

A few notes about this presentation

- My methodology is research-informed and based on evidence-based approaches. I will not be citing much research in this presentation as it's designed for parents who want practical information, not research data.
- Most of my professional experience has been working with boys because I am one of the few males in a female dominated field.
- I specialize in social skills for males, however, almost everything in this presentation is applicable to parents of girls.
- **Disclosure:** I benefit financially from the ADHD Dude Membership Site and YouTube channel.



The Brochachos, my new animated video series for kids at the ADHD Dude YouTube channel. Click on the "Playlists" button, then "Dude Talk" playlist

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How my son's difficulty with social skills led me to this work

- You can read about my training and experience at my website, adhdude.com



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About Me

- Licensed Clinical Social Worker
- School Social Worker
- Father to a son with ADHD and learning differences
- Specialize solely in ADHD
- Creator of the ADHD Dude YouTube channel and Membership Site
- Run in-person programs here in Ventnor, New Jersey

A minimum of 6 hours of training have been spent in the following:

Non-Violent Resistance (The New Authority)
(Dr. Haim Omer)

Cognitive Connections
(Sarah Ward & Kristen Jacobsen)

Nurtured Heart Approach
(Howard Glasser)

Work of Dr. Michael Gurian

Social Thinking®
(Michelle Garcia Winner & Dr. Pam Crooke)

Cognitive Behavior Therapy For Youth
(Beck Institute)

S.P.A.C.E. Treatment
(Dr. Eli Lebowitz)

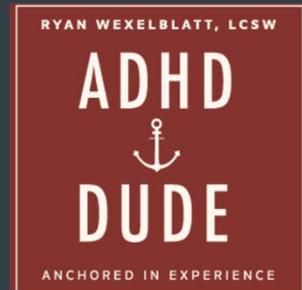
Sexuality & relationship education
(Dr. Isabelle Henault)

Tech Addiction & Digital Health in Children,
Adolescents & Young Adults Certification

Work of Linda Murphy
Declarative Language & Co-Regulation Handbooks

The research of Drs. Russel Barkley,
Steven Hinshaw, Amori Mikami (& associates)

The Routledge Series on Counseling and
Psychotherapy with Boys and Men
Curated by Dr. Mark Kiselica



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Social Executive Function Skills (SEF)

The executive function skills that are required to socially navigate through life successfully.

In individuals with ADHD the ones that I find to be most prevalent:

- Perspective-Taking
- Situational Awareness (*Reading The Field*)
- Relating to others' emotions & emotional experiences
- Initiation (Asking for help/clarification)
- Cognitive Flexibility
- Appropriate use of humor



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Lagging Social Executive Function Skills in kids with ADHD *are not:*

- Difficulty “reading social cues”
- Lack of empathy
- Autism, misdiagnosed as ADHD
- Lack of “positive peer role models”
- The result of poor parenting
- A mental health issue



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The social executive function & language connection

- Much of executive functioning is based in language, because verbal working memory is self-directed talk, stated intentions (Brain Coach).
- If you are not “hearing” your self-directed talk, you’re going to have social executive function challenges.
- You cannot improve socially if you do not address the underlying SEF issues, which are based in language (self-directed talk).



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In Elementary School lagging SEF skills look like:

- Propensity to be bossy/controlling in play situations.
- Often relates better to younger kids/adults than similar-age peers.
- Propensity to talk at others about their interests. (perspective-taking).
- Difficulty in unstructured social situations like recess but can present O.K. in structured social situations.
- Can make friends but difficulty keeping them.
- May claim they are being “bullied” when their words/behaviors elicit a negative response in others.
- May be “smothering” of a new friend.
- **2nd grade is when SEF challenges become noticeable**
- **5th grade is when most parents realize that their child needs help because social expectations increase.**



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In Middle & High School lagging SEF skills look like:

- **(Many of the ones included in the previous slide.)**
- Has begun retreating into an online world of video games/social media.
- Inflexibility may get worse around age 14-15 (Inflexibility tipping point).
- Criticizes other kids (*They're weird, annoying, etc..*)
- Inappropriate use of humor.
- May only want to befriend kids with higher social status who are not accepting of him/her.
- Lacks an understanding that kids his/her age spend time with peers outside of school.
- *"I don't care what people think of me."*



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Will he/she grow out of this?

