

What To Do When A Child With ADHD Controls Your Home

Ryan Wexelblatt, LCSW

2023 ADHD and Related Concerns Conference



ADHD  DUDE

REAL HELP. RIGHT NOW.

Disclosures

- I benefit financially from the ADHD Dude YouTube Channel, Membership Site, and Trip Camp, LLC.

What I hope you'll take from this presentation

- Be able to define Parental/Family Accommodation.
- Understand an evidence-informed approach to reducing parental accommodation and helping parents reclaim their parental authority for their child's benefit.
- Understand why this approach is focused on working with parents, not children.
- Understand why parental accommodation naturally occurs in many families of children with neurodevelopmental differences

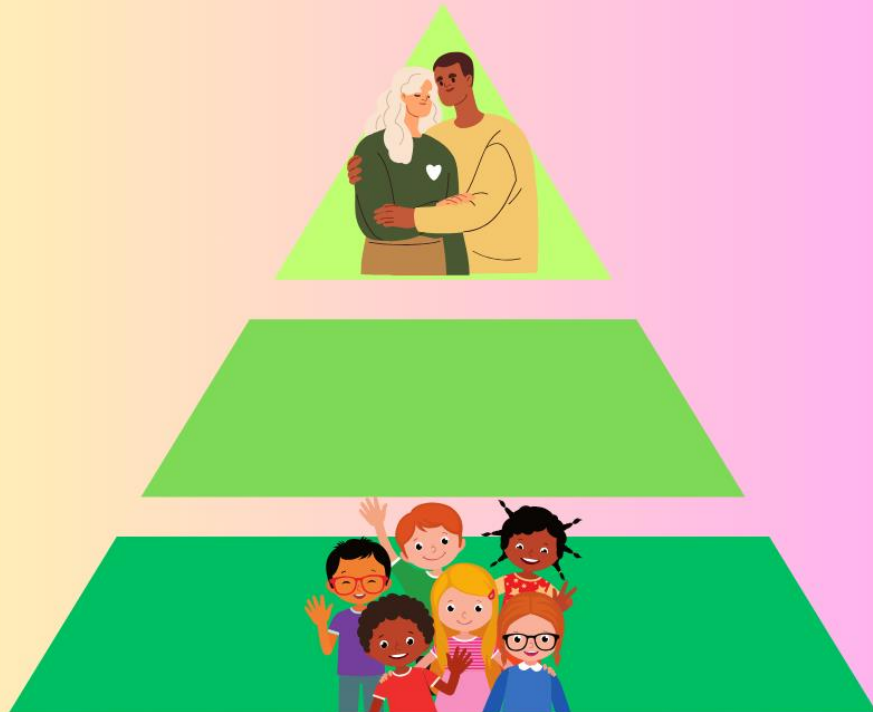
FAMILY ACCOMMODATION?

When parents change their behavior to alleviate or avoid their child's temporary discomfort.

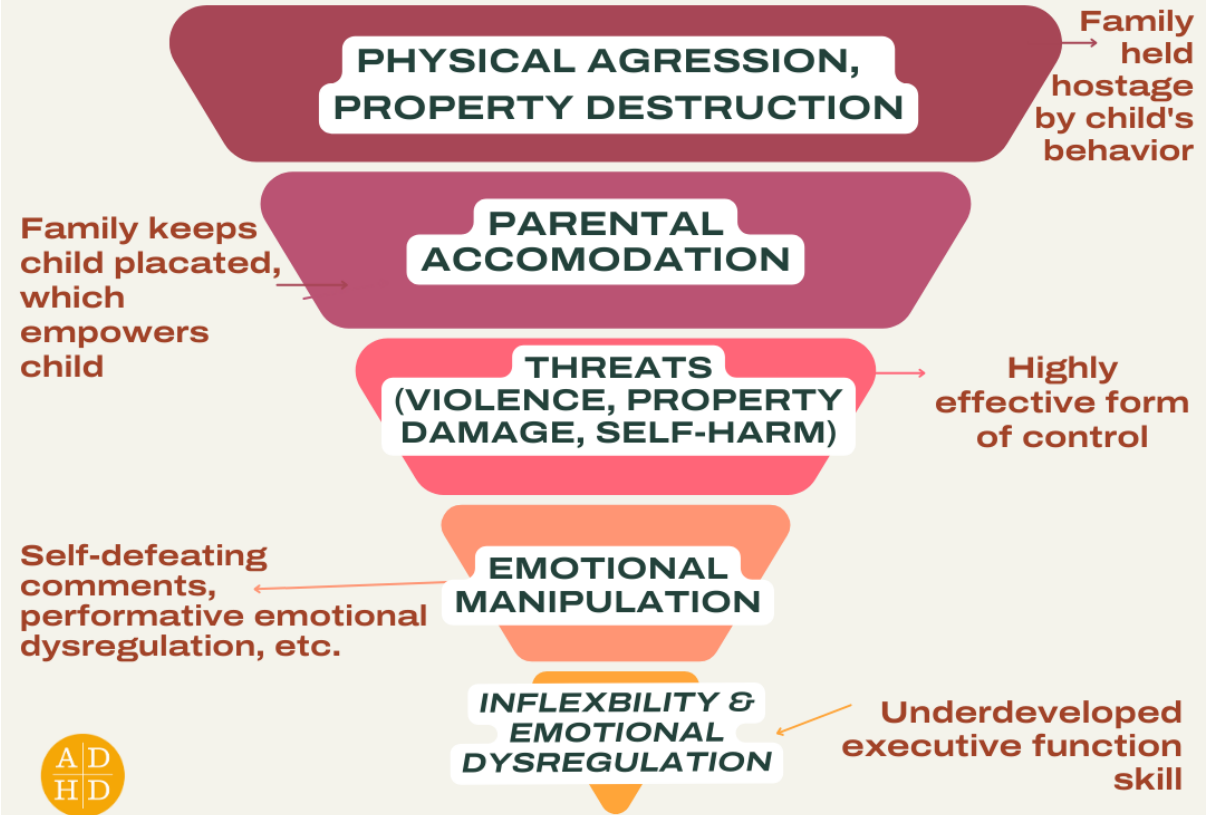
Family accommodation is done out of love to protect the child from experiencing anxiety, having a "meltdown or blow-up" because they're not getting their way, etc.



