Encouraging Responsibility and Independence:

The Power of Positive Communication

At home, at school and in the social arena

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Agenda:

- *why can this be so hard???*
- *when flexibility morphs into rigidity*
- *the dread rut of Able-ing*
- *positivity changes behavior*
- *Q & A*

Characteristics of children with LD / ADHD that prompt exceptional parenting

- Language Issues - Expressive and Receptive
- Attentional Issues / Distractibility / Hyperactivity
- Ineffective Emotional Modulation
- Low Frustration Tolerance
- Social Skills Problems
- Variability in Performance
- Slow Developers
- Poor Risk Takers
- Disorganization

Situations Related to *Parents* of Children with Learning Disabilities That May Compound Parenting Issues

- Our Own Life Stages (Passages, etc.)

- Child Raising Seen as a Measure of Our Value as Adults

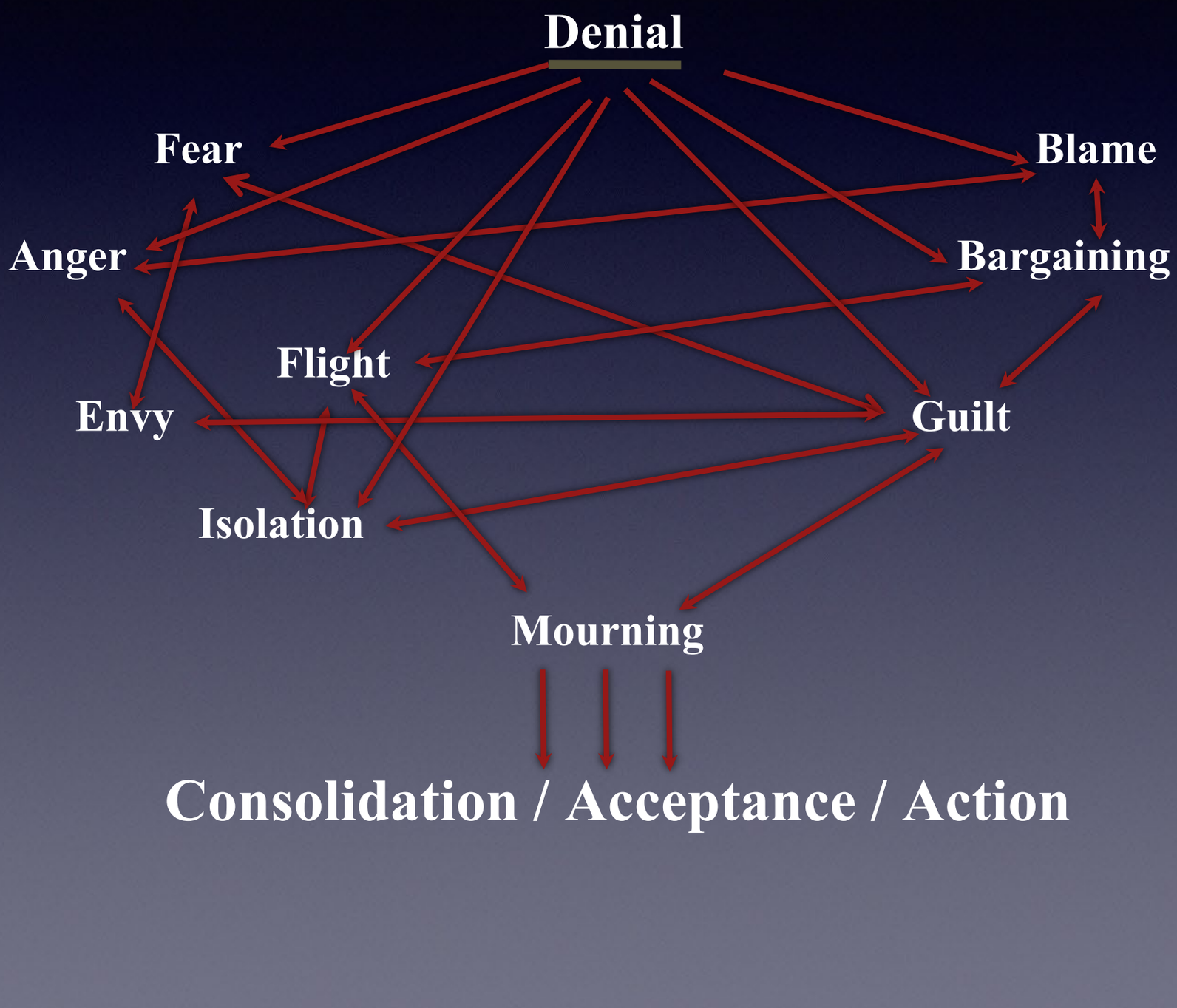
- Proclivity for Polysyllabic Pedagogical Pronouncements

- Current Status of Relationship with Spouse

- Particular Pressures of Where & When We Live

  * *affluence*
  * *competitiveness*
  * *"cornucopia kids"*
  * *neighborhood issues*
  * *hurried child syndrome*

Emotional Roller Coaster Ride Related to the Diagnosis of a Learning Disability in Our Children



When Modifications and Adjustments Become Contortions

- routines need to be etched in stone
- most often doing “for” the child, rather than “with”
- store of bribes and incentives needs to be bottomless
- avoiding social contact for fear of embarrassment
- need to downplay non-LD siblings accomplishments
- many excuses for the child’s misbehavior in public

...Others?

