

Success With ADHD

When you catch a glimpse of your potential, that's when passion is born.

—Zig Ziglar

Laying the Foundation for Success With ADHD

Perhaps you have never really considered your child's potential, and that is okay. The purpose of this book is to give you additional tools to help determine your child's greatest assets and any shortcomings that might make it difficult to develop those strengths to the fullest.

We'd like you to begin by considering the question, "Is what I am currently doing to help unlock my child's potential working?" We know you are already busy and supporting a child with ADHD adds another layer to your hectic day. However, as parents and school psychologists dealing with ADHD, we know that the effort you put forth in learning the latest research and techniques for supporting your child

The ADHD Empowerment Guide

will pay big dividends. We want to help guide you to *enjoy* rather than *endure* raising a child with ADHD.

Every family's journey of raising a child with ADHD is different. Yet, there is a common thread that we all share—a disorder that is hidden because it is brain-based but one that manifests in very real ways. Our children have a condition that is proven through neurological studies, including MRIs and other brain scans. Some teachers, relatives, and others want to chalk it up to simply bad behavior or poor parenting, but nothing is further from the truth. By increasing your understanding of ADHD and how to effectively work with your child, you can be more proactive in helping others be supportive as well.

Behaviors Associated With ADHD

The core symptoms of ADHD are developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, hyperactivity, and/or impulsivity. We all know the children who blurt out things before thinking about their consequences, can't sit or stay still, are accident prone, and are constantly in trouble with their teachers. However, these same children can hyperfocus and spend hours doing things that are stimulating or interesting to them. The children who are daydreamers are harder to spot than the hyperactive ones, but they have just as real a disability.

We want you to know that you will likely be the number one influence on your child's future.

We now know that children with ADHD also have deficits in executive functioning—the brain-based skills required to get tasks done. These skills include things like planning, starting, organizing, persevering, and completing tasks. Such skills are developmental in nature and can be improved with coaching and teaching. To make executive functioning easier to understand, some have compared it to the CEO or conductor of the brain. To fully understand ADHD in

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your child, it is important to know something about his level of executive functioning. If your child has trouble getting started on homework, he may not be oppositional or lazy; he may have deficient executive functioning in the area of initiation. We talk much more about these important skills in Chapter 4.

ADHD occurs on a continuum from very mild to very severe. Your child's severity affects your journey. Regardless of where your child is on this continuum, she has unlimited potential and can be successful if given the right support along the way.

We want you to know that you will likely be the number one influence on your child's future. The things you say to your child fill her head. The guidance, or lack of, shapes her decisions. The lessons you teach create a foundation. Success does not happen on its own. If you want your child to reach her potential, become intentional about your actions. Your child is a unique individual with a purpose in life. Part of your job as a parent is to provide your child with words of encouragement, guidance, and experiences to help her discover a purpose. Better than anyone, you know your child's natural strengths and weaknesses.

Views of Success

Our Thoughts on Success

Your definition of success depends on your culture, background, and values. There is no universal definition of success because people are unique in how they view the world. Some see success as having wealth, being a celebrity, or achieving important status in a career. Even Merriam Webster's definition of success includes having a "favorable or desired outcome, the attainment of wealth, favor." However, we read almost every day about someone who might be considered "successful" according to those standards but is miserable and unproductive. We define success as being happy with yourself and with what you have and believing that you make a difference in this world. When we talk with parents about what success would look like

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for their child, we hear things like the following: an independent person who supports himself as an adult, a quality person who can be counted on, and an effective problem solver who is able to use her talents to the betterment of herself and others.

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Are you successful? Most people would answer this question with, “Yes, I’m successful in (insert a particular area in your life).” If you are like us, you are more successful in some areas as compared to others. Now relate this to your child. With all of the academic pressure on your child, just remember that academics is just one area. Your child’s success in life does not mean earning stellar grades. Jim works with tweens and teens who struggle with learning and often feel discouraged or inadequate about their grades. He will ask them, “Do you think I’m successful?” When they answer, “Yes,” he shows them his fourth-grade report card that had a lot of C grades (see Figure 1). They quickly understand that even a C student can be successful with support and hard work.

What Some of the Experts Say About Success

In their 2018 book, *The Yes Brain Child*, Drs. Daniel Siegel and Tina Payne Bryson defined what they call “Yes Brain” success. They said success is “based on helping our children stay true to who they are while guiding them as they build skills and abilities that allow them to interact with the world from a place of balance, resiliency, insight, and empathy” (p. 164). Siegel and Bryson termed this “authentic success” because children are open to learning from new experiences and can handle any resulting adversity with a fuller understanding of themselves, their strengths, and their passions. This thinking fits with our definition of success and the focus of this book—helping our chil-

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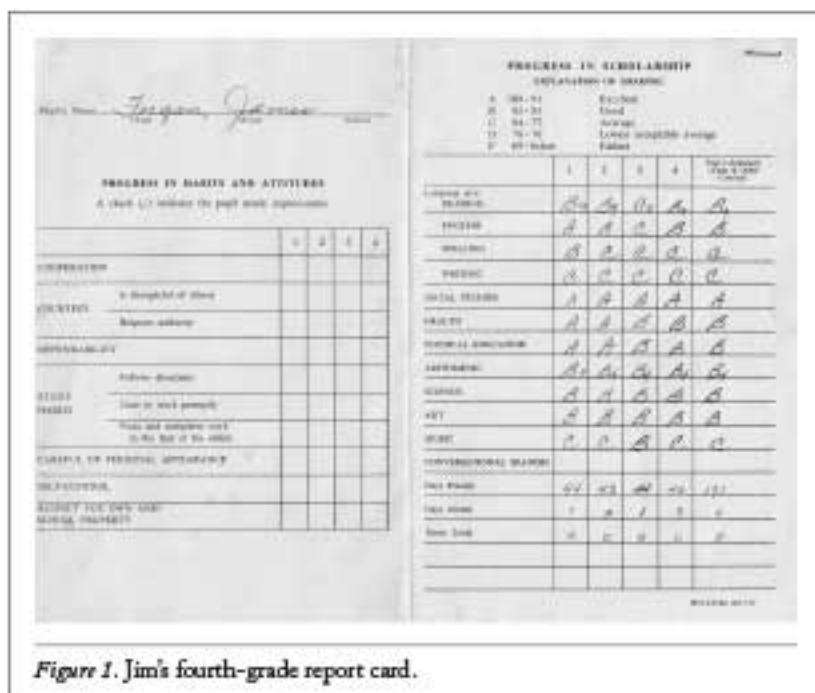


Figure 1. Jim's fourth-grade report card.

dren develop their skills to the best of their abilities, see challenges as opportunities, remain resilient in the face of setbacks, and be able to show concern and awareness for the needs of others.

Drs. Theresa Maitland and Patricia Quinn, authors of *Ready for Take-Off: Preparing Your Teen With ADHD or LD for College* (2011), studied what helps children with ADHD become successful adults. They believed success involves having a sense of self-determination, which requires an awareness of strengths and weaknesses and being able to set goals and work toward achieving them, including finding and using help when necessary. According to Maitland and Quinn, "Most importantly, a self-determined individual can solve problems, make decisions, and regulate his own behavior. Success in college and in life requires self-determination skills so young adults can take the controls effectively and overcome any obstacles that stand in the way" (p. 95).