Parents lead children.
This is how parenting works in every culture
in the world.
This is called the Parent-Child hierarchy.



How The Parent-Child Hierarchy Becomes Flipped Leaving Parents Feeling Helpless



Why is parental accommodation so common in families of children with neurodevelopmental differences?

- Families lack support in child-rearing
- Physical/emotional exhaustion/parental mental health issues lead to the “path of least resistance.”
- Fear of child’s emotional dysregulation, aggression, etc.
- Fear of harming child by setting limits, having expectations, etc.
- Fear of rejection by the child (*parents who have ADHD themselves)
- Misinformation on social media.
- Current trend of parenting approaches that encourage parental accommodation.
- Lack of clinicians providing evidence-informed treatment.

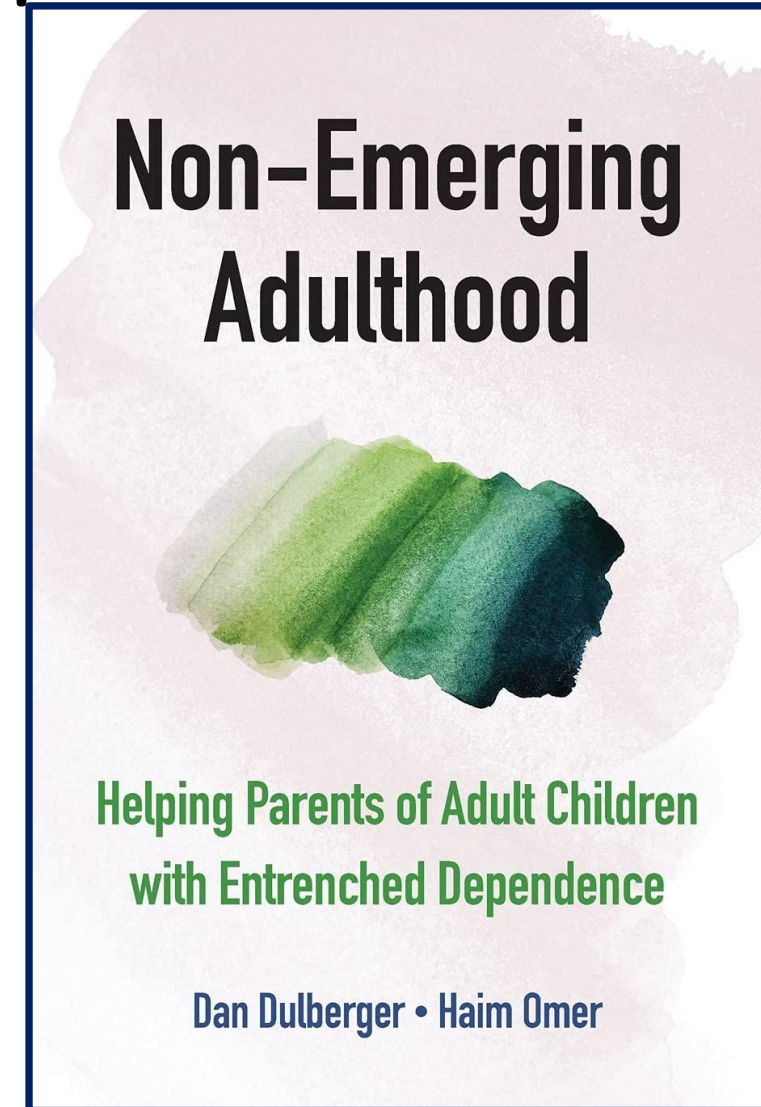
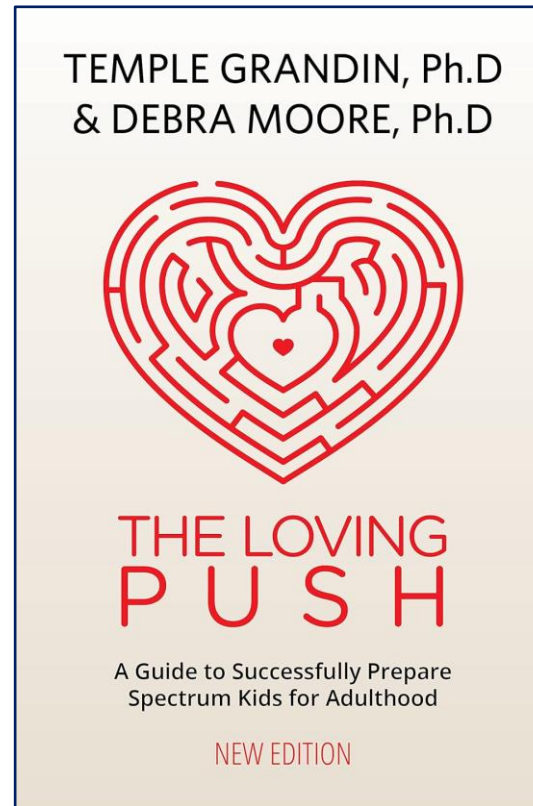
Self-confidence develops through kids recognizing their abilities within themselves, not from adults giving them affirmations or reassurance.

(This is a premise of Cognitive Behavior Therapy.)



Will this apply to families of children with ASD Level 1 (Asperger's) as well as ADHD?

I would make the case that this information is even more important for families of children with higher-verbal autism profiles as they are at higher risk for “non-emerging adulthood,” aka “highly dependent adults,” aka “failure to launch”.



Level One:
Works Well

- Behavioral interventions (any combination)
 - BPT
 - BCM
 - BPI
- Organization training

Level Two:
Works

- Combined training interventions

Level Three:
Might Work

- Neurofeedback training

Level Four:
Unknown/Untested

- Cognitive training

Level Five:
Tested and Does Not Work

- Social skills training

Therapies and Terms Defined:

- BPT: behavioral parent training
- BCM: behavioral classroom management
- BPI: behavioral peer interventions

What are the evidence-based recommended treatments for children with ADHD?

