

Research-based Interventions Addressing Social Challenges

This supplemental handout provides further details about psychosocial interventions for social functioning that have been found to be effective for children with ADHD. It also provides guidance on how to find a treatment provider and how to effectively collaborate with schools.

Research has repeatedly shown that one group of effective interventions for children with ADHD involves training adults who are with them in their daily lives to administer behavioral interventions at the 'point of performance.' Because children with ADHD have difficulty remembering to use something they learned in one setting in another setting, children with ADHD benefit from behavioral interventions that are administered at school and at home, where they are having difficulty. Behavioral parent training (BPT) is the treatment where parents are taught to use behavioral therapy strategies to identify and intervene to improve challenging behaviors that children manifest at home and elsewhere.

Pelham and Fabiano (2008) found that BPT, as well as behavioral classroom management (where teachers are taught similar strategies), met criteria for "well established treatment" based on a review of 46 treatment outcomes studies for children with ADHD conducted between 1997-2006. Their review highlighted that these interventions improve parent's ability to intervene behaviorally to help their child, reduce children's disruptive behavior, and reduce negative interactions between parents and children. A multisite treatment study comparing medication and behavior therapy and their combination as treatments for ADHD, found that behavior therapy was particularly important as a component of treatment if children had co-occurring anxiety or mood disorders, experienced poverty or other sources of family stress, or experienced significant academic impairment (Multimodal Treatment Study of ADHD (MTA), Swanson, et al, 2008).

Research has found that BPT can be applied to address social functioning challenges children with ADHD have. Research evidence suggests that ADHD-related social deficits are an inconsistent performance deficit, rather than a knowledge deficit (Aduen, et al, 2019). In other words, children with ADHD know what they should do socially, but they have difficulty consistently doing what they know that they should do. When addressing a performance deficit, interventions like BPT that apply treatment at the point of performance, involve key adults in treatment, and plan for generalization and maintenance of gains are an important part of the treatment. Due to this challenge, a once a week social skills group is not enough to treat a child with ADHD's social functioning challenges (Abikoff, et al, 2004; Mikami, et al, 2017). If a child does not know what to do, then beginning with some skills training that teaches them what to do in the situations that are challenging for them might help. However, skills training alone is not enough. It is important that any intervention you get for your child's social functioning challenges include components that teach you to providing increased reinforcement and reminders of appropriate social behavior at the point of performance,

encouraging peers to be more socially accepting and inclusive of youth with ADHD, and promote generalization to new settings and unanticipated situations by including key adults.

Each of the interventions for social functioning challenges shown by children with ADHD that have been found to work have included a behavioral parent training or behavioral classroom management component. Possible treatment targets for these interventions based on what research has found is challenging for children with ADHD are:

- Changing behavior in response to situation
- Following game rules
- Letting your friend lead/go first
- Asking friends' preferences
- Using an others-centered negotiation approach
- Noticing and responding to social and emotional cues
- Knowing when the time is right to act and acting then
- Accurately perceiving success of peer interaction

They have each also included a skills training component or a component addressing peer perceptions of children with ADHD.

Parental Friendship Coaching

Parent Friendship Coaching (PFC, Mikami, et al, 2010; Mikami, et al, 2020) is a behavioral parent training program that teaches parents to coach their child in developing friendship skills. In the version that was researched and shown to be effective in changing children's friendship behaviors, it is an 8-session parent training intervention elementary school aged children. The intervention focused on the development of a positive parent-child relationship, teaching parents to coach children's social interactions, having parents apply interventions through between session homework, teaching parents to set up social opportunities, and reinforce social skills during play. Specifically, in this intervention, parents are taught to:

- Create relationship-fostering social opportunities
- Instruct children in social skills
- Talk with their child about social concerns
- Effectively give feedback to child about social problems
- Reinforce implementation of skills during play
- Increase number of play dates
- Form friendships with parents of child's friends

Based on research that increasing the number of play dates improved social functioning (Mikami, et al, 2010), parents are encouraged to schedule playdates. Because research showed that parents' friendships predicted children's friendships (Mikami, et al, 2010), parents were encouraged to form and maintain their own friendships. Given the finding that parental correction predicted with worse social outcomes (Mikami, et al, 2010), parents are taught that correction is a punishment strategy. Correction extinguishes behavior and does not teach new behavior, so children do not learn new appropriate skill. Therefore, parents are taught to identify and teach child the skill that would prevent that behavior from happening. For each skills that is taught, parents are taught to role play and practice of skills ahead of time with their child and then setup a token economy plan before the social interaction with rewards given after interaction.

Children's Friendship Training (CFT)

Children's Friendship Training (CFT, Frankel, et al, 1997; Frankel & Myatt, 2003) is a 12 week social skills training group for children and concurrent behavioral parent training group to teach reinforcement strategies. Both groups are taught strategies and practice using these strategies in session and then are given homework to use these strategies between sessions. This intervention was adapted for adolescence and found positive results (Gardner, et al., 2015). Research and application of this intervention has focused on children with autism spectrum disorder more recently, but research shows that it is effective for children with ADHD.

Summer Treatment Program (STP)

The Summer Treatment Program (STP, Pelham & Hoza, 1996; MTA Cooperative Group, 1999) is a social skills group curriculum and token economy point system in the context of an 8-week summer camp program. This program is the child skills training and social skills component of Multimodal Treatment of ADHD (MTA) behavioral intervention. This intervention is the most frequently-researched specific program and has a strong evidence-base supporting it results in improvement in social behaviors within a social context. This intervention uses peers as coaches, as well as therapist camp counselors. Children showed improvements in social skills and peer liking into the next school year but effect sizes were small.

