

Episode #2: What is best? Behavior interventions or medication

This is episode two. Let's get started.

Smarter Parenting welcomes you to our podcast series, The Parenting Coach for ADHD. Here to heal and elevate lives is your parenting coach, Siope Kinikini.

I hope everybody is having a great day and that everything is going well for you. Now I actually wanted to share a story with you in this kind of discussion. I did want to go over this idea of medication versus trying a behavioral approach. Now when parents receive a child who's been diagnosed with ADHD, when they receive that diagnosis, it can be a really troubling thing for them to figure out exactly what they want to do. What I've noticed in the last 10 years or so and working with families is a lot of parents want to focus on a behavioral approach first before trying medication. Why is it? Because I think parents are more informed about the dangers of medication and that there are side effects to the medication that their children will be taking. And that there are some drugs out there that we don't know what the side effects are completely because it, we haven't had enough time to see how it's affected children over the long-term.

In this idea of trying to figure out should I implement a behavioral approach or should I use medication? Parents are juggling what to do in this case. They often come and ask me, my recommendation is for parents to assess what their child needs and to discuss amongst themselves what they feel would be best for their child. However, I always recommend a behavioral approach and let me tell you why. The behavioral approach is something that again, is something that will be consistent over the course of the child's life. Let me tell you a story of a young mom who had a child who was diagnosed with ADHD in high school. Now she came to me and asked for help in figuring out what to do. She did not want to do the medication route, but she felt like she needed to do something immediately and she needed to do something right then. In discussing this with her, I said, okay, well it really is up to you.

However, the benefits of using a behavioral approach is that it will be consistent over the course of your child's, your interaction with your child, your child's life. So she took her daughter to get medication for it and what ended up happening is this crazy dance that she and her doctor and the young girl went through in trying to find the right dosage and finding the right medication for her to deal with these issues. And it ended up taking a long period of time for them to find adjustments. And in fact, there were side effects that were unforeseen for this young lady, which made it difficult for us to work through the behavioral piece. Now, some people feel that the behavioral pieces all about the child, but the reality is, is the behavioral piece is more about the parent and their ability to implement these skills in order to react with their child in a positive way.

So I worked with this young mother on some very specific skills from the Smarter Parenting curriculum, which is the teaching family model. We worked on her ability to implement Effective Consequences. We worked on her ability to use Preventive Teaching, Effective Praise. We went through the whole gamut of the different skills that she could use and implement. What I found with her is that she was eager to learn these skills and we were able to work through them fairly quickly. We practice them, she was able to see how they were done because I modeled them for her. She was able to hear how they were then because we spoke about it and then she role played it back and how it made her feel. She felt confident, she felt empowered because she knew how to respond to different situations as they arose. Now while the daughter was going through this dance with her doctor and the medications the mom actually became a powerhouse, a real powerhouse in learning these skills.

And despite the child's inability to stabilize, the mom was able to adjust based on any behavior the child was giving her. So as a child was high, super intensive, she knew exactly what to do. As the child became a little more calm during times of the day, she knew exactly what to do to reinforce positive behaviors. What that ended up doing is for the mom stabilizing her and made her more calm, she was able to realize what it is she needed to do in any situation that arose. Eventually they pulled her off medication and just decided to do the behavioral route. Now I'm not recommending that to every parent. You need to do what you feel is best for your child. However, because of the consistency of the mom, the daughter actually began to model and imitate where mom was. As she escalated and mom was able to address the escalation, she was able to bring it down to a level that was appropriate and that was even, and this continued until she became an adult. In fact they have a great relationship and I was invited over to visit with them later on when the daughter had a child of her own, which is kind of neat.

We've remained in contact largely because of this ability for the mom to implement a behavioral intervention on her own that was really personal to her. Okay. Now again, a lot of parents and a lot of people think, oh the intervention techniques are for the children. They are for the children, but they are also for the parent there also to provide the parent the needs and the things that they ought to do in order to help their child stabilize. This consistent dance with medication and with behavioral, what do I do if that is your question? The question is you can do both, but you should always implement a behavioral intervention regardless of what you decided to do with medication.

Use behavioral interventions to help you stabilize your interaction with your child in order to help them stabilize in that way. And if medication is needed, great. Use the medication to reinforce all that. So be very cautious and careful about the use of medication and always ask great questions to your doctor about side effects, long term effects, how long the drug has been on the market, recent studies about side effects for these things. Cause a lot of times medication can escalate some of the issues that ADHD present. So be very vigilant on your part at the same time take the time to learn something that will help you as a parent and also your child in the behavioral realm that exists outside of medication. Now you can find the skills that I used

with this mother on the Smarter Parenting website and also in the ADHD course, which is specifically made to help parents with children who struggle with ADHD.

I think parents should use both if they need to and if they can get away and do just the behavioral piece, I think that's even better. Largely because of possible side effects of medication. However, there is a place and a time for medication. Absolutely. And so if there is a need for that, use that. But in conjunction with a behavioral technique or intervention that will be helpful for your child. Now I would be grateful and glad and happy to hear more comments from you about your interaction with your child in regards to medication and behavioral or even your story of how you came about making a decision. There's a lot of parents struggle with this, should I use medications, should I not use medication? Are there other options? And of course there are other options, but those are important topics for parents to discuss.

There are other parents on this Smarter Parent website with children with ADHD who would love to learn more about what it is you have done in order to help your child. So that's it for me, but I will see you again next week. Just have a great day and I will catch you again later.

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