

Episode #24 Chasing “normal” with ADHD child

This is Episode 24. 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 Siopé Kinikini.

Well, hello my friends. How are you doing? I hope everyone is doing well today. I still have that little scratchy thing in my voice. I'm not sure exactly what's happening, but it seems a little bit lower, right, which is okay. That's just fine.

Anyways, I, today, feel really excited to talk about this very specific topic. But before I do, I wanted to relate a story of a family that I've been working with who have a child who struggles with ADHD. The parents are consistently frustrated over what is happening as far as progress for their child. During this episode, during this podcast, this vlog, because this is also available on YouTube, we're talking about chasing normal. Which is something that I think is by human nature, natural for us to do, as parents and as guardians of children, but also something that can be detrimental if we set our goals in places that are not necessarily helpful for our children.

So with this family in particular... Excuse me. With this family in particular, they had some very strong expectations of where they thought their son should be, and their son actually is struggling to reach those goalposts. Now, of course, standing back and looking at that, we would say just to adjust the goalposts and make it work for your child. However, that's a difficult thing for parents to do.

In talking to them, and helping them understand, what it is, what is the dilemma, it was easier for me to explain kind of the progression and the expectation of human nature, especially as parents for children over time to help them understand why they are stuck in this mindset. Really, it is a mindset and it's a mindset that we've created for ourselves and for our children as we've watched them progress. So I want you to think back to when your child was super young, before they started walking.

As soon as we start lifting their arms up, and they start standing up with our support, we're pretty happy and we're excited for them, right? And so the next gradual thing is we start to have them take steps, either forward or backwards, just one, just two. As they're able to master that, then we expect them to walk two steps, while we're still holding onto them. Maybe three steps, and four steps. Soon, as our child develops and masters that, we expect them to make steps on their own without us holding them. Right?

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Soon though, the expectation is even larger, where we expect them to take not only five steps, but maybe six, seven, eight, nine steps. Until finally, we are standing at the other side of the room and we're calling your children to walk towards us. Right? And we expect them to walk towards us. Now, every once in a while, a child will fall in the middle, but the expectation is that they will continually progress that way.

In walking, when we watch our children walk, it's actually a fairly fast progression of where they're first learning how to stand and then they're eventually walking on their own, right? Well, depending on the child. But most of the time, that happens, it doesn't take years and years for them to learn those skills, it actually happens fairly quickly.

That is a normal response for a parent to expect these things, to expect them to first start off by standing up on their own with our help, taking a few steps with our help. Then letting go and letting them take maybe three or four steps. Then, this gradual progression is an expectation that parents have for their children. It's very natural.

What happens is, is that translates to other things in the child's life. We expect them to do certain things, and to reach certain mileposts, that we have established and that we continue to establish as they get older. Right? So for an ADHD child, we're setting these expectations for them much the same way we have done throughout their life. First, it's with walking it.

It's feeding themselves, like holding the bottle. First, they can't hold it, then they can hold it, then they can hold it by themselves, then they start asking. So these progressional things are just natural for parents to have. That, actually, is one side of it. The other side is human nature tends to be dissatisfied. Now, that's a state of mind as well. We tend to be dissatisfied.

Once we reach a certain milepost or a goalpost, we tend to be dissatisfied with that and we want to progress on even further than that. So this idea of parents wanting their children to reach certain goals, and to move forward, is a natural thing. Both from a parental point of view and also from human nature. Human nature, it's interesting when we talk about dissatisfaction for certain things that we receive. We always think that the next thing is gonna make us happy.

So we always think, "Oh, if I get that job, it's going to make me happy. If I get this..." You know, "If I get a bag of potato chips, that'll make me happy." Whatever it may be, may not be a bag of potato chips, but we desire, and we crave certain things that we believe will bring us happiness. Once we receive that thing, then we actually want something else, right? It's this constant thing of hmm, want, want, want, want, want something just a little bit more, just a little bit more.

I remember being a college student and I thought it was hilarious because I was completely broke as a college student. I had no money. Like none. I remember waking up and catching the bus to school and it was, I'd get up roughly around 4:30 in the morning to catch the bus because I had to take three different buses to get to campus. Yeah. I found \$3 once. I found \$3 in the

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couch cushions and I was so elated, because the expectation was a lot lower, a little bit more, actually helped boost my mood.

Now after \$3, of course \$3 wasn't enough. Then, after a while, it'd be like, "Oh man, I wish I had \$5." Right? It happens naturally, as a natural thing. To be honest, this is a great thing for humans. It's a great thing because if we were satisfied where we were, there would be no progression. I mean this innate desire to progress, and to move forward, and to always want something just a little bit better, or bigger, or whatever it may be, is a good thing. It can be a very good thing. Now, it can be a bad thing, if we continually want and want and we're not enjoying the journey. Right?