- Source: effectivechildtherapy.org
- Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology

This is where kids
with ADHD live,
which is why we
need to teach in the
moment.

Episodic Memory

The Present

**Non-Verbal
Working Memory
(Future Thinking Skills)**

*Difficulty recalling
emotions/information
from past experiences &
applying what was
learned from those
experiences to the
present or near future.*

*Ability to visualize oneself
doing a task in the near
future. Has everything to
do with motivation since
motivation is an "emotion
of the future".*

Evidence-based approaches
that I pull from:

- Non-Violent Resistance (Dr. Haim Omer)
- SPACE Treatment (Dr. Eli Leibowitz)
- Nurtured Heart Approach (Howard Glasser)

"Working with parents on decreasing family accommodation has shown promise as a means of gradually increasing the child's capacity for independent coping."

Source:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4895190/>



Family (Parental) Accommodation Definition

Family accommodation describes changes that family members make to their own behavior to avoid or alleviate distress related to the disorder.

Source: Shimshoni, Yaara & Shrinivasa, Basavaraj & Cherian, Anish & Lebowitz, Eli. (2019). Family accommodation in psychopathology: A synthesized review. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*. 61. 93. [10.4103/psychiatry.IndianJPsychiatry_530_18](https://doi.org/10.4103/psychiatry.IndianJPsychiatry_530_18).

Changes in parents' behavior in attempts to prevent or reduce child distress.

Source: Thompson-Hollands J, Kerns CE, Pincus DB, Comer JS. Parental accommodation of child anxiety and related symptoms: range, impact, and correlates. *J Anxiety Disord*. 2014 Dec;28(8):765-73. doi: [10.1016/j.janxdis.2014.09.007](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.janxdis.2014.09.007). Epub 2014 Sep 16. PMID: 25261837; PMCID: PMC4254352.

Lucy, 11

- Oldest child in a family of three.
- Propensity to be highly inflexible, often gets “stuck” when she doesn’t get her way.
- Will (pretend) to strangle herself, threaten suicide, and hold knives up to herself if her parents do not give her what she wants.
- Parent Coach working with the family said don’t get into power struggles, Lucy is too fragile. Just focus on building your relationship. (i.e. Accommodate her inflexibility)
- Parents reported that the more flexible they were with Lucy, the more inflexible she became with an increase in the behaviors mentioned.



Corey, 12

- Mother must dress him daily while he watches something on his iPad.
- Parents order Domino's Pizza daily, which he will eat for breakfast. Will only eat about six other foods.
- All meals must be eaten in front of iPad.
- Will become physically aggressive towards his mother (never his father) when not given what he wants. Mother has had to stop driving the car due to Corey throwing things at her head when she is driving, unbuckling his seatbelt to hit her when she would not stop to get him Pokemon cards.
- None of these behaviors are exhibited at school, only at home.

"This is a type of child-to-parent violence that can be categorized as "severe tyrannical behavior".

Fongaro, Erica & Picot, Marie-Christine & Aouinti, Safa & Pupier, Florence & Purper-Ouakil, Diane & Franc, N.. (2023). Children and Adolescents with Severe Tyrannical Behaviour: Profile of Youth and Their Parents. *Child Psychiatry & Human Development*. 10.1007/s10578-023-01592-z.



Sam, 17

- Involved in marching band at school, has a part-time job. Some experimentation with marijuana and alcohol but not excessive.
- Parents brought Sam to a therapist when Sam was experiencing depression. The therapist suggested to parents not to place any demands or expectations on Sam because he is fragile right now.
- Sam took advantage of this newfound freedom and began staying out later and later began experimenting with more drugs, taking the car out in the middle of the night, sneaking over a girl's house in the middle of the night, etc. *"We realize now that the therapist's advice made things worse, which is why we're reaching out."*



Malik, 9

- Diagnosed with ADHD at 9, parents began following social media influencers who pushed various forms of parental accommodation branded as “connected parenting, “gentle parenting”, etc.
- Parents treated Malik as their partner in parenting. He was involved in every parenting decision and everything (aside from going to school) was negotiable.
- Parents reported that Malik’s behavior began to deteriorate, became more irritable and he started to become physically aggressive, which was new. Teachers reported that he appeared sad and irritable in school. Began on depression medication.
- A year later they came to understand that the parenting approach they were implementing caused Malik’s deterioration because it had made him highly anxious.
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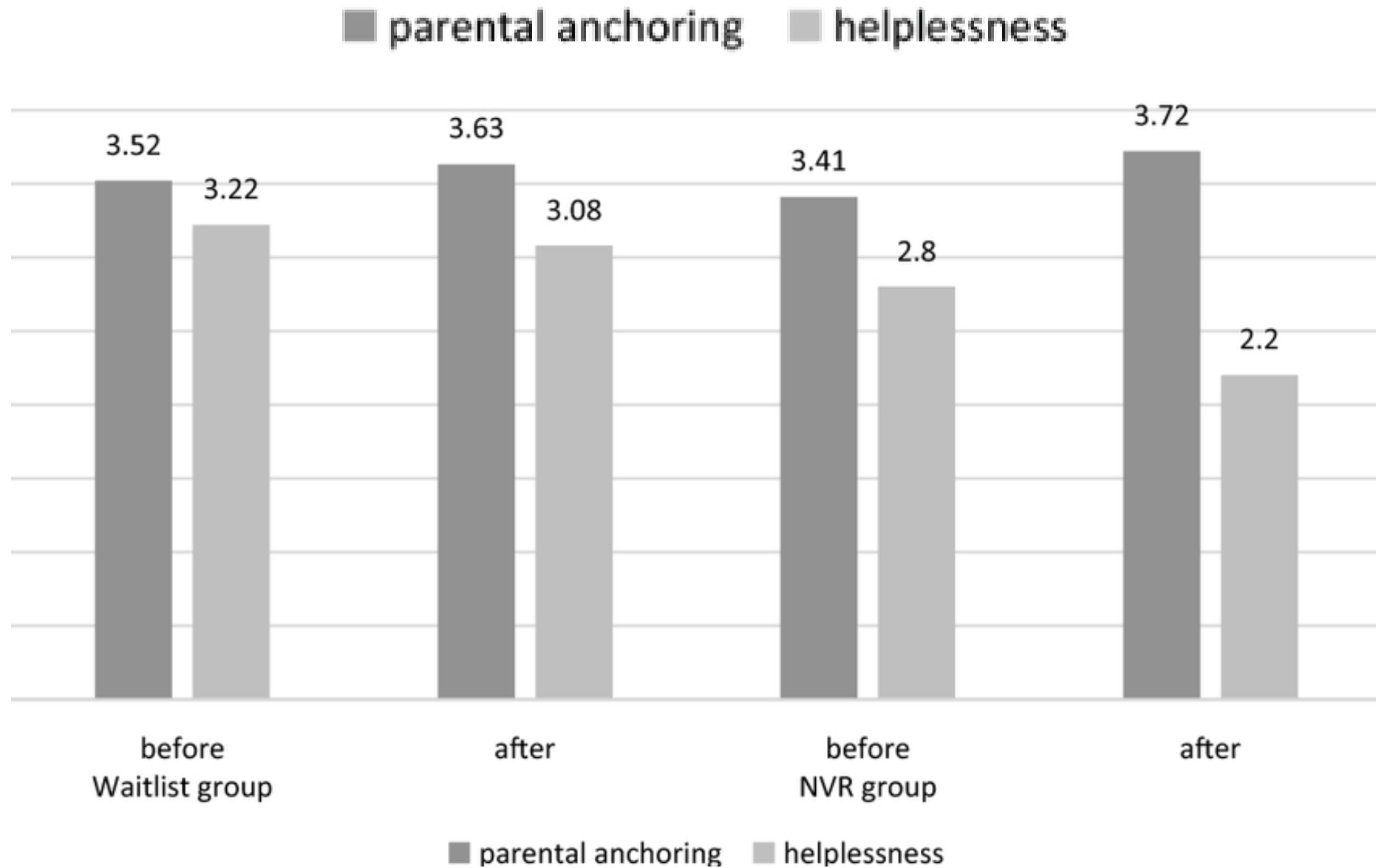
Helplessness & Parental Anchoring

