Guidance for Uncertain Times: Mindful Parenting
https://podcasts.chadd.org/e/mindful-parenting-1587474280/
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Learning Objectives:
1. Gain an understanding of the components of mindful parenting.
2. Learn strategies for improving mindful communication and listening skills.
3. Understand how co-occurring conditions may affect teenagers.
4. Get suggestions parents can use while sheltering at home with children.
5. Learn how to have mindful and meaningful conversations with children and teens.

Intro: Supernus Pharmaceuticals is pleased to sponsor the ADHD 365 podcast. ADHD can be complex. This resource and those you will find at MORETOADHD.com are designed to help.

Speaker 1: Hello, you're listening to ADHD 365 podcasts. I'm your host, Alondra Perez. Today's guest is Pat Hudak.

Speaker 2: Thank you for having me. I am Pat Hudak, as Alondra mentioned. I am a parent of two young men who have both had an ADHD diagnosis. I am also a certified ADHD executive function coach. I've been doing that for about 20 years in the Northern Virginia area. I'm thrilled to be on the national board of directors. I was able to have the opportunity to chair the Northern Virginia DC chapter of CHADD, and I just cannot say enough good things about how much CHADD helps the community.

Speaker 1: And we appreciate you being here today with us. To start off, what is mindful parenting and why is it important now for families who have children with ADHD?

Speaker 2: Mindful parenting is a way of communicating with your children in a way that creates a meaningful, thoughtful, positive relationship, that really is more of a two-way communication. We can have a less anxious, stressful relationship where we, as parents, are being open with our children about what some of our fears are, as well as acknowledging and giving them the space to talk about what their fears are.

If you look at the clinical definition of mindful parenting, it really has three components. One is listening, and as we know, listening is a key part of communication—listening with full attention. It is so easy for us, if one of our children comes in to talk to us, and we're on the phone, whether we're speaking or texting, we might be listening to them with just half an ear. Or, if we're not doing that, we might be thinking about work or thinking about what we need to get at the grocery store. So, it's very important when you're trying to build that mindful relationship that you're able to pause and listen with full attention.

The second component is cultivating emotional awareness and self-regulation, and that is a mouthful. But in a nutshell, what that is saying is slowing down when our child wants to speak with us. Just pause, and pick up on their cues. We know our kids. We can, in most instances, if we're not distracted, instinctively
pick up those times when we need to cause and have a serious conversation. We're also able, in most instances again if we're being attentive, to pick up on their body language. So, what they may be saying is very different from what their body is saying, and so trying to just acknowledge that those two things are going on so that as we're communicating, we're aware of that.

The next piece is recognizing where we are in that moment, especially with working from home. Now it's a whole different situation, and your child might want to come in and talk about something, and you have a deadline that you need to meet, you're working on your computer. So, it's important to recognize that this is not a time when you can give your child full attention unless it's an emergency, and be able to communicate to your child. I really want to talk with you about that “can we set this aside until some later point in time.” And, of course, the next important thing is to then make time to have that discussion.

The last component is having compassion and not judging. Sometimes, as with adults and the relationships we have with adults, sometimes people just need to vent. And with kids, depending on their age, what they want more than anything is for their parents just to listen to them—and sometimes we hear things we don't want to hear. If we're able to be mindful and step back and take in what our child is saying, we can then take that next step, possibly helping them do some problem solving, if that's what's needed.

As we're talking about some of the struggles, for teens in particular, we know this is a hard time for them because just by virtue of the ADHD diagnosis. There are co-occurring conditions in so many of our teens when you think about it. But for some of the teens that I've talked with recently, one in particular had a trip planned for the summer that would really put him ahead of the game and make his resume very appealing as he applies to college. That's going to be a missed opportunity, and that's upsetting to him. Seniors, both college seniors and high school seniors, may not be able to take that all important walk after all the work that they've done. Now, they likely will graduate, but just you have to be able to take that action and walk across the stage. They're sad about that.

Let's just spend a minute talking about teens and their co-occurring conditions. About 25 to 75% of our teens have some type of disruptive behavior disorder, which means they're about 10 times more likely to experience that teens that do not have an ADHD diagnosis. So that is concerning—they’re 10 times more likely to experience this than their peers. That's something we need to recognize but also be able to determine. Is it just a teen being a teen? Mood disorders—14% of children with ADHD have depression versus 1% of teens without any ADHD diagnosis. So, for some of the reasons I just mentioned, these disruptions in their lives, it can be overwhelming and it could cause some depression. Anxiety disorder is present in about 10 to 40% of our teams, and that comes with excessive worrying, and who is worrying now? We need to be tuned into that. Our teens are at risk for early cigarette use much more than their non-ADHD counterparts. So we, as parents, must recognize that these are the kinds of things that we need to be alert to in normal times, and now with the worry and so much that is out of our control.

Please pay attention to what your teens are expressing— even some of your younger kids, preteens. And when necessary, seek help from outside support.

**Speaker 1:** You brought up a really important point. What kind of suggestions do you have for parents and family, whose new normal has created different parenting challenges or unique parenting challenges?

