

NURTURING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

February 8, 2023



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Northwell Health®

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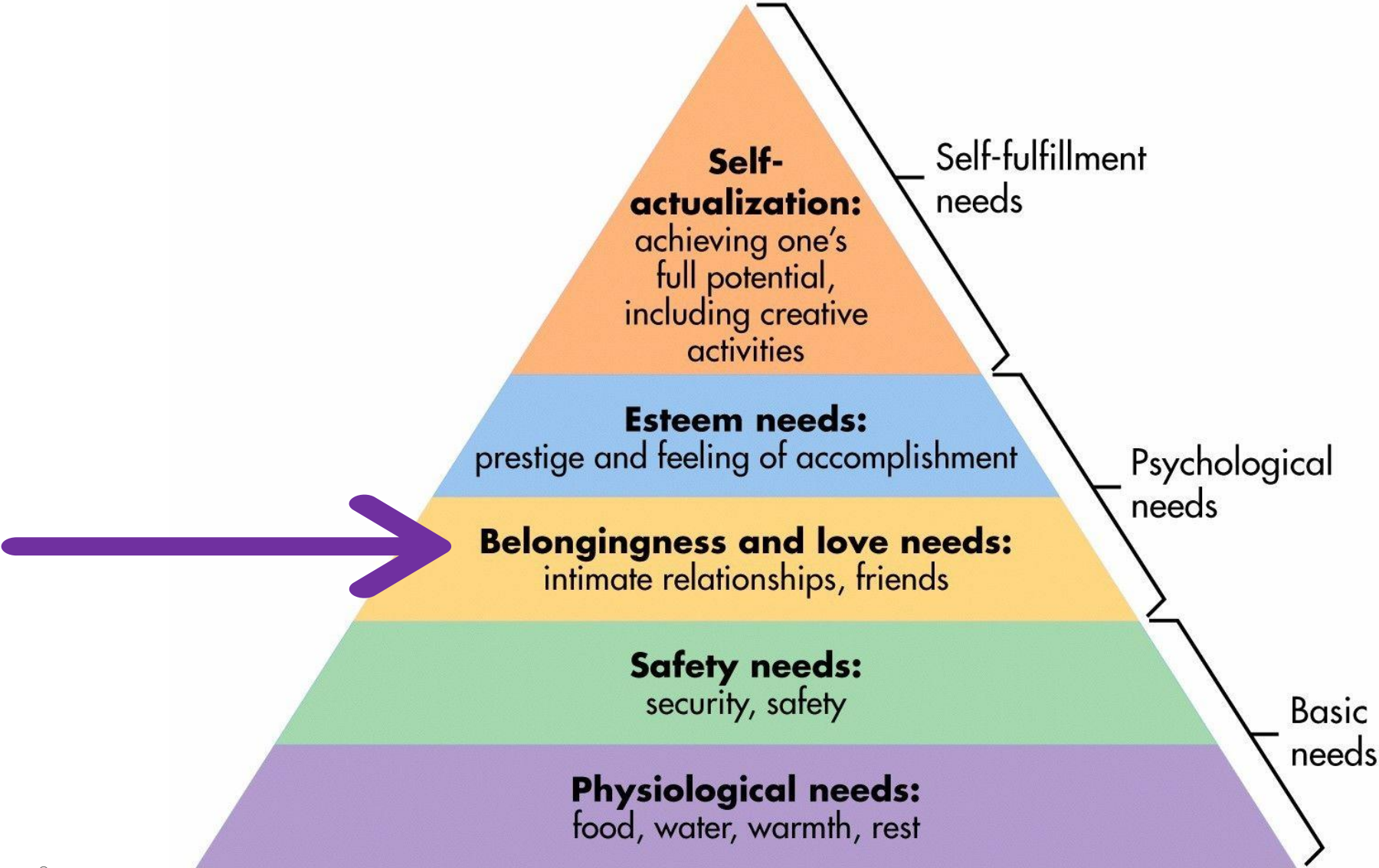
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AGENDA

1. The Importance of Belonging and Connection
2. Strengthening Family Relationships
3. Building Peer Relationships
4. Q&A
5. Resources

THE IMPORTANCE OF BELONGING AND CONNECTION

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



"BELONGING": IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

- **Belonging:** experience of being involved AND sense of being an important part of the group/environment (**participation + connection**)
- Developmental task of adolescence: identity formation
- Conformation to group standards/norms -> behaviors, beliefs, attitudes
- Research: link between belonging and happiness/well-being; decrease in anxiety, depression, loneliness, social anxiety

Belonging => ↑ support, ↑ coping ability => ↑ resilience

CURRENT STATE OF ADOLESCENT SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

For some teens, COVID led to:

- increased stress and conflict within the home
- enforced disconnection/isolation => loss of sense of belonging
- fewer typical experiences (school, play dates) to learn/develop social skills
- Fewer typical experiences that taught/reinforced group norms/behaviors (teams, classes)

Increase in adolescent self-reported loneliness over past decade;
promise of more/deeper connections via social media has not come true

STRENGTHENING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

WHY FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS MATTER



- Family is the **first group** to which we belong
- **Impact of familial cohesion/conflict** on child/adolescent social, emotional and behavioral health
- Family as **model** for **foundational social and emotional skills**
- Family as **template** for **future relationships**

FOUNDATIONS OF STRONG FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

1. **Needs met:** stability, physical safety and emotional security.
2. **Commitment:** cohesion, shared goals
3. **Active engagement:** available, responsive and supportive
4. **Connection:** shared time, routines and traditions
5. **Communication:** open, honest, genuine, respectful, trustworthy; building skills
6. **Emotional regulation:** expression, coping, conflict resolution

ACTIVE ENGAGEMENT: NURTURING TRUST AND RESPECT

- **Be available** for needed support, care or help.
- **Keep promises**, so your child learns to trust what you say.
- When your child expresses opinions different from yours, **listen without judging**
- Get to **know your child and value them** for who they are.
- Allow the **relationship to evolve** as your child's needs and interests change.



CONNECTION: QUALITY TIME



Being *present* is more than just being *there*:

1. Minimize distractions – disconnect to reconnect
2. Give your full attention
3. **"Our thing"** - shared interests and experiences
4. Be curious about your child and their world

**Engaged, positive