

PARENT SUGGESTIONS: Parenting Exceptional Children

Session 1, 21st March 2025

1. Related to the topic 'Understanding and Connecting with your Children' what has worked for you as a parent?

- Physical contact/snuggles.
- 1:1 time together, walks, activities together.
- When they're ready to talk stop and make time to listen.
- Following his lead - not being bound by 'typical' structure.
- Educating myself and being curious about their experience.
- Try to understand his feelings and not react too much to meltdowns or challenging situations.
- Talking, asking them to explain. We do quizzes on tv on topics we know they are good at ie animals, anime.
- Making a very small change at a time - it's difficult though.
- We each attended counselling separately for ourselves. We attended any assessments / school meetings together as much as possible. We try to share everything 50/50 even though we both live in the same house to make sure the children see and spend time with both of us equally. We got lovely advice from a psychologist about doing scrap books for each of us in our family with our likes, dislikes, strengths and weaknesses as there are two of us who are ND and three who aren't. It is a great way to show how everyone contributes differently. Headphones in school have worked brilliantly. We had them and never used them until one day I said to school to try them and they said it works brilliantly. Everything is trial and error we have found. You have to take it easy on yourself. No drama discipline and the idea of good enough parenting gave us both (Mum especially!) huge relief. Their older siblings attended a Sibshop which made a big positive difference to them "Mum, we got off lightly with our brother!"
- Outdoors activities
- Educating myself about what his struggles are, reading books and watching documentaries about ADHD and dyslexia. Also, thinking about different ways to make homework more interesting - letting him write his spellings on the windows with whiteboard markers or on the tiles in the bathroom while he's in the bath. Making up rhymes to help remember patterns in spellings.
- Approaching situations saying in my head "he needs time, patience and help and it is not his fault"
- Taking the lead from my child - letting him choose a game or a toy or an activity and then taking part in it with him, but not intrusively. It's about getting to know him better, what he likes and dislikes for example. Motivation is also a key element in helping him develop his speech and language, and other skills, so doing this through an activity that he has chosen is really beneficial.
- Acknowledging his neurodistinction
- Focusing on connection over following rules, understanding behaviour is communication, learning that 'discipline' means to teach not punish, low demand home environment to help decompress & calm nervous system from world outside, being careful with societal pressures e.g. sports, ensuring they know you think they are amazing exactly as they are as it may be the only place they hear this, calm responses always
- Spending time focusing on his interests and talking about his passions, playing yes and no type games to find out information instead of a direct conversation
- Taking time to understand his needs and taking them into consideration when planning as a family. Giving him space when he needs it. Listening and being patient. Playing cards/watching movie together.
- Joining her game where I'm the younger sister and she gets to be the one in charge.
- Taking time to go on walks with my son. I find conversation flows easy when we are walking and burns off excess energy.
- One to one time, away from siblings and distractions. Deep pressure massage and hugs. Following her passions and getting down on her level. Engaging in silly play. Being empathetic and recognising that we don't know how challenging every day demands can be for her.
- Listen without disturbing and assure that what they feel is valid.
- Listening and not trying to fix
- Getting down to their level and making eye contact. Our boys are really into music so it is always good to take the guitar out.

2. What resources have you found useful? (e.g. groups, books, websites, social media accounts...)

- groups and books
- Asiam. It can be a lonely journey particularly getting access to services.
- Internet
- Neurodivergent Ireland and also him up being in an Educate Together school
- Books e.g. 10 Things Every Autistic Child Wishes You Knew; local parents groups and Family Resource Centre; websites e.g. MeaningfulSpeech.com; Instagram (EverydayOT)
- As i am website
- As an adult AuDHD- online influencers sharing LIVED experiences, unfortunately children still pathologised and yet to catch up
- Whatsapp group connected to school, autism.org.uk, asiam.ie
- Therapeutic parenting
- ASIAM
- Websites
- Social Media, Websites
- ADHD coaching
- As I Am website, BOOK: Untypical How the world isn't built for autistic people and what we should all do about it. Treehouse Practice on Insta, Middletown Centre for Autism. Videos on You Tube recommended by a professional: Amazing Things Happen, Autism Spectrum: Atypical Minds in a Stereotypical World, What Does it Feel Like to Have Autism?
- Dr.martha. psychologist on Instagram
- The Out of Synch Child by Kranwitz, the Louth Disability Cycling Group, the Meaningful Speech gestalt processing website
- The Colour Monster - kids book on recognising their own emotions. Middletown centre for autism sensory processing resources.
- Audio books, i can't always read but if I am running errands solo, parenting adhd books help a lot.