When “Able-ing” Becomes “Enabling”

- we inevitably end up doing tasks our kids are assigned to do
- we see regression in the face of new experiences
- we begin to fear we’ll never see independence
- expedience wins out over instruction - ALWAYS!
- we alter expectations b/c we fear explosive response
- there’s more whining than in a Tuscan village in September
- Others?

Positive Interactions Promote Independence

Are your expectations for your child clear and predictable?

Do you frequently give your child praise and recognition?

Do your children hear positively stated commands more often
than messages that relay “no”?

Do you set limits and follow through reliably?

Moving Our Kids in a Positive Direction

Human nature: negative behavior gets more attention, positive behavior is often ignored. Let's flip this!

"It's the communication, Stupid"

We're at our best when we're...

... communicating goals rather than "sins"
... using our mouths AND our ears to communicate
... *consciously* using our tone of voice, cadence and volume for impact

Praise Power:

A positive evaluation of behavior or production

- Most of us overestimate the amount of praise we give
- Strive for 5 praises for every 1 negative comment

Examples of Positive talk

Problem Behavior	*Opposite*	*Clearly Targeted Praise*
Doesn't complete homework	Completes part of homework	"Nice job with #1, 2, & 4. Need any help with the rest?"
Begins to interrupt sister's story at the dinner table… AGAIN	Stops when looked* at (maybe glared???)	"Thanks for letting her finish her story without being told."
Teen returns home 25 minutes after curfew	Has been pretty good about sticking to her curfew	"You've been showing us that you can meet your curfew well – what happened tonight?"
Bedroom is still 50% messy after an hour of cleaning	50% of the room is clean	"Nice beginning here! What part should you do next after a little break?"

Parents as Positive Spin Doctors

When kids describe themselves as…	*Instead, let's help them to think of themselves as…*		
… lazy	… easily discouraged	… cautious risk taker	… deliberate worker
… dumb	… language gaps	… processing issues	… complicated learner
… bad / a problem	… developing judgment	… impulsive	… manipulative
… unmotivated	… having a history of defeats	… pessimistic	…under-confident
… unable to learn	… needing direct instruction		… benefitting from creative teaching
… weak students	… having different strengths … finding their persistence potential		… learning to ask for help … possessing unique courage

Positive Talking with Kids

- ***Clearly identify the problem***
  - * tease out the ancillary, less significant details
  - * focus on the main issue
  - * check frequently for understanding

- ***Choose the right time to talk***

  the closer to the event the better, but…
  - * the less **heat** the better
  - * the fewer **eyes** the better
  - * the lower **decibels** the better
  - * the fewer the **words** the better

- ***Invite comment about both the child's affective as well as cognitive response***
  - * check for mutual agreement on your facts
  - * give the child a turn to speak – ON YOUR SCHEDULE!
  - * closure & summary

- ***Create a solution oriented plan***
  - * articulate the goal
  - * brainstorm possible solutions
  - * anticipate possible snags
  - * set a time for a progress check
  - * assess the process and adjust as needed

Principles to Guide the Breaking of the Enabling Cycle

- *Communicate and live by the values of:*
  - *responsibility,*
  - *accountability and*
  - *independence*

- *Focus on the "cans" rather than the "cannots"*
- *Provide opportunities for the child to reach rather than shouldering the responsibility of pushing them*

- *View tasks as processes rather than a single performance*

- *When selecting target skills with the child:*
  - *Start small*
  - *Shoe-in for success*
  - *State it succinctly*

- *Tune into the effort as much as the end product*

Thanks much for attending this morning!

Sample Positive Behavior sheet

		All class long	Almost the whole class	Occasionally	Not often at all
Today I...		3	2	1	0

SELF-CONTROL :

… showed **patience** by **waiting to be called on** on before answering

… responded to teacher/classmate requests **quickly** (without arguing)

… showed respect by **responding to my teacher's cues** when they asked me to change my behavior

… showed respect by **accepting** what my teachers said **quietly and quickly**

SOCIAL INTERACTIONS

… contributed **compliments** to my classmates and/or teacher during class activities

… "**disagreed agreeably**" when I expressed a different opinion from those of my classmates and/or teacher

… showed **tolerance** by ignoring distracting behaviors of my classmates

ATTENTION / CONCENTRATION

… showed that I was **paying attentio**n by **Sitting up**

… showed that I was **paying attention** by **Leaning forward**

… showed that I was **paying attention** by **Asking questions**