Have you ever met an adult with ADHD who struggles with:

- Says offensive/hurtful things yet seems oblivious
- Struggles with understanding how they're coming across to others
- Propensity to be argumentative
- "Black or white thinking"
- Uses an abrasive tone with others
- Misses the "bigger picture"/takes things out of context



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On a weekly basis I delete comments on my social media from adults with ADHD



Elizabeth [REDACTED]

Are you really this dense? Do you have ADHD or are you just an idiot pretending he knows how to break kids of this? They aren't broken they are all smarter than you are

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Difference between SEF challenges and social anxiety

- **Professionals and parents often mistake social anxiety for SEF challenges.**
- **Social anxiety** is a fear of others' judgment. In kids with ADHD, it's often specific to similar-age peers.
- **SEF challenges** are skills that have not developed intuitively from a young age.
- Please do not presume your child has social anxiety just because you're reading this. I find that parents often rush to assume their child has social anxiety when I explain this.



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What *does not* help build social executive function skills

- SEF challenges are a learning issue, *not* a mental health issue.
- When parents create “scaffolding” and change the way they use language they can help build SEF skills

“Being around kids with more developed SEF skills.

Role playing scripted, socially appropriate behaviors.

Traditional “talk therapy”/counseling

Social skills groups

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Social Skills Groups for Boys

At The Center for Creativity and Healing

This 10-week group therapy program will help boys develop social skills. Topics include; friendships, communication, conflict resolution, taking responsibility, recognizing and expressing feelings, self-esteem, decision-making, and responsibility. Boys enrolled in the group will master these topics while interacting with their peers.

“Although social skills training (SST) is a common intervention approach, evidence to date suggests that SST has limited efficacy, at least when provided in traditional, clinic-based settings.”

- Mikami, A.Y., Smit, S. & Khalis, A. Social Skills Training and ADHD—What Works?. *Curr Psychiatry Rep* 19, 93 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11920-017-0850-2>

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I have a saying:
“Most parents are unintentionally misled, as soon as their child receives an ADHD diagnosis.”

Therapy might help for other conditions, but there’s no consistent evidence these treatments are effective for the symptoms of ADHD.

-Dr. Stephen Hinshaw (ADDitude webinar)

In my experience, most professionals are unfamiliar with the AAP treatment recommendations thus they recommend ineffective treatments, such as individual therapy & social skills groups.

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Episodic memory and SEF skills

- Because kids with ADHD have difficulty with episodic memory, they may not remember positive experiences.
- As an example: If your child went to a summer camp last summer that they really enjoyed and then you ask them in January if they want to go again and their response is “No, it was boring.” that is because they can’t recall how they felt 7 months ago . They’re not connecting the emotion to the experience.
- Many kids with ADHD will say “No” to anything new or unfamiliar. This could be because of their difficulty with episodic memory, or because of their discomfort in new situations.

