

PARENT SUGGESTIONS: Parenting Exceptional Children

Session 2, 18th March 2026

1. Related to the topic 'Managing challenges and problems' ' what has worked for you as a parent?

- Stepping back, lowering the voice, staying calm but every so often there's a need to flag that this is hard for us too - she's 13 so that helps too to build empathy.
- try to be patient and let my child know she is loved no matter what has happened
- active listening, respecting my child's opinions and needs, discussing my expectations and his expectations and trying to meet in the middle with regard to self care.
- Pausing' has helped/ window of tolerance
- CAMHS and engaging with school. Believing my child when she's too tired to leave the house, ignoring pressure from family that going to school 5 days a week is the only way.
- My self care with exercise
- Telling our son that we love him and that we know it is hard. Trying to connect with him. Offering support when he needs it e.g. sometimes he just needs me to help give him his clothes when he is feeling dysregulated instead of asking him to dress himself (this often happens at night). If we can do some deep pressure exercises before bed, this seems to reduce challenging behaviours. Making sure he is not hungry - this can be a real trigger alongside fatigue.
- I tend to naturally slow things down - understand my son's needs, figure out what's bothering him, and then discuss what we can do to make things better - but it doesn't always work. Sometimes a little time to process his feelings is essential for him. Then we regroup and talk calmly at eye level before giving a hug and starting again. But I learned from the session this evening that this is simply validation for him - he just needs to know we are there for him (although he is not totally aware that this is what he needs, if you know what I mean!)
- Taking a breath in challenging moments and giving myself time to react. During intense meltdowns, my first instinct was often to panic, or worry what other people will think of my son. Taking a breath allows me to calm myself, lower my tone and gives me a bit of time to think about how I want to react to my son's behaviour. I also find that sometimes saying less is helpful. My instinct is to reassure my son or try to calm him down, but this can feed his anger or anxiety. Sometimes being quiet but being there for him helps to avoid any further escalation. Being kind to myself and not beating myself up if a situation was challenging or didn't go to plan is something that I am trying to work on.
- Ignoring 'bad' behaviour (whenever possible) - praising good behaviour; picking our battles

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

- books & podcasts
- OT
- Hub program through Camhs very good. Lots of reading and podcasts, taking bits here and there that work for us.
- ADHD Ireland, 50 shades of extraordinary group Waterford Brill Family Resource Centre
- The HSE have been really great for us to date. Our school, less so.
- HSE course on 'parent emotion coaching'. Some book recommendations would be really appreciated - particularly around dealing with anxiety and intense emotions.
- Swords Neurodiversity Network; Book 'Breaking free of child anxiety and OCD by ELI R. Lebowitz
- books / podcasts