**Speaker 2:** That's a great question, Alondra. The main things that I believe parents could do that will try to normalize the current situation is to develop some type of daily routine for the family. There's so much that we can't control. Taking control of our day and how we spend it not only allows us to get done what
needs to get done, but we feel like there is something that we can control in all of this, while we do stress there are clear expectations. If there's a routine that everyone is aware of, it helps with the kids' continuity of learning—you know, that's something.

Each school system is doing something different, private schools versus public schools, so there are a lot of unknowns, and from talking to a national audience, things are at different stages. I saw one family who has a routine posted and they've got the times and they've got a column for Mom and Dad and a column for the kids, and they have a wake-up time, for it’s important that we're not sleeping until one in the afternoon. Wake up at a certain time. The parents do their work at home. The kids do whatever they need to do academically.

What's even more important than that is building in time for having nutritious meals, having snacks, exercising, going out and taking a walk, following all of the social distancing rules that the CDC has said that we should be aware of. But maintaining a positive attitude also, as we've got a routine not everybody’s going to follow the routine all the time. Don't sweat the small stuff. I truly see this as an opportunity for parents and kids to get a chance to know each other on a whole different level, and I think that will be one of the most positive things that comes out of this.

Speaker 1: I know you talked about listening as a part of mindful parenting. But I was wondering if you could talk a little bit more about mindful listening and the impact it can have on maintaining those positive relationships within the family.

Speaker 2: When we talk about mindful listening, it is an important part of mindful communication. It's also a key component to any relationship that we have as employees. Listening to our boss is listening to our coworkers. We can always do better. It is so easy to if we're distracted to tune people out. Generally we should speak while others listen, and we should listen while other speak. That doesn't always happen.

One thing that parents can do or we all can do to improve our listening skills is go through this process that I'll call STOP, where we stop what we're doing, S. Take a few breaths, T. Observe what's going on, O. And then proceed with intention choosing what would be the best thing to do next. You have a coworker, and we all have them, who tends to get on our nerves because they open their mouth and you automatically tune them out. And actually those are the people where you can get the best practice. So you recognize, okay, I am not listening to them. So stop. You know, that's a good time to practice just that pausing, listening to them, communicating with them, allowing them to speak and then just practicing some of those listening techniques where you can rephrase what they're saying to ensure that you're understanding them.

And that's really the same skills that we use with our partners, with our spouses, and with our children. You know, being mindful, being present in the moment, listening to what they're saying and understanding what they're saying. Things that we could do to help with that comprehension is maintaining eye contact, nodding, smiling when appropriate, encouraging them to express their thoughts. “I hear what you're saying, tell me a little bit more about that.” And paraphrasing, if you're not quite sure what they're saying. Ask the question, “I'm hearing this, but I'm not sure if I'm hearing you correctly, what am I missing if I'm missing something?” So those are some very, very key things when it comes to listening.

The other part of listening and I'm going to just digress a little bit. The concept of mindsets and many, many people have heard of this, Dr. Carol Dweck has written a book on mindset—fixed mindset versus growth mindset, which really means the way we look at the world, the way the world looks at us. If we
have a fixed mindset, we feel as if we have certain traits that we can't change, versus a growth mindset,
where we believe that we can make changes, that we can learn from experience, learn from our mistakes.
So as we're listening to our kids doing this, mindful listening and we're sharing, they're sharing with us,
something that may not have gone quite right. That is a perfect opportunity for us as parents to display a
growth mindset and say, “I’m sorry that you didn't do well on that test. I know how hard you prepared for
it. I know that next time you'll give it your best effort and it's okay that you didn't do well. And by the
way, when I was at work today, I have to share with you that I made a major mistake and my boss is so
angry with me. And what I've learned is next time I have the same type of project, I'm going to take a
different approach. I am going to reach out and ask for help rather than thinking I could do it on my own.”

So, the lesson there is, we are modeling a growth mindset. We are modeling a way that our children can
approach problems. We're making ourselves a little bit vulnerable. Kids need to know that we're not
perfect, but we're also setting the stage so that the next time our child doesn't do quite as well on a test,
perhaps it's the way he or she was studying. There are all kinds of options that we can talk about, but
you're opening the door to a conversation because if you listen to your child and you've shared with your
child that "Hey, I have the same experience as you and it's okay, you can figure this out.”

It's important that we take care of ourselves while we're taking care of our kids. Self-care has to be a part
of either the routine that is established, or just a time that may not be a part of the routine, but that the
parents consciously make an effort to take care of themselves—whatever it is that you enjoy, just playing
that as a way of just kind of getting yourself away from the day, taking care of yourself.

Speaker 1: Before we end, is there any final suggestion that you would like to add?

Speaker 2: Love each other. Be there for each other. This is the time we need each other. Petty
differences that have kept family members apart, or friends apart—put those away. They don't mean
anything. The relationships that we have with the people that we love and who love us, that's what matters
the most.

Speaker 1: Thank you, Pat.

Speaker 2: Thank you, Alondra. It's my pleasure.

Outro: As you've just learned in this podcast, mindful parenting may offer many positive results for the
child with ADHD. Supernus Pharmaceuticals would like you to know that mindful self-care is important
for parents and caregivers, too. Visit MORETOADHD.com, a comprehensive resource for families living
with ADHD to learn why self-care is so important for the most important resource in your child's life—
You. You’ll find strategies and resources that can help you stay safe and healthy.