

Family Champs Meeting 27.5.26 - Neurodiversity

Tonight's session was led by an Educational Psychologist and she has agreed to share her slides which were all about the definition of neurodiversity and how the brain can work differently in children with (for example) ADHD and / or autism. I took some brief notes and would be happy to talk more in depth about what she said, if anyone wants to give me a call!

The ways that hormones such as dopamine impact differently on those brains than on the neurotypical brain. One feature for a person with ADHD is that they typically need a much bigger 'dose' of dopamine to get the same hit that a neurotypical child would. So, they seek bigger and more exciting experiences and can be harder to motivate to do the slower, quieter tasks. Also the stress response (fight, flight or freeze) is more easily triggered.

She talked about how hard parents and teachers can find it to identify if the child is communicating that they *can't* do something, as opposed to they *won't* do it. It can be frustrating when you can see they can focus on certain things for an hour, other things you want them to do, they can't focus for more than a few minutes. She explained how this can sometimes be to do with the hormonal affect / the dopamine motivation.

She also talked about the impact on the nervous system, and how all of these things change over time as the child develops [the impact of puberty and changing hormones].

Strategies for helping children regulate their nervous system include deep / mindful breathing. Encouraging good sleep. Making things as predictable and prepared as possible. Offering sensory supports. Understanding that emotional 'outbursts' are the child's way of communicating their sense of overwhelm. Offering emotional connection – for instance saying to them 'that sounds really hard for you, what shall we do?' Getting used to spotting early signs of overwhelm.

She recommended a book called 'Energy Accounting' which is all about keeping track of what is sapping our energy and what is giving us more of it. She also recommended the following resources:

The ADHD Foundation

National Autistic Society

Young Minds

ADDitude magazine

Understood.org

As I said, I'd be very happy to talk more in depth about what I picked up about the above topics and I'm always keen to hear if anyone has suggestions for ways we can share health and wellbeing support as a community!

All the best,

Clare