

## Episode #8: What ADHD parents don't need to hear

In this episode, I cover five things to never say to ADHD parents. This is episode eight. 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.

Welcome. Hi. I hope everybody's doing well. I am talking about five things people should never say to parents of children who have ADHD. Now you may be wondering why I'm focused on this, but it's largely because there is a lot of people who have great intentions and they want to say kind things and they mean it well. However, what they say is very offensive and can be very hurtful. And so this actually is probably not for ADHD parents who have children with ADHD, but probably for family members or friends that they know who may have unintentionally been offensive in the remarks that they've made. So I'm making this hopefully to educate people on the idea that sometimes your words can be very hurtful to people who are struggling with children who also struggle with ADHD. All right?

Now this is in no particular order and so I am just sharing these to you because they're the most common that I hear with the families that I work with. Now the first one that I want to address is this idea that ADHD isn't real. Now if you are a person that says that to somebody, please, please do some research and examine that. Now you may say, "I've done the research and I've read that it doesn't exist and it's not real and blah blah blah." Okay. I would beg to differ with that opinion, largely because science and studies have proven that it does exist. It's an official diagnoses that you can receive from a medical doctor in the DSM, which is the criteria for measuring and doing diagnoses for mental illness. And so it's listed there. It's been reviewed, peer reviewed by multiple professionals in the field and researchers. It's been around for a long time and so to say that it's not real is actually negating to the person who's struggling with it or to their parents, that you're just making things up. So you're saying it's not real, but what you're actually saying is, "You're making it up and you're lying." And so you know. Right?

Now that may not be the intention, but that's how it comes across. It really is how it comes across when you deny it. You may think, "Oh, well they should just buck it up and deal with it." But in reality, why not be supportive and helpful to somebody who's already struggling with something? Why not help them along, right? So do some research and majority of it you can do online, but you can also pull out books as well and talk about ADHD, the history of ADHD, how long it's been around, et cetera. So please don't say that ADHD is not real. That's just not helpful. All right.

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The second thing is sometimes somebody will say, "Well, everybody has ADHD. I have ADHD. It's not that big a deal." Right? Yeah, that's not great either. I want you to think about the implications of what that means. It minimizes the struggle that some parents go through with a child who has ADHD. So when you say, "Look, everybody has it. Not a big deal," you're actually putting it in the category of something pretty benign and pretty normal when you say, "Everybody has it, so it's not that big a deal." Well, understand that ADHD actually is a bunch of symptoms. It's a list of symptoms that have been classified and clustered together to give us the diagnoses of ADHD. Now some of those manifest more severely than others in some children and so ADHD doesn't always look exactly the same for every child. There are some variances and differences. However, they all fall under the symptomology that has been established in the DSM-V. So be aware that when you say things like "Everyone has it," it actually minimizes the impact that it's had on families and other people who may be struggling with it. So please don't say that. Okay?

One of the other things that I often hear, and this is number three. "Well, ADHD is new. It never existed before and all of the sudden now everybody has ADHD." Right? I don't know if ADHD parents have heard that before, but they probably have in some form. The reality is ADHD has existed for a long time. And in fact, in the medical field, they have been looking at this for decades. In the 1960s, it actually had a different name, and in fact, in different times it's had different names, but it's all fallen under the same type of symptomology. So in some places it's called hyperkinetic disorder. And in the 1980s, we used to call it ADD, which now has been switched to ADHD. So it's gone through some name variations, but the cluster of symptoms has remained the same. So it's been around for a longer time than most people realize, but it has been around for a while and it has a lot of research around it from decades. So take some time, do some research, and learn more about the history of ADHD because it will really enlighten your mind and help you better understand that this isn't really a new thing. This is a thing that we've been working with for a long time and we're still working with it and we're trying to figure out what is best. Right? Okay.