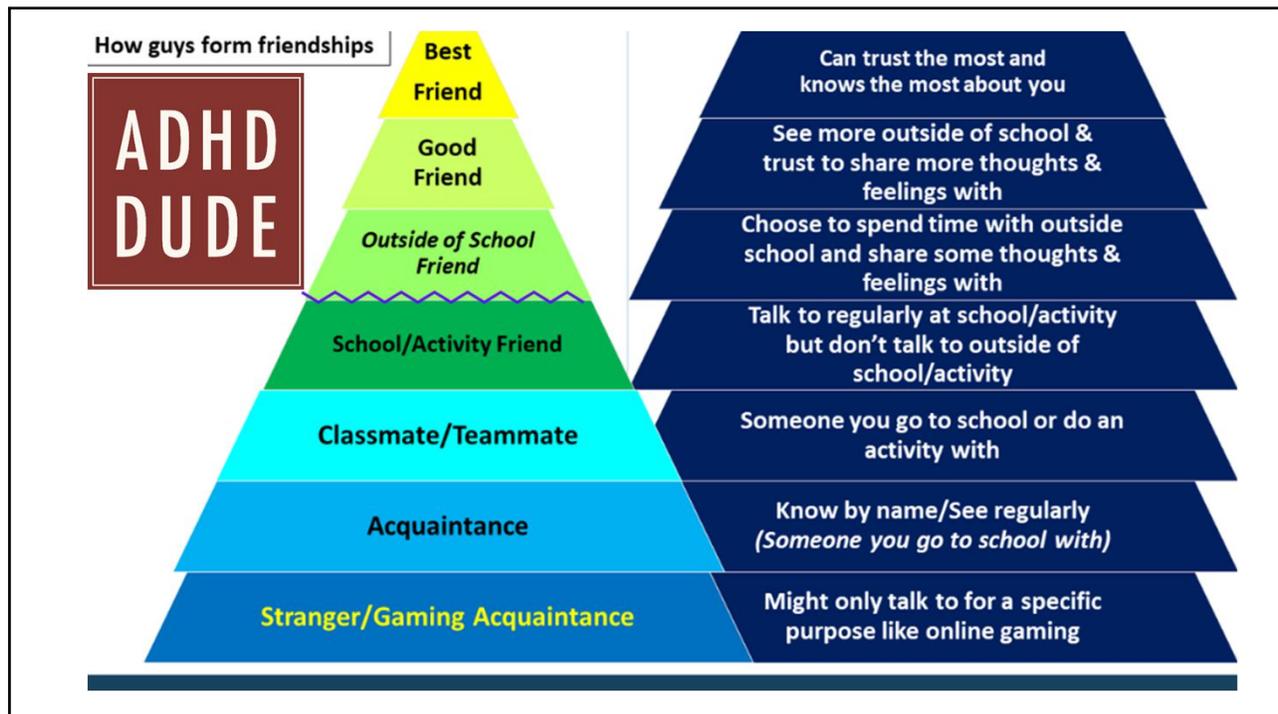


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Some of what I teach kids in my school-year and summer camp programs.

Situational awareness ("Reading the field")	Role in cultivating & sustaining friendships	Reciprocal play skills, "sharing an imagination" & sportsmanship
How male friendships evolve	Using humor appropriately	Getting through initial social anxiety
Showing interest in others	Structuring "hanging out"	Different types of thoughts: <i>clutch</i> , <i>neutral</i> and <i>cringey</i> (Perspective taking)

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Strategies to help with SEF challenges: Perspective Taking

Share your internal dialogue out loud to help model your own internal dialogue around perspective-taking.

That was nice of that guy to pick up the lady's umbrella. She probably had clutch thoughts about a stranger doing something nice for her.

I'm feeling a little bored right now because you're having a one-way conversation with me about Minecraft.

I wonder if that girl realizes that other people are having cringey thoughts because of how loud she's talking on her phone.

I noticed that when we were at Tyler's house you did a good job doing a fake-out when Tyler asked you if you wanted to play basketball, even though you really don't like basketball.



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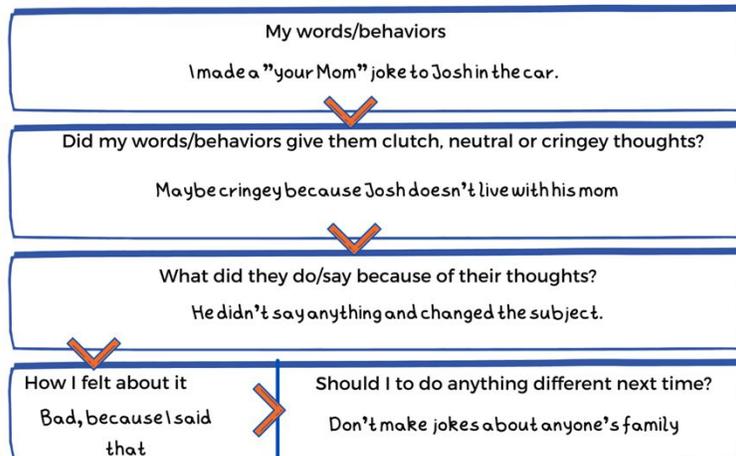
Teach cause & effect of the impact of words/behaviors on others, based on the context of the situation.



CLUTCH, NEUTRAL, CRINGEY FIGURE OUTER

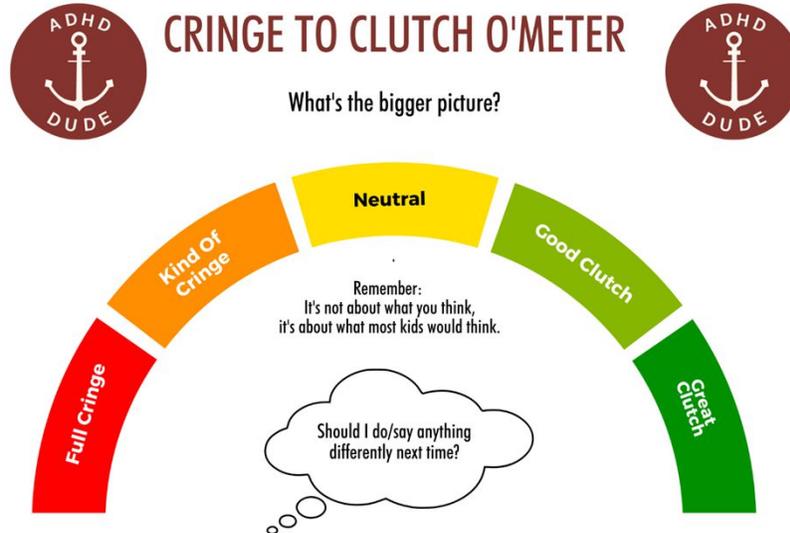


Step 1-What was the bigger picture? In the car with Josh and Mom



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There is no “right or wrong” when it comes to other’s thoughts, rather there’s a range of thoughts others’ have based on the context of the situation (bigger picture)



