/focus tools, reinforcement. The list is long and varies by client.

Mom: We are interviewing an ADD coach for our 24 year old son on Friday. What are the most important questions for us to ask him?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Will your 24 year old be a part of the interview process? If the coach did not ask for that, I would ask how he plans to set up the coaching partnership and the confidentiality agreement.

As mentioned before, your son, and you, want to find out about the coach training, experience and have your son ask questions about the coach to make him comfortable. It is very important that there is rapport between the coach and client. Once you know about the experience and training, it really is up to your son.

MDmom: My son has an organizational tutor once a week and is seeing a psychiatrist once a week for therapy (and meds). I like the idea of a coach but wouldn't want to throw yet another "body" at my son who already feels overwhelmed with people in his life. How does one know which kinds/combinations of support to use at which time?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: An organizational tutor and a coach for a young person can be a lot at one time. I would suggest that you talk with your son to determine his needs...

If he needs tutoring and the tutor helps with organization, too, that is great. If your son wants/needs to learn how to self-advocate, set goals, learn to plan and prioritize, a coach may be a good replacement for the organizational tutor.

Some families will shift slowly from one to the other since the process is different and coaching works more toward helping with life-skills, independence, self-confidence, and the like.

Some of my clients have content tutors and we plan our coaching around that so it is not overwhelming. The services are different and kept separate. The doctor is needed regardless of the other professionals.

Sasha: Are parents ever able to be the coaches of their own children?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Good question! For young children, it can work well. As children reach adolescence, they push back from their parents and want to be independent.

To allow for the parent/child relationship to grow and to avoid conflict as best possible with teens, it is recommended that someone other than the parent do the coaching.

With that said, a parent who has a good connection with their teen can certainly set up basic systems for accountability to support their teen and try that out.

Moderator 1: Being a CHADD member not only provides valuable products and services, such as Attention magazine, to you and your family, it also supports CHADD's work on behalf of individuals with ADHD at the local, state and national level. [Join CHADD today](#)

Adurgavich: ADHD is not a disorder that exists by itself. Often there are other co-existing conditions, i.e. learning disabilities, depression. How does an ADHD coach assist the teen that has co-existing disorders?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: A trained ADHD coach will have knowledge of all the co-existing conditions. During the initial phase of coaching, the coach will inquire as to what is going on for that teen, what is problematic. Then, the coaching is designed to meet the special needs of the teen. LD issues are discussed and the coach will work on strategies to help that teen and support the teen around the learning issues.

With depression, anxiety or other related issues, the coach cannot treat these issues directly but can check in with the client to find out how he/she is doing and encourage the client to get help if needed. Sometimes just having a coach to share ideas with, to support and listen can be of great help. Please be sure that the coach does not try to be your teen's therapist!!

Ruki: What are the requirements coaches need to have? Any specific degrees or experience?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: At present, there is no regulation in the coaching field. We have certifications through the International Coach Federation and the Institute for the Advancement of ADHD Coaching, but unfortunately, no one can make a person get a certification. As a consumer, it is important to ask about coach training.

Some programs are at coaching schools, there are some graduate programs in coaching around the country, too. Completing a minimum of 60 hours life coach training and 35 or more hours of ADHD coach training is a bare minimum.

Add to that experience and involvement in continuing education and with local and national groups like CHADD, and that can help consumers choose a coach.

LDM: Can a coach help with immature/inappropriate social interactions: instigating without knowing it, not reading body language, knowing when to stop kidding and inappropriate comments? How do parents determine if it's the ADHD causing social issues, or it's just being a teenager?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Two questions here. First one on coaching for social issues - yes, a coach can work with a client, role-play, help the teen see other perspectives on behavior and learn new ways to approach situations.

Second part on is it ADHD or being a teen. Sometimes we don't know. Remember, coaching is valuable either way. If it is ADHD related, the coach can help the teen figure out how to manage the ADHD related behaviors and if it is teen behavior unrelated to ADHD, the coach can help the teen identify what is proper, improper, getting in the way of social life and friends, etc. Role playing is great for teens and having a safe place to discuss these issues is a benefit for the teens who have coaches.

Moderator 1: We have ten minutes left. Jodi will move through as many questions as possible. If we are unable to get to your question please contact one of our Health Information Specialists on ADHD by calling 1-800-233-4050 between 9 AM- 5PM EST or by clicking on the "Ask A Question" link on the top of our website: www.help4adhd.org.

Jan: What is the average cost for a coach? What is reasonable?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Coaches charge by the month or by the hour. For monthly fees, the range is about \$250 to \$500 per month for full service coaching. That includes weekly sessions (30 -45 min) and unlimited e-mails, messages.

For those who hire a coach hourly, the cost can be as low as \$50 per hour for a new coach to \$200 per hour for an experienced coach. I prefer the monthly fee structure because it allows for check-ins and consistent service all the time.

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: Reasonable fees - it depends on where you are located. Many coaches have sliding scales, offer small group coaching or pro bono coaching. Ask around.

Moderator 1: Missed part of the chat? [Past chat transcripts are available](#) to CHADD members as a benefit. [Join CHADD today!](#)

Coco Stanback: How closely to do you work with the parents when coaching a teen?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: I work closely with the parent in the beginning, getting lots of background information and feedback from them. When we set up the coaching plan, I like to set the boundaries clearly.

Some teens agree to check in with the parents every day and are OK with the parents asking me how things are going. I give basic info and always ask the client for permission to disclose to the parents. If a teen is really struggling, the parents will be more involved.

Moderator 1: This will be our last question.

Roxanne: How does coaching for students with ADHD work over the summer break?

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: In the summer, about 50% of my clients take a break for at least part of the time. When we are in coaching, we work on life goals and step away from academics unless the client is in summer school. I leave the decision up to the teen.

Moderator 1: Thank you Jodi! You have helped us all to understand the benefits coaching can have on all aspects of an adolescent's life as he/she is learning how to become more independent. Thank you so much for joining us today to share information on coaching teens, which is increasingly becoming available to complement the treatment for youth with ADHD.

Jodi Sleeper-Triplett: This was fun. Thank you for having me as your guest!

Moderator 1: If you have a question that was not answered today, please contact us online (National Resource Center's Web site at www.help4adhd.org) or by phone (800-233-4050) between 9AM and 5PM EST and one of our health information specialists will respond.

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