Now the fourth thing to please never say to a parent who has a child with ADHD is, "I would never medicate my child." Yeah, that's a touchy one for anyone really, because what you're saying there is a judgment that you, as a parent, would not medicate your child, so they, as a parent, should not medicate their child. And if they do, then they must love their child less than you. Right? Some people feel like it's their opinion and they're just saying, "Oh, I would never medicate my child," but you don't know the struggles that are going on and medication can be, at times, very helpful in dealing with the symptoms of ADHD.

And so to make a blanket statement like, "I would never do that for my child," it implies that you shouldn't do it either, that parents of children with ADHD shouldn't do that. And the recommendation is to work with your physician. Find out what is best for your child. Sometimes it's medication. Sometimes it's medication and an intervention. Sometimes it can be a myriad of different options and solutions, but to just say a blanket statement like, "I would never do that to my child" is rude. It's quite rude. You're making a judgment call on something you don't know

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very much about or that you feel you may know about, but you really don't, right? Okay. So please don't ever say that. Please do not ever say that.

The last thing that people should not say to parents who have children with ADHD is "It's not ADHD, it's parenting." Wow. That is super judgemental. I want you to think about that statement. "It's not ADHD, it's parenting." And again, this is part of that whole blame cycle. Okay, your child behaves this way because, as a parent, you were inept. You're inadequate. It's a judgment statement, blaming somebody and blaming the parent. And that is a very harsh thing to do to somebody. If the child has been diagnosed by a professional and gone through the gamut of being sure that they have ADHD, then what is involved in that is there are treatment options for them. However, it's not as easy as just, "Hey, it's just a parenting thing." It may include medication. It may include a change of diet. It may include a myriad of different things. So be sensitive to those around you. People are fighting a struggle that we often don't know or understand because we're not in their shoes. We just don't know.

So my recommendation then for people who know parents of children with ADHD is to be a listening ear, to be supportive. If you disagree with something, that's fine. If the parent asks for your opinion, then yeah, share your opinion, but it's not really warranted or needed if they're not asking for your opinion. So just keep that to yourself. Don't offer to solve their problems. A lot of times parents just want someone to hear them out and understand that they're struggling and they're having a hard time. Right?

It's funny that these are the types of questions that, or comments that people make to parents of children with ADHD and it's completely acceptable. Yet if a child were physically sick, like they had something like the measles, right, we wouldn't ask any of these questions, right? Because it's the measles. Can you imagine somebody seeing a child with the measles and saying, "Well, it isn't real. That's not the measles." Or "Eh, everybody's had the measles. Not a big deal." Or "You know, kids didn't have the measles before and now they have the measles, so you know, it's new and it was created by." Or "I would never medicate my child for the measles." Right? Or "It's bad parenting. No, it's not the measles, it's just you're an awful parent." Right? We wouldn't do that. And that's what makes it so difficult when we're dealing with issues involving the brain, because they're not manifest that we are in physical terms, and yet it's the same. We're dealing with illness.

We're dealing with struggle. We're dealing with issues that need to be resolved and need to be fixed and so a little more compassion would be appreciated by everybody. So take some time. If you know any parent who has a child with ADHD, lend them your ear and be a friend. Be supportive. Be helpful. Listen to their story. Try to understand exactly what it is they're experiencing and reach out to them, offer your help if you can. Those things are always welcome, as long as you don't overstep your bounds. And those parents should let you know when you have.

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Anyways, those are the recommendations. Please don't use any of those comments with parents who have children with ADHD. They can be very hurtful and very detrimental to your relationship with them as well. If this was helpful for you, please share this and also subscribe to our podcast and our vlogs. You can find us online and you can visit our website, Smarter Parenting. We'd be happy to have you aboard. Until next time, I will see you again next week. I hope you have a great week. Hang in there. And if you're a parent who've received any of these comments, just hang in there. You're doing good. You're doing your best and that's fine. That's all that matters. And that's all that's important. All right? All right, thanks. All right, bye.

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