Anyways, let's get back to talking about children with ADHD. When we set those mileposts, we always have to keep in mind exactly where our child is and how far they can go. One of the thieves, and there's a quote, I love this quote. "Comparison is a thief of joy." If we are comparing our children to other children, even children who have ADHD, and we start comparing where our child should be compared to another child, or where this family has been and where we are now, then we will never find the joy necessary to continually make the progress necessary to be okay.

Pretty simple concept. But yet, it's difficult. It's very, very difficult to implement. When we are looking at children who were progressing through some issues that are stunting them. Because remember, these expectations are largely put in place by parents, or by society, or by environment, or by teachers, or by pediatricians, or therapists. We have to always keep in mind where our child is and celebrate even minor improvements in those.

Now, there's a skill on the Smarter Parenting website, called [Effective Praise](#). It is a way to reinforce those even small things in order to help your child gain the confidence they need in order to move forward. I would highly suggest jumping over there to watch that lesson. It's a fantastic lesson. I think it's like six minutes long. It doesn't take very long. It's a video. There's some worksheets you can download as well.

But we should always be praising just the minor and the small things that our children are doing well, in order to help them progress even further along the way. One of the things that I always recommend for parents to do is step back and evaluate, are these your goals or are these goals that your child has? If they're old enough to make goals, we should be engaging them on setting some very specific goals.

Now, the reason that we want our children to engage in setting these specific goals is because if they set the goal, they're fully aware of the goal. They're more aware of it and they're more able to accomplish what they need to do to do that, right? So have them involved in that setting the goal process, praise for the small things that they're doing well. Any type of improvement that they're doing, they should be praised.

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Then, as we continually move forward, they can improve much more, and we'll be able to find a lot more peace and happiness in their progression if we are able to just step back and say, "Okay, this is where my child is at. My expectations are here. His expectations are here. What is realistic?" Right? We can deal with realistic goals rather than overshooting goals and then becoming disappointed and frustrated in the end. Right?

Again, as we continually help our children walk, and I'm using that same example from before. As they learn to walk, and we're helping them along the way, they are going to fall, they're going to make mistakes. Usually, for a child, we don't scold them for that. We understand, right? We understand when a child is first learning to walk, we understand that it's hard and so we tend to be more encouraging. You know?

I have never seen a parent waiting for a child who's walking towards them, who's learning how to walk, actually get angry and yell at them, right? When they fall. No. They're just like, pick them up, and then they go, "Come on, you can do it. You can do it." And they start cheering for them to come forward. That's the attitude and the approach that we need to carry over as our children get older, and are progressing, and actually walking some very difficult things throughout their lives, especially with school and with friends.

So, encouragement along the way. I wish we could capture that essence of those first steps and we could implement them into our parenting styles as children get older. There's always the expectation that parents are like, "Look, the kid should know better, so..." Yeah, they should know better, but there's still children, and they're still learning. And they learn better through the encouragement and the praise of positive things that they are doing and our instruction than they do through punishment. We can talk more about that in a different podcast because punishment is not always the most effective teacher, teaching is.

That definitely is something that we will cover in a future podcast. But anyways, what I really do want to point out is that chasing this normal, or chasing what you perceive to be normal, is not normal. There is no real normal because we're all human beings with different expectations and needs. And so it's very important for us to understand that what you are chasing is realistic for your child and is an expectation your child can actually accomplish. Right?

I want to continue this conversation. I think this is a very important conversation for parents to have, especially with their children, and with each other in regards to how we approach our parenting to children who struggle with ADHD, and how teachers should approach it. How everybody should approach it. So feel free to send us a message and let's continue this conversation as we go.

Now, Smarter Parenting has started a [coaching program](#) for parents who have children with ADHD. We use the skills and the behavioral interventions that are found in the Teaching-Family Model, so feel free to jump over to the Smarter Parenting website. If you want some coaching, if

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you need some coaching, we are here to absolutely help you. So jump over there and sign up. You can receive a 15-minute consultation.

When you sign in, we will send over a form you can fill out to give us some information about what's happening, your child's age, issues that are occurring. That will save a lot of time during the consultation because then we'll know exactly what we're addressing and we can address those issues right off the bat instead of getting that information at the very beginning. My goal is actually to provide whoever calls in for a session, two or three different options for them that they can try, or that they can use with their child, that will be helpful for them. Or even resources that may be helpful for them during that 15-minute consultation.

What I want to do is be sure that we can maximize the amount of help that we can do during that time and help as many parents as we possibly can. So jump over there and you can sign up for the [ADHD Parenting Coaching](#). I would be so grateful to hear from you. So, that's it for me. Until next time, I will talk to you later. Thanks.

Resources discussed in this episode

[15-minute Parenting Coaching](#)

[Behavior skill: Effective Praise](#)

[Episode 19: The power of a parenting coaching session](#)

[Episode 6: Your expectations for ADHD child](#)

[The ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast](#) with Siope Kinikini

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