ADHD AND SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS

PRACTICAL STEPS TO UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING TREATMENT

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INTRODUCTION

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Resolute Recovery
SHAPING THE PATH TO RECOVERY

- Complex, multi-layer families
- Business family management
- Household staff training

Individual and Family Case Management

- In home, custom materials
- Evidence based practices
- Gottman Trained

Private Couple and Family Workshops

- Interventions
- Recovery Coaching
- Research questions

Action Plans and Special Projects
EXECUTIVE FUNCTION

Self-awareness
Inhibition
Non-Verbal Working Memory
Verbal Working Memory
Emotional Self-Regulation
Self-Motivation
Planning and Problem Solving

“I’m not talking about you and your social shit.”
OVERLAPPING SYMPTOMS

- Difficulty paying attention
- Self control issues
- Trouble managing emotions
- Holding information in the brain
- Task switching and getting started
- Organizing time & materials

- Keeping track of what you're doing
- Completing long-term projects
- Thinking before acting
- Easily distracted, forgetful
- Impatient, difficulty with waiting
- Remembering what's been asked of them
"I NEED A LIST TO REMEMBER BUT AS SOON AS I PUT SOMETHING ON THE LIST, I NO LONGER HAVE THE DESIRE TO DO IT."

Female professional, 50 years old
Interest-Based Nervous System
Working Memory Deficits
"ADHD IS LIKE HAVING A TODDLER RUNNING AROUND IN MY HEAD THAT DEMANDS THINGS. I HAVE TO LISTEN OR IT GETS WORSE."

Female professional, 28 years old  
Difficulty controlling attention  
Self control deficits
"I DON’T KNOW WHY I PROCRASTINATE. SOMETIMES IT’S BECAUSE SOMETHING SEEMS TOO EMOTIONALLY HARD TO START. SOMETIMES, IT’S BECAUSE IT DOESN’T SEEM LIKE THE RIGHT TIME. LIKE IT’S SUPERSTITIOUS OR SOMETHING."

Male professional, 37 years old
Difficulty getting started on tasks
Executive function issues
THE CLIENT'S EXPERIENCE

You’re so annoying.
Stop talking. You interrupted me.
Hello? Space cadet!
You can play video games for hours but you can’t focus on your homework.
You lost your ________ again? You’re so unorganized.
Why can’t you…..act like your brother, stop fidgeting, just focus, get control of yourself?
We’re late because your sister isn’t ready, again.
You’re such as weirdo.
Why do you have so much energy when it’s time for bed?

The average 12yo with ADHD has received on average, 12,000 more negative messages than a child without it.
EXPECTATION AND DESIRE TO BE LIKE EVERYONE ELSE

- Unsure of self - Social anxiety
- Self esteem - Compensate with ‘know-it-all’ attitude
- Internalize defectiveness - 'It must be me. I'm messed up.'

AVOID CRITICISM AND PUNISHMENT

- Try to act 'acceptable' or 'pleasant'
- Suppress parts of yourself
- Feel different and separate from others

ADHD SKEWS REALITY - FOR EVERYONE
WHAT DO YOU THINK HELPS OR HINDERS A YOUNG ADULT WITH ADHD? WHAT LIFE PROBLEMS WOULD YOU ANTICIPATE?

- Family history of ADHD, substance use and trauma
- Boundaries and environment
- Socioeconomic Status (SES)
- Co-Occurring MH Issues
- Comorbid Physical Health Issues
- Stigma, awareness and education
- High Achievements, family success
- High IQ
QUICKER, EASIER, BETTER: THE ROLE OF SUBSTANCES IN REGULATION

Generally, substances are an attempt to regulate emotions, thoughts, external and inward experiences.

WHAT IS REGULATION?

- Upregulation when understimulated.
- Downregulation when overstimulated.

Generally, substance are an attempt to regulate - emotions, thoughts, external and inward experiences.
SELF MEDICATION: MARIJUANA & COCAINE

Marijuana
- Downregulation, slows thoughts
- Medical Marijuana
- Anecdotal evidence

Cocaine
- Upregulation, focuses brain
- Dopamine
- Case Study
Case Study
30 year old, Caucasian, cis-gender gay male

- Works in restaurants but educated as an artist
- Can’t seem to get his life where he wants it.
- Both parents continue to abuse alcohol
- Very smart and insightful, fiscally responsible
- History of neglect by mother and emotional abandonment by father
- Strong connection to older brother, some good friends
- Trauma history - sexualized early (12-13) by older male friend of mother
- Sex Addiction - sees pattern of regulating with multiple anonymous sex but currently monogamous with partner of 3 months
- Occasional cocaine use (once a week) makes him feel focused and normal. Doesn’t want to use because he doesn’t want to think of himself this way.
- Marijuana - using everyday but describes as recreational use
- In Session - bounces all over the place, tangential
EARLY RECOVERY

IT ALL LOOKS LIKE ADHD
• ADHD is biological
• Reassess symptoms after 1 year

PRIORITY OF TREATMENT
• Will treatment efforts stick or be undermined?
• If it’s diagnosed, address it on the treatment plan.

MEDICATIONS IN RECOVERY
• Non-stimulant medications
• Intermittent or not medicating
The best recommendations for a solid recovery foundation also apply for ADHD - stabilize sleep, eating, and establish a routine.
Supplements
- Multivitamin
- Omega-3 and 6 fatty acids (fish oil)
- Vitamin D
- B-12 Shots
- Melatonin

Diet & Exercise
- Diet - low sugar, low carb
- Regular exercise/movement
- Yoga and walking meditation

Medical Tests
- Thyroid
- B12
- Iron Levels
THANK YOU!

READY TO START THE CONVERSATION?
Let’s collaborate. We can help.
Dr. Laura L. Walsh

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