- When the parent-child hierarchy is flipped upside down, parents often feel helpless. They may feel that they have no control over their child and that their family life is controlled by their child's emotional dysregulation and behaviors.
- Many parents fall into learned helplessness:
 - "My 11-year-old won't take ADHD medication."*
 - "If we limit screen time, he becomes violent, so we've stopped putting limits on screen time."*
 - "She won't go to school; she steals my debit card to buy things, I feel like I've failed her as a parent, but I can't stop her."*

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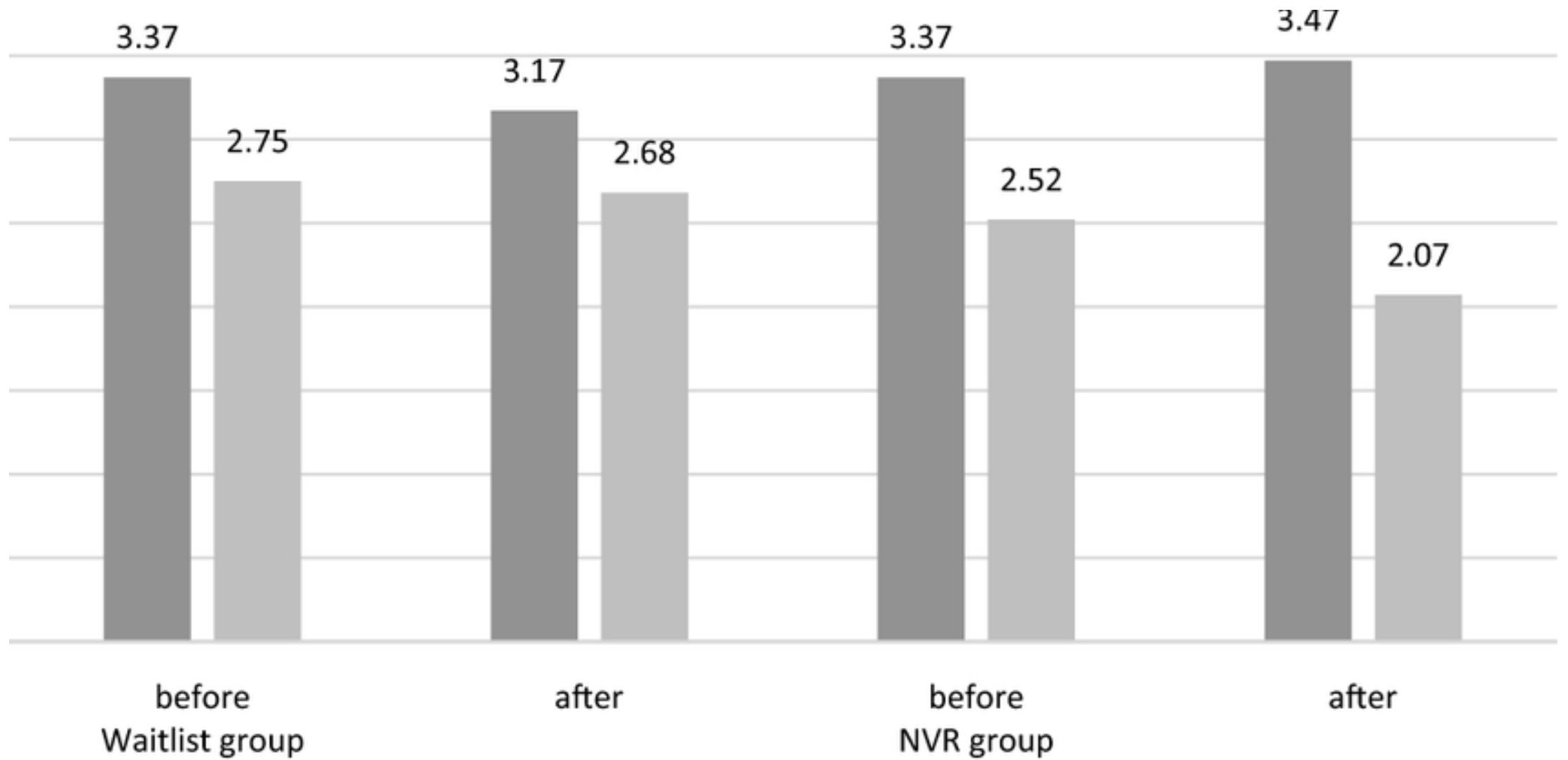
Helplessness & Parental Anchoring

- Parental Anchoring is when parents help ground their children through an authoritative parenting approach.
- Parents (not peers or the internet) become the biggest influence and presence in their children's lives.
- Articulating their unconditional commitment to the child: "You can hate me, and I'm not going anywhere because I care about you too much."



