Ask the Expert

Helping your Child Successfully Handle Change

Jeffrey S. Katz, Ph.D.
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Ask the Expert

Helping your Child Successfully Handle Change

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Our Outline for Today

- How we experience change.
- “Genetic” factors.
- Executive Cognitive Function
- Practical Advice for Helping Children with Change
  - Schedules and Routines
  - Tasks
- Troubleshooting
- Questions and Answers
Change

• Change is often stressful.

• Change is a part of life.

• Learning to successfully adapt to change is an important life skill.
Temperament

- Temperament is genetic.
- Some children are “slow-to-warm-up.”
- Some children are “easy-going.”
- Some children have ADHD.
Executive Cognitive Function

There are many different conceptualizations.
Executive Functions Impaired in ADD/ADHD

Executive Functions
(work together in various combinations)

Organizing, prioritizing, and activating to work
Focusing, sustaining and shifting attention to tasks
Regulating alertness, sustaining effort, and processing speed
Managing frustration and modulating emotions
Utilizing working memory and accessing recall
Monitoring and self-regulating action

1. Activation
2. Focus
3. Effort
4. Emotion
5. Memory
6. Action

(TE Brown (2005))
ENGINEERING FLOWCHART

DOES IT MOVE?

NO

SHOULD IT?

NO

NO PROBLEM

YES

WD-40

YES

SHOULD IT?

YES

NO PROBLEM

NO

TAPE
Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory
Jack Naglieri, Ph.D. & Sam Goldstein, Ph.D.

- Emotion Regulation - control and management of emotions
- Flexibility - adjusting behavior to meet the circumstances
- Self-Monitoring - the ability to evaluate one’s own behavior in order to determine a different approach, if necessary.
• Planning - how one can develop and implement strategies to accomplish tasks

• Attention - how one can avoid distractions, concentrate on tasks and sustain attention.

• Inhibitory Control - the ability to control behavior or impulses.
• Initiation - how one begins tasks or projects on their own.

• Organization - the ability to manage personal effects, multiple tasks, organizing tasks and thoughts well

• Working Memory - the ability to keep information in mind and to manipulate it.
Oh, crap! Was that today?
It’s a Paradox

• Kids with ADHD change quickly…

… but, they have trouble with change
Practical Advice for Ease Change

• ADHD children struggle to create structure.

• When change happens they may not know how to handle it or adapt to it.
It Takes a Thoughtful Approach
It’s like, getting ready to get ready. (Rudy Rodriquez)
Prepare Your Child for Change

- Tell them what to expect, and why it is happening.
- Give them time to accept the change
- Talk about it- listen to their concerns
- Discuss their realistic, and unrealistic expectations.
Structure and Routine

- The more structure and routines that are built into the day, the more the child can do without having to think about it.

- Keeping daily routines help children to feel less stressed.
• Prepare for unexpected changes

• Set up a secondary strategy if things have to change.
Use Visual Cues

- Calendars

- Draw pictures and colors to show different schedules or to show which day it is

- Use checklists for the day’s activities, especially when it is going to be different
Disrupt the Schedule

- Disrupt the schedule in unexpected, fun ways.
- Change the routine.
Use Reminders to Prepare for Changes

- Give advanced warnings - timers, calendars, signs on the bedroom door.

- Be repetitive - the more you remind, in a variety of ways, about what to expect - the better.

- Give unexpected reminders.
The Crucial Transition Time

• Keep your child busy.

• Having nothing to do is often very difficult.
Handling New Tasks

Open-ended tasks are difficult for ADHD kids.
Make It Simpler

- Reduce the complexity of the task
- Break it down into parts
Show, Don’t Tell

- Walk the child through the task.
- Step-by-step.
- Make each transition explicit.
- Don’t expect the child to “get it.”
Troubleshooting

- Identify the changes that cause the most upset.

- Adjust the changes if you can.

- Teach coping skills- walk away, ask for help, breathe to a count of four.

- Make a script for unexpected changes and practice. Walk through and role-play with your child.
Handling the Emotions

• Help the child to learn when they are becoming upset. Fast heart beat, feeling hot, holding their fists tight.

• Teach coping strategies to help regulate emotions.
Handling Emotions

- Focus on the positive aspects of the change
Mom? What is...Normal?

It's just a setting on the dryer, honey.
Go With the Flow!
References

- Comprehensive Executive Function Inventory, Naglieri and Goldstein.
- The Brown ADD Scales, Thomas Brown, Ph.D.
- “3 Reasons Why Change Is So Difficult For Some Children,” Robert Myers, Ph.D.
- “Managing ADHD When Routines Change,” Pat F. Bass, III, MD.
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Recognizing challenging behaviors in young children, could it be ADHD?

Webinar 2: Tuesday, August 2, 2:00-3:00 pm ET
Classroom management supports for ADHD behaviors in early childhood education settings

Webinar 3: Tuesday, August 16, 2:00-3:00 pm ET
Tailoring learning settings to engage young children with ADHD

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