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Teaching to “Read The Field” Situational Awareness

Things we need to think about to Read The Field before we get out of the car at Walmart:

When are we going to be there? Saturday around 5, which is their busiest day, but not their busiest time so there will be a good number of cars in the parking lot.

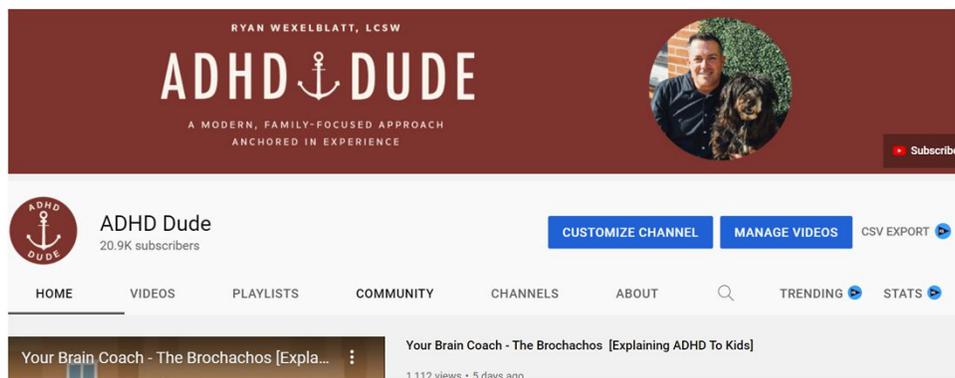
What would Reading The Field in the parking lot look like? Looking to see if cars have their lights on because that means they might be pulling out. Don’t walk too close to the cars because the person driving may not be paying attention.

Anything else important to Reading The Field in the parking lot? You shouldn’t be looking at your phone while you’re walking in a busy parking lot.



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Type in "ADHD Dude" on your preferred social media



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ADHD Dude's Do

- Require your son/daughter to contribute to your home and teach them to think about the needs of others in your family. That is teaching reciprocity in relationships.
- Require them to participate in extra-curricular activities, particularly at school.
- Tap into their episodic memory, to help them recall past social successes and to remember what was enjoyable about being in social situations with peers.
- Use purposeful recognition and praise to help them specifically understand what they did well in social situations.
- Praise effort, resiliency and thinking about others.
- Expect defensiveness if you try to help improve SEF skills without an education in the topic.
- Be extremely patient, the process of improving SEF skills is very slow.
- Expect inconsistency, because ADHD is a condition of inconsistent performance.

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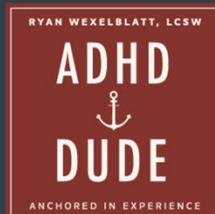
ADHD Dudes Don'ts

- Use your child's sibling relationships or your parent-child relationship as an indicator of their social competency. Kids don't feel the need to "use good social skills" with immediate family because there are no social ramifications.
- Accommodate inflexibility.
- Allow them to avoid social situations or new experiences.
- Get pulled into the argument/negotiation/reasoning vortex.
- Expect much growth in the development of SEF skills if you decide to treat ADHD your way, instead of following the American Academy of Pediatrics treatment recommendations.
- Prioritize protecting their feelings over teaching social appropriateness, because they will learn social appropriateness from peers, who will not be concerned about protecting their feelings.

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You can protect your children from experiencing temporary discomfort or you can prepare them to navigate socially in the world, but you can't do both.

The social world is often uncomfortable, so if you protect them, at the expense of developing social competency and resiliency then all they'll have left is to hope that you'll always be there to protect them from experiencing discomfort.



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- How to know if someone wants to be your friend
- How to keep friends or stay in touch with them
- Go from in school to outside of school

From my most recent Guy's Group

how to get people to want to hang out with you instead of you always asking them and them not answering

how to make good friends

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Thank You!
Ryan Wexelblatt, LCSW, ADHD-CCSP
ADHD Dude

www.adhddude.com
 "ADHD Dude" on YouTube & social media

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