Changes in the mothers' helplessness and anchoring over time across treatment groups

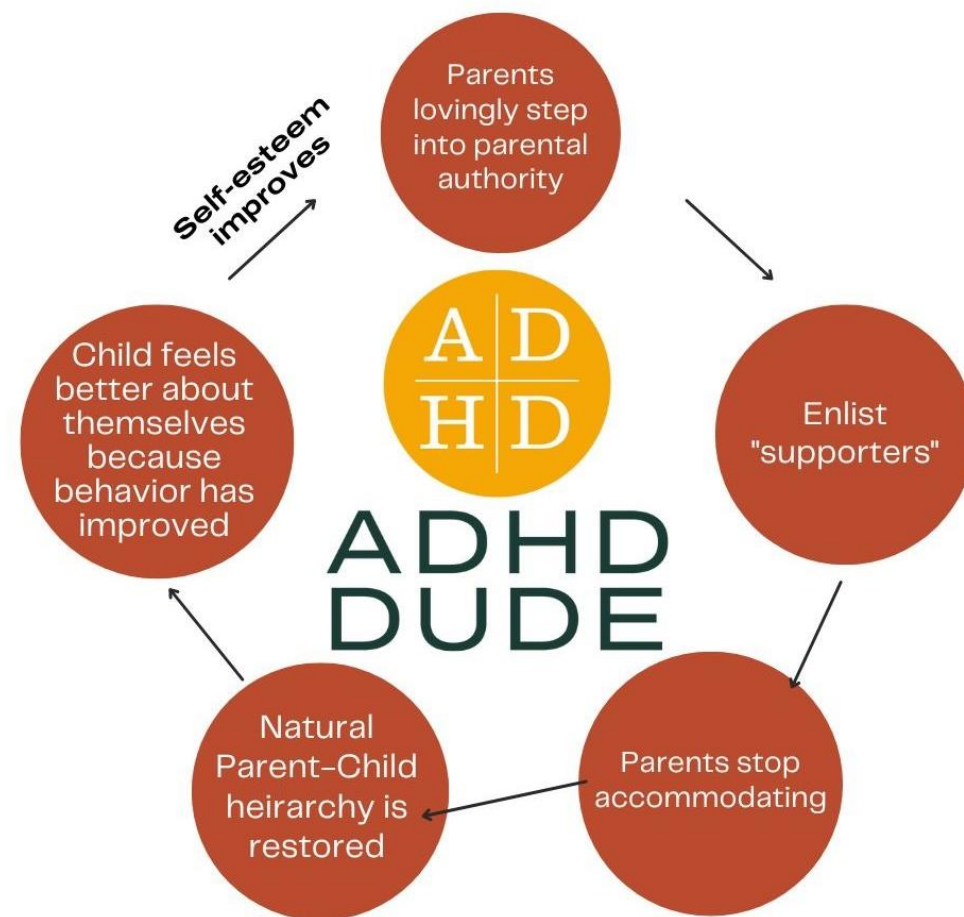
■ parental anchoring ■ helplessness



Changes in the fathers' helplessness and anchoring over time across treatment groups

The premise of the work here

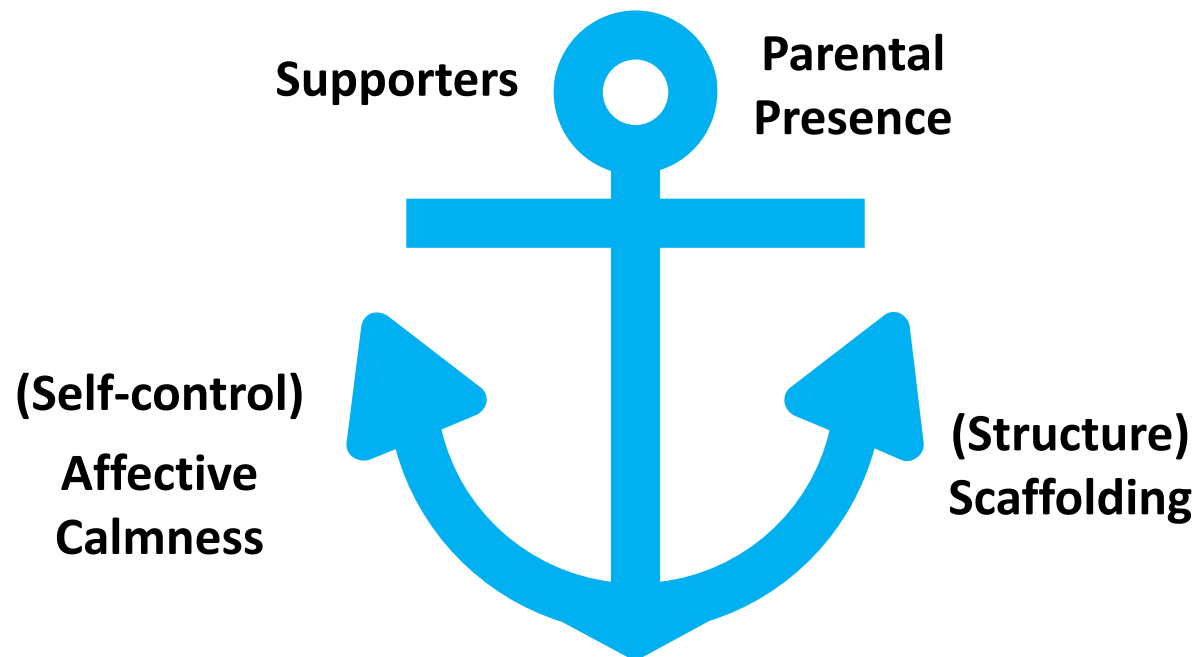
- No one is at fault; this is not about blame.
- The child *will not* be asked to change anything; rather, the parents will learn how to stop engaging in parental accommodation and reclaim parental authority by serving as their child's anchor.
- This is not about being punitive, not about punishments, etc.





