

MOTIVATING THE UNMOTIVATED:

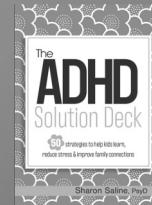
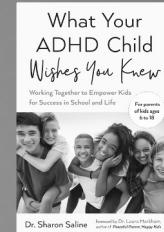
HOW TO ENGAGE ALL TYPES OF LEARNERS FOR ACADEMIC AND SOCIAL SUCCESS

Dr. Sharon Saline

www.drsharonsaline.com

Follow me on social media:

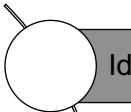
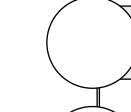
@DrSharonSaline



1

Copyright 2025 @Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

-  Identify the executive functioning skills that affect motivation
-  Describe how to teach goal-directed persistence, time management, and organizational skills that stick
-  Understand and reduce the anxiety that impacts the productivity of all types of learners
-  Teach prioritization and create effective routines with meaningful, collaborative incentives

2

DOES THIS SOUND FAMILIAR?

- "With my parents it's like stop nagging me..." Tyler, age 14
- "*I don't love doing my laundry so I keep putting it off...*" Zara, age 17
- "I wait until the last minute or not do it at all..." Finn, age 15
- "*I try to do everything as quickly as I can...*" Ashlee, age 10



3

THE CENTRAL MYSTERY OF ADHD

Living with ADHD means living with consistent inconsistency

• **Children and teens procrastinate due to:**

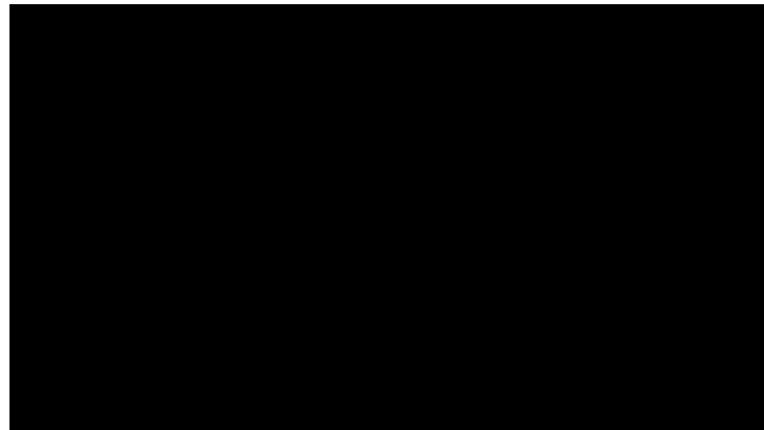
1. Lack of confidence in ability to engage or finish a task satisfactorily
2. Intense dislike of the task to the point that doing it feels torturous
3. Preference to do something related but still off-task
4. Desire to make their own choices (show of independence)



POLL 1: WHAT CHALLENGES WITH MOTIVATION ARE YOUR STUDENTS STRUGGLING WITH?

1. Low motivation in uninteresting tasks
2. Following through on homework or chores
3. Managing time and responsibilities
4. Disorganization
5. Procrastination
6. Defiance
7. Anxiety

MEET
ANANDA:



KIDS WITH ADHD WANT TO DO WELL BUT STRUGGLE WITH HOW

Can't consistently access and apply what they know when they need to.

- Negative outlook.
- Rely on fixed mindsets.

- Offer help by:

- Normalizing different types of brains.
- Naming their brain as it reflects their lived experience.
- Emphasizing building skills rather than naming character flaws
- Point out successes OFTEN



7

8

EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING SKILLS REVIEW

EF HOT SKILLS	EF COOL SKILLS
INHIBITION (VERBAL AND BEHAVIORAL IMPULSE CONTROL)	ENERGY (alertness, perseverance, information processing)
EMOTIONAL CONTROL	WORKING MEMORY
ORGANIZATION	SUSTAINED ATTENTION
TIME MANAGEMENT	SHIFT/FLEXIBILITY
PLANNING/PRIORITIZING	GOAL-DIRECTED PERSISTENCE (Both)
INITIATION (GETTING STARTED)	SELF-EVALUATION (Both)

S

4



9

MOTIVATING ALTERNATIVE LEARNERS TO DO THE TOUGH STUFF

- Things have to be **ENGAGING** to accomplish them
- Use **INCENTIVES** that matter to kids including time with you
- Tie **MEANING and VALUE** to the task or goal
- Incorporate **CHOICE** within the **OBLIGATION**



(Saline, 2018; Volkow, N. D., et al. 2011,
Ng, B. 2018, Dweck, 2006/2016)



10

PROCRASTINATION

- Perfectionism: an attempt to limit mistakes and reduce future shame.
- Avoidance: expectation of failure based on past experience.
- Productive: delay tactic that feels good.

➡ Myth that procrastinators aren't doing anything when they are busy doing other things.

INTERVENTIONS:

1. **Break things Down and start small**
2. **Find order of work that makes sense to student**
3. **CREATE LIMITED WORK PERIODS WITH SPECIFIC TA**



Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

11

WHY SHOULD YOU USE INCENTIVES?

- Meaningful incentives train kids to understand that effort leads to satisfying accomplishment.
- Negative consequences (punishments) don't teach motivational skills.
- Many neurodivergent kids struggle with delayed consequences.



12

POLL #2: WHAT GETS IN YOUR WAY OF SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATIONS WITH STUDENTS?

- 1. Pushback
- 2. Disagreement about the meaning or value of a task
- 3. Impatience
- 4. Frustration
- 5. Hopelessness
- 6. Lack of positive connection
- 7. Something else

13

Strategies for Improving Initiation (Getting Started)

- 1. Work with innate desire for mastery & independence**
- 2. Break it down! *Think micro-steps***
- 3. Check in on progress**
- 4. P. I. N. C. H.**



Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

14

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING TIME MANAGEMENT

- Make time for physical
- Use alarms and analog clocks
- Teach estimation skills
- Rely on backwards design



Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

15

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ORGANIZATION AND PRIORITIZING

- Lay out steps for completing tasks
- Use self-smart systems
- Create routines and spaces for storing mate
- Rely on looking not recalling

→ **Teach these skills directly!**

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	Q1: Both Urgent and Important Things like: ■ Crises ■ Emergencies ■ Deadlines ■ Last-minute items	Q2: Important but not urgent Things like: ■ Healthy living choices ■ Maintaining Relationships ■ Professional/personal goals ■ Recreation or hobbies
NOT IMPORTANT	Q3: Urgent but Not Important Things like: ■ Interruptions ■ Certain calls, texts, emails ■ Some meetings or obligations ■ Internal pressure to check-off tasks on list	Q4: Neither important nor urgent Things like: ■ Some calls, texts, emails ■ Web and social media surfing ■ TV and video gaming ■ Trivial stuff including stress cleaning or endless lists
	Interruptions	Distractions

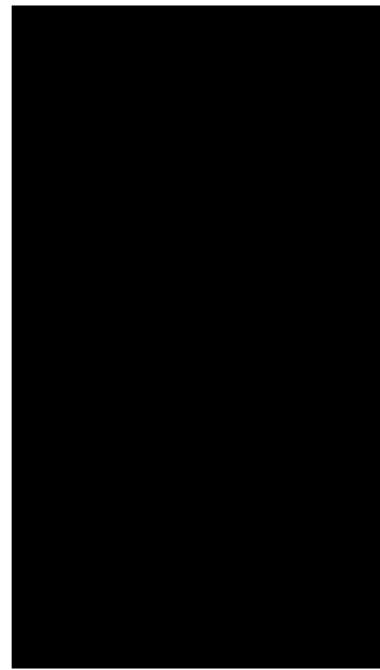
Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved



16



MEET
MIGUEL:



17

Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING SUSTAINED ATTENTION AND GOAL-DIRECTED PERSISTENCE

1. Put away distractions
2. Use shorter work periods
3. Determine order of work
4. Co-create reachable goals
5. Offer or set up neutral cues for getting back to work



HOW ANXIETY AND DEPRESSION AFFECT MOTIVATION

- Catastrophizing
- “What if’ thoughts and worries
- Interpreting predictions as facts
- Reducing self-confidence
- Supporting procrastination
- Increasing overwhelm
- Intensifying avoidance



19



STOP REASSURING AND START ENCOURAGING

- Reassurance offers short-term relief but long-term anxiety.
- Stay neutral and compassionate without fixing.
- Encourage them to take a small risk and see what happens.
- Reframe “I can’t” into “I’m not sure if”



20

7 KEY TAKE-AWAYS FOR A SUCCESSFUL MOTIVATIONAL PLAN

1. Routines foster persistence and motivation.
2. Work collaboratively.
3. Tackle something small; keep things simple.
4. Create a specific plan.
5. Encourage *efforting*.
6. Expect frustration and impatience from adults and kids alike.
7. Reframe defeats as learning opportunities.



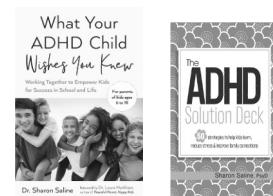
21

Copyright 2025@Dr. Sharon Saline, PLLC, all rights reserved

STAY CONNECTED WITH ME. . .

Sharon Saline, Psy.D.

- www.drsharonsaline.com
- Follow me on social media: @DrSharonSaline



• Get Your Free Handout:

<https://drsharonsaline.com/successful-collaboration-using-get-in-sync-method/>