In the STP intervention, age-matched groups of 12 children stayed together to receive intensive experience functioning as a group and making friends. Social skills training was provided in daily group sessions using instruction, modeling, role-playing, and practice. Children engaged in daily cooperative group task. Children received training in making and maintaining close dyadic friendships using a 'buddy system.' Children received group problem solving skills training. Systematic reward/response cost program prompted and rewarded children's use of peer interventions. The program included an individual daily goal that allowed individualization of target behaviors. Counselors served as behavioral coaches in school the following year to promote generalization of skills. Parents participated in parent training intervention and were

trained to implement structured play dates. Has been modified to meet the needs of an urban after school program and to function as an adjunct to a summer school program

Child Life and Attention Skills Program (CLAS)

Child Life and Attention Skills Program (CLAS, Pfiffner et al, 2007, Pfiffner, et al., 2014) is an intervention for children aged 7-11 with the inattentive subtype of ADHD, but has since been tested with children of all subtypes. CLAS is a 12-week parent group teaching skills for behavior management and reinforcement, a simultaneous child skills training group teaching organization and social skills, and simultaneous teacher consultation to teach strategies for classroom management and reinforcement of child skills. Collaborative Life Skills (CLS; Pfiffner, et al, 2016, Pfiffner, et al, 2018) is a school-based version of this program. Both versions have been found to be effective, although the effects on social skills were small.

The social component of CLAS targets both foundational social skills such as good sportsmanship and dealing with teasing and friendship-making skills such as entering a peer group and play date skills. It considers both skill and performance deficits.

Challenging Horizons Program (CHP)

Challenging Horizons Program (CHP, Evan, et al, 2011; Evans, et al, 2014) is a multicomponent program for Middle School students that includes interventions for academic and OTMP skills, interpersonal skills, and self-management, as well as a co-occurring parent group. Two versions of this program have been developed and studied, an in-school mentoring (CHP-M) and after school program (CHP-AS). CHP-AS has the strongest evidence for success. CHP-AS was administered twice weekly for a year as part of an after school tutoring program. The social interventions include a combination of skills training through an interpersonal skills group and then the opportunity to implement these skills with reinforcement during a recreational time.

Challenging Horizons Program includes an Interpersonal Skills Groups (ISG). This group is a group intervention that targets the social impairment common in adolescents with ADHD. Specifically, it targets social-cognitive processes and behavioral Monitoring. The group has 3 phases:

- Phase 1: Introduction and Goal Setting
- Phase 2: Skills Practice
- Phase 3: Generalization

The group teaches teen to compare their ideal Self, which is what we would like other people to think about us to their real self, which is what people really think about us and help their behavior become more in line with their ideal self. It also provides training in emotion regulation, which it describes as the ability to keep ideal self-goals in mind and manage behavior while experiencing a strong emotion. This is different than hiding your emotions. Expressing emotions is healthy, but managing your behavior while expressing your emotions is important for getting along with others.

Making Socially Accepting Inclusive Classrooms (MOSAIC)

Making Socially Accepting Inclusive Classrooms (MOSAIC, Mikami, et al, 2012) is a program that targets peer perceptions of children with ADHD, rather than the children with ADHD themselves. MOSAIC teaches classroom behavior management to teachers, combined with teacher employed strategies for increasing valuation of students with ADHD and inclusion by peers. The program includes teachers having warm 1:1 interactions discussing the interests of the child with ADHD, daily rewards to highlight strengths, positive and negative contingency management feedback given in private and explicit classroom rules for social inclusion. The intervention resulted in improved peer functioning, but only resulted in improved peer perceptions when the program was administered in a novel setting where peer perceptions were not previously established. Recent findings suggest that this may be due in part to teacher interactions being seen as preferential to students with ADHD and therefore not fair and to such interactions being seen by peers as not genuine.

Finding a Treatment Provider to Provide These Interventions

Of the interventions which have been tested, Parent Friendship Coaching is the one which can be applied in an individual therapy setting. When you are looking for a provider to do this intervention, you want to find a provider who describes the type of interventions they use as 'behavioral'. The provider should also give you homework each session to implement whatever intervention you developed together in session and ask you to report back on how it went. Many psychologists are trained to implement these interventions, as are other treatment providers like social workers. You should contact your insurance company for their provider list if you want this to be covered by insurance. Other good sources of therapist recommendations are your child's school and other parents. Even if a therapist does not take insurance, you can file for reimbursement of some of the visit cost from your insurance company. When considering summer camps and after school programs that target social skills for children with ADHD, consider whether these program include the components that are in the research-based programs that have been described.

Collaborating with Your Child's School

A positive relationship between parents and their child's school staff helps children do better in school. Whatever you can do to build such a positive relationship will help your child. Volunteering and giving positive feedback to your child's teacher is not an 'intervention' for your child, but it can benefit your child.

Some tips for working effectively with your child's school are:

- Understand interventions and accommodations – Schools can intervene to help a child with by designing an intervention to help address a problem or by setting up an accommodation for your child. Accommodations may help your child for a time, but they are not designed to teach your child a skill. Therefore, whenever possible, you want

to make sure that your child's intervention plan for school includes an intervention component in addition to any accommodations.

- Have realistic expectations. Your child's teacher is teaching multiple children. An intervention will be more effective to implement if it is relatively quick to do. One of the most effective interventions is a home-school note, which is an intervention where a teacher tracks whether a behavior occurred at school and sends this information home to the parent and the parent then rewards the child for their success at school.
- Engage the child- he/ she may have important contributions!
- Model liking of children with ADHD, but be careful that it appears genuine and does not seem to be favoritism.
- Ask teachers to seat children with ADHD near prosocial peers with similar interests and have them do jobs or projects together
- Provide support for their social problem-solving
- Ask teacher to identify peers who might be good playmates for your child so that you can initiate play dates with these children.

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