



Promoting Self Esteem and Positive Identity While Reducing Anxiety and Depression in Dyslexic Children



Presented by:

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Dr. Roberto Olivardia

- Dr. Roberto Olivardia is a Clinical Instructor of Psychology at Harvard Medical School and Clinical Associate at McLean Hospital. He maintains a private psychotherapy practice in Lexington, MA where he treats a wide range of conditions
- He also treats the various issues that accompany learning disabilities, such as stress and negative self-esteem along with many other conditions in his practice
- He is on the Scientific Advisory Board for ADDitude Magazine, a publication serving the needs of individuals with ADHD and Learning Disabilities.



Dyslexia and Self Esteem

- Academic difficulties
- Being bullied
- Feeling stupid
- Feeling different
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Feeling inferior

COPE Model

- **C**reating a Healthy Philosophy about Emotions
- **O**perating a Shame-Free, Judgment-Free Mindset
- **P**romoting Self Esteem and Self Advocacy
- **E**ncouraging Authenticity

Creating a Healthy Philosophy about Emotions

The Price of Suppressing Emotions

- We must feel emotions in order to cope with them
- Tremendous energy in emotional suppression
- Numb a “negative”, numb a “positive”
- Suppressing an emotion creates an uncontrollable expression of that emotion
- Anxiety becomes panic
- Anger or sadness becomes depression or rage

Operating a Shame-Free, Judgment-Free Mindset

The Devastation of Shame

- Shame is feeling bad about who you are (or who you think you are)
- Leads to numbing, avoidance and withdrawal
- Suppression of emotions lead to a suppression of self
- Leading to development of inauthentic self

Promoting Self Esteem and Self Advocacy

- No one is superior or inferior to you
- ALL of us are vulnerable to a breaking point given specific circumstances
- Dyslexia is not about low intelligence, willpower or morality
- Develop and I.P.P. (Ignorance Preparation Plan)



Labels: What's In A Name?

- Proper diagnosis is important for treatment
- Labels can validate that they are not the only one
- Define the term before someone else does
- Calling it something other than it is unintentionally can induce shame
- Educate
- Label is not for limiting oneself or denying accountability

Encouraging Authenticity

- The degree to which one is true to one's own personality, spirit, or character, despite external pressures
- True self esteem and confidence stems from authenticity
- If you are inauthentic, no positive feedback gets absorbed



The Dyslexic Identity

- View dyslexia in more accepting ways versus a doomsday diagnosis (“a way the brain is wired”, “a learning difference”)
- **INTRODUCE** the terms, Do not shy away from them, Embrace them, especially for children. If you do not define the terms, someone else will
- Have positive models of others with Dyslexia

Positive Features of Dyslexia

- Creative
- Highly aware of environment
- Curious
- Intuitive
- Imaginative
- Abstract thinkers
- Flexible
- Enthusiastic
- Spontaneous
- Energy and drive
- Entrepreneurial

Parenting the Dyslexic Child

- Assume they are trying the best they can, even when they are overtly not “giving it their best shot”
- Most parents/adults diagnosed when their child is.
- Empathize, don't say “Well, I got through it.” Explain *how* you got through it.
- Support for yourself as well as your child
- Self esteem and mental health is the # 1 Priority!!!!!!

Mood Disorders

Warning Signs

- Frequent bouts of sadness or angry outbursts, especially out of context
- No pleasure in anything (even things once did)
- Social Isolation on continuous basis, even with opportunities to be social
- “I hate myself.”
- “I wish I was dead.”

Mood Disorders

Warning Signs

- Somatic complaints
- School refusal
- Major sleep or eating changes
- Grandiosity/Devaluation
- Regressive, baby-like behavior

Risk Factors for Depression

- Loss
- Abuse (includes Bullying) and Neglect
- Maternal Depression
- Parental Criticism
- Parental Conflict
- Learning Disability
- Stress
- Social Alienation/Poor Social Skills

Anxiety Disorders

Warning Signs

- Constant worrying (especially about future)
- Obsessive thoughts, intrusive, interfering
- Somatic complaints (migraines, IBS, GERD, stomachaches)
- Rituals to reduce anxiety or neutralize bad thoughts
- Perfectionism
- Avoidance

Risk Factors for Anxiety

- Learning Disability/Academic Difficulties
- Genetic factors
- Perfectionistic traits
- Stress
- Medical Illness in Family
- Shyness
- Traumatic Event (Direct or Indirect)
- Poor Sleep

Pro-Active Approaches - Mood and Anxiety

- “Tell me 2 good things and 1 not so good thing about your day”
- Comment on observed behavior
- Discuss a time when you (parent) felt down/were anxious and what you did about it
- Find physical or creative means of engaging them and discharging their emotions
- Don’t brush it off as a “phase”, “drama”, or simply tell them they’ll feel better with time

Pro-Active Approaches - Mood and Anxiety

- “Let’s work together to make you feel happier”
- Validate that it can be hard to even articulate
- Buy children’s books that talk about these issues
- Teach relaxation techniques/deep breathing
- Self-monitoring. Scale of 1-10
- Challenge negative thinking
- Do not accommodate unhealthy avoidance
- Seek professional help sooner rather than later

- “If you can dream it,
you can do it.”

- **Walt Disney**





Learning Ally

TOGETHER IT'S POSSIBLE

- Parent Support Specialist Consultations
- Webinars and Events
- Youth Services
- Ask A Parent and Parent Chat Forums
- Specialist Directory & Tutor Network
- Community E-Newsletter
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THANK YOU

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