The anchoring function

Stepping into parental authority



The plan

1. Identifying the 1st accommodation to target
2. Identifying and enlisting supporters
3. The “announcement”
4. Taking a stance (resisting behavior)
5. Enacting the plan

Example family – The Smiths

- 15yo Eric, 10th grade.
- Regularly misses school because he won't get up or as a "punishment" for his parents not giving him what he wants.
- Decided to stop taking ADHD medication that was working well for him
- Using marijuana, he is purchasing himself but does not have a job or his own spending money.
- Will destroy property in the home when he is denied things he wants, punches holes in walls, and has caused significant property damage.
- Police have come to the house when he is being destructive.
- School has been (too) accommodating of his absences.



Working on reducing accommodation is working with the parent(s), *not* the child.

- This is about the parents changing their behavior, not trying to get the child to change.
- Sessions can be done virtually, in small groups, etc.
- We focus on the outcome the family wants, not on how they want the child to change.



I. Identifying the accommodation to target

Goal: For Eric to attend school regularly

- Typically, I suggest targeting whatever the family feels is causing the most stress for the entire family.
- In the case of Eric, I suggested targeting the school avoidance issue, so it does not turn into complete school refusal.

-Parents will resist his school refusal.

-Access to his phone service is dependent upon him going to school.

-If Eric refuses to go to school – the home internet is shut off, his phone is shut off, TV remotes are removed, etc.

-No negotiating about going to school, no response to property destruction, threats unless safety is a concern.



2. Identifying & Enlisting Supporters

- Supporters are people whom the child respects; they do not need to be local.
- Grandparents, aunts, uncles, older cousins, youth group leader, family friend, etc.
- Supporters would likely not want to know about their maladaptive behaviors because they would feel embarrassed. This is called “constructive shame”.
- The job of supporters is to offer support and encouragement, nothing else.



3. The “announcement”

- The announcement is a letter prepared by the parents to be read to the child.
- It is a way to formalize how the parents will reduce accommodation and explain to the child what changes they will make.
- The tone of the announcement is supportive and loving; it is never about telling the child what they are doing wrong or what they need to change.
- In the announcement the parents take responsibility for accommodating the child and acknowledge how their behavior has not been helpful.



Example of an announcement letter

Dear Eric,

We love you very much. You are thoughtful, curious, fun to be with, and are so talented with the videos you make. Every year since you've been in school, your teachers have commented that you ask great questions and are helpful to your classmates. You have shown that when you want to accomplish something you will make it happen.

We recognize as your parents that we have been doing e things at home that have not been helpful to you. We love you too much to continue to allow you to miss school, and we take responsibility for the amount of school you have missed this year.

Here are the things that we will be changing because we want the best for you and want you to feel successful:

1. Moving forward, if you choose not to go to school, your phone will be shut off during the school day. Additionally, the home internet will be turned off as well.
2. If you refuse to go to school, Grandpop, Aunt Tina, James from your youth group, and Dad's friend Jim will be reaching out to you because they care about you and want the best for you. They are only going to be offering you their support and asking how they can help you.
3. If you refuse to go to school, we will no longer get into discussions about why you don't want to go, we will no longer plead with you or try to negotiate to get you to go. We will remind you once of your choices and let you decide what you want to do.
4. We will not respond to your threats or destroy things in the home. If we feel that your behavior is unsafe, we will call the police as we have done in the past, because as your parents it is our job to protect you and your sister.
5. If there is anything you feel that we can do differently that would help you with getting to school we want to hear your thoughts, because we want you to be successful and will do whatever we can to help you.

We love you very much and know that you can do this.

4. Taking a stance (Resisting the behavior)

Taking a stance essentially means that the parents verbally articulate to the child that they will not accept their behavior because they love and care about the child.

There are no threats, ultimatums, etc.

Eric Example: “Turn my phone or I’m not going to school.”

Parents taking a stance: We will not accept you not going to school; we care about you too much to allow you to sit at home all day.



5. Reaching out to supporters

Parents to Aunt Tina: “Hi Tina, Eric is having a hard time right now and refusing to go to school do you mind reaching out to him?”

Aunt Tina to Eric: “Hi Eric, I know you’re having a hard time getting to school, I know you can do this; what can I do to help you?”



6. Enacting the plan

Things will often get worse before they get better. This can be the most challenging time for families as behaviors can escalate.

When parents reclaim their parental authority on top of the parent-child hierarchy, it can feel like a loss of control to the child.

Many children will escalate to see if their parents are serious and if they will hold their ground.

For many children, they need to mourn the loss of their control in the home.

This is the time when parents often need the most support, as the period of escalation can vary, depending on the child.

Other strategies incorporated into this approach

- Give attention, recognition, and purposeful praise to desired behaviors; do not give attention or emotional reactivity to negative behaviors.
- Praise effort, resiliency, cognitive flexibility, and thinking about others.
- Avoid “empty praise” such as “Great job” or “You’re so smart.”
- Who are the supports that can help you with the four aspects of serving as an anchor? Parents need support because this can be extremely challenging, particularly if the child is highly skilled at emotional manipulation.

Kids with ADHD need to feel competent & useful.

Teaching them to make food for themselves & help with meals builds executive function skills & gives them a sense of purpose, which helps them feel capable & confident.



Avoid...

Over-validating Over-empathizing

Over-processing feelings (playing “armchair therapist”)

Over-negotiating Over-asking

Over-thinking Over-suggesting

Your job is not to make everything better.

Your job is not to keep your child comfortable.

Your job is to help your child develop the resiliency and the skills required, so they’re on a pathway towards becoming a capable, independent adult.



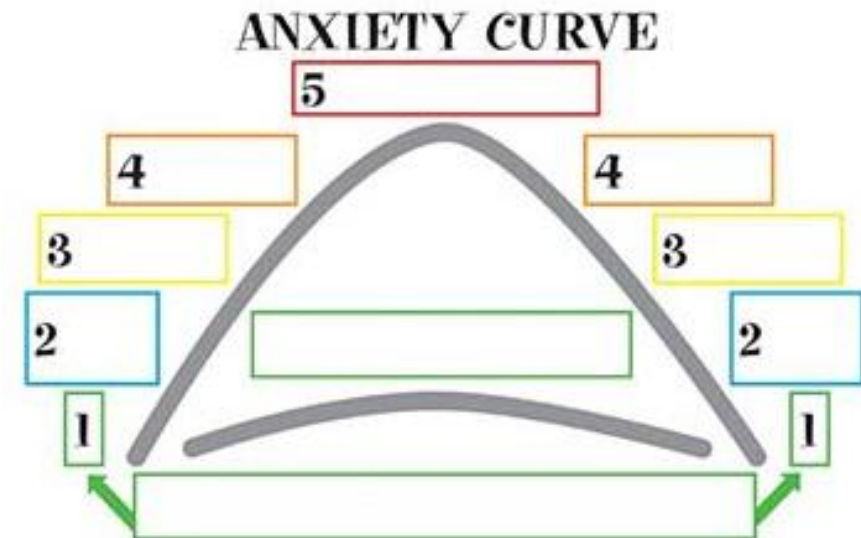
Common objections

- I don't want to lose connection with my child.
- I'm worried they won't feel heard.
- What if they mean what they're threatening?
- I'm scared I'll traumatize them.
- I don't want to hurt their self-esteem
- The therapist/parent coach/social media "expert" said the opposite of what you're saying, so I don't know who to believe.



How I would vary this approach for a child diagnosed with higher-verbal autism

- 1. Is there parent-child codependency, and if so, how severe?
- 2. Would a proactive med adjustment be helpful in advance of this, given that anxiety may increase?
- 2. Have suicidal threats been made?
- 3. Psychoeducation around anxiety using visuals like this.
- 4. It is important to ensure they understood the “announcement” as they may have become anxious and not heard correctly or distorted what was said.



Click on "Playlists" to see different topics of videos

The screenshot shows the YouTube channel for ADHD Dude. At the top, there is a banner with the channel's logo, a profile picture of Ryan Wexelblatt, and buttons for 'SUBSCRIBE' and 'MAILING LIST'. Below the banner, the channel name 'ADHD Dude' is displayed with a verified badge, along with the handle '@ADHDDude', 50K subscribers, and 438 videos. The tagline 'Real Help. Right Now.' and the website 'adhdude.com' are also visible. Navigation tabs include Home, Videos, Shorts, Live, Playlists, Community, Channels, and About. The 'Playlists' tab is selected, showing a playlist titled '[Parents] Start Here If New To ADHD Dude'. The first video in the playlist is 'How To Help Your ADHD Child Read Social Cues', which is currently playing in a video player. Below the video player, there are six video thumbnails with their respective titles, view counts, and upload dates.

ADHD Dude ✓
@ADHDDude · 50K subscribers · 438 videos
Real Help. Right Now. >
adhdude.com and 1 more link

Customize channel Manage videos View channel stats

Home Videos Shorts Live Playlists Community Channels About

How To Help Your ADHD Child Read Social Cues
2,132 views · 6 days ago
Real Help. Right Now.
ADHD Dude is Ryan Wexelblatt, LCSW, ADHD-CCSP.
Ryan is the father to a son with ADHD, a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, a Certified School Social Worker, an ADHD-Certified Clinical Services Provider, and creator of ADHD Dude and Trip ...
READ MORE

Videos ▶ Play all

- Stop Making Lists for Your ADHD Child: Try This Instead**
1.7K views · 4 days ago · 17 VPH
- How To Help Your ADHD Child Read Social Cues**
2.1K views · 6 days ago · 15 VPH
- Decluttering Dilemma: Why Your ADHD Child Thrives in ...**
2.9K views · 12 days ago
- How Can I Help My ADHD Child Improve Their Social...**
1.2K views · 2 weeks ago
- Empowering Your ADHD Child with Realistic Goals**
1.6K views · 3 weeks ago
- How Do I Help My ADHD Child Focus?**
1.8K views · 3 weeks ago

[Parents] Start Here If New To ADHD Dude ▶ Play all
This playlist will help get you oriented to the ADHD Dude® methodology

ADHD Dude Membership Site



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THE MOST EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS FOR PARENTS OF KIDS WITH ADHD.

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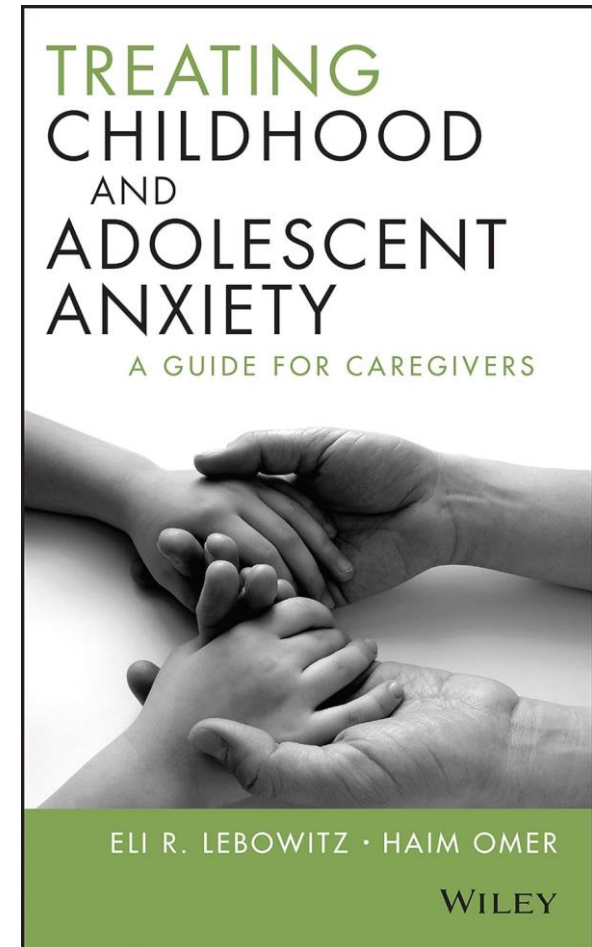
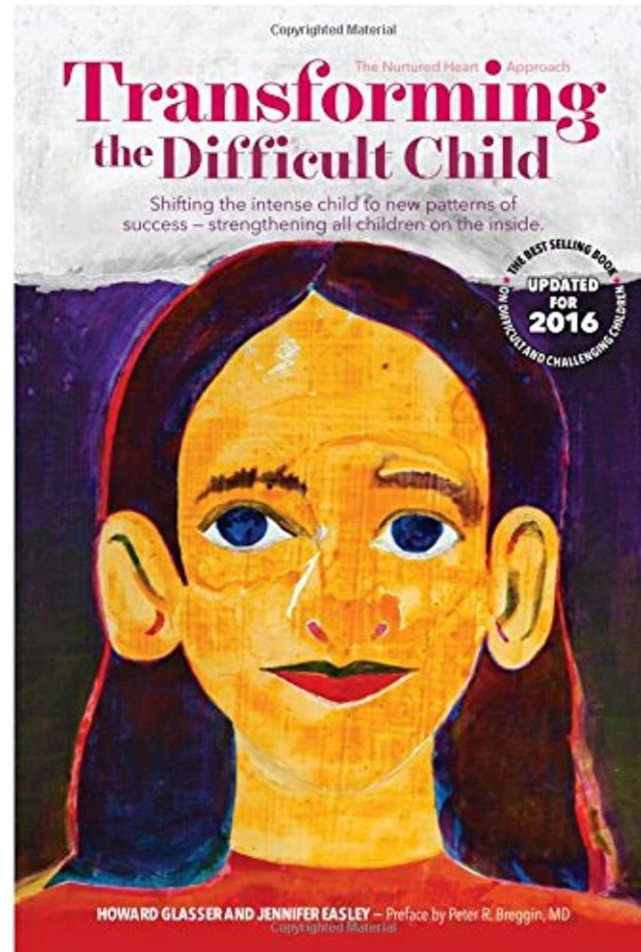
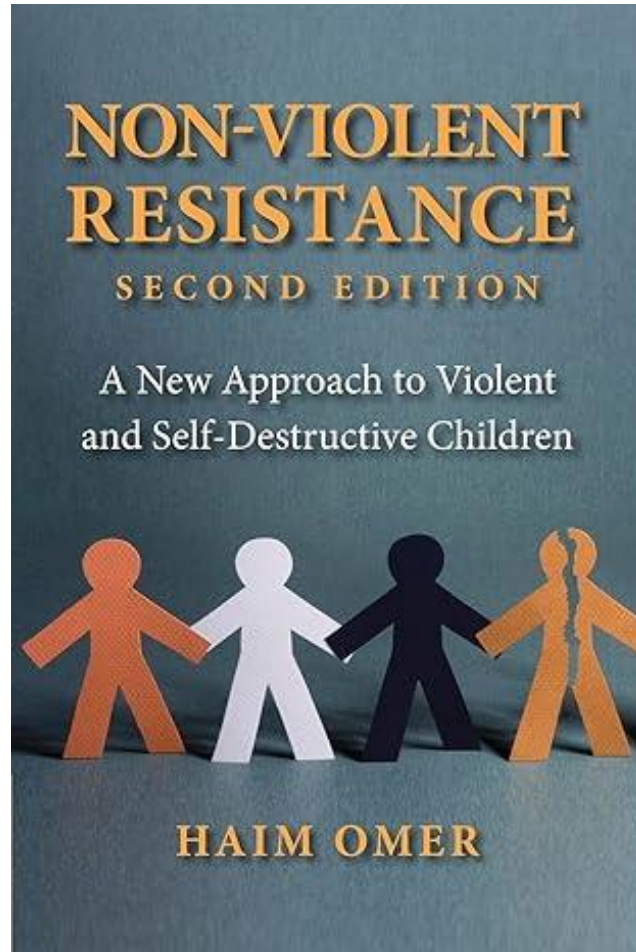


PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS THAT YOU CAN START IMPLEMENTING IMMEDIATELY.

The ADHD Dude membership site consists of ADHD Dude webinars designed specifically for parents of kids with ADHD.

Thousands of families worldwide have successfully used these strategies to help their child with ADHD improve executive function skills, behavior, social skills, independence, and self-confidence.

Suggested Readings for Clinicians

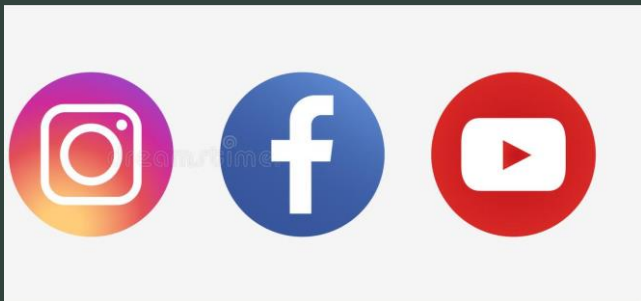


Final thoughts

- Empower parents to understand they must have a greater influence over their children than peers or social media.
- Many parents are desperate for their child's approval; they need support to understand that their child being temporarily upset with them will not damage their relationship.
- I stress the importance of kids being connected to their community through activities, youth groups, etc.
- Help parents discern evidence-informed information from opinions and pseudo-science on social media.
- Teach parents that phones the internet are not entitlements; they are privileges to be earned by meeting realistic, age-appropriate expectations. (Shifting away from "high giving/low expectations)

Thank You!
Ryan Wexelblatt, LCSW
ADHD Dude

“ADHD Dude” on
YouTube & social media



I am a mother of 2 children with ADHD and also a therapist. I've never had anything as useful as your training. I'm using it a lot with my kids and I'm referring you to my clients too. I explain to them that I cannot treat their children with ADHD, but they can help them a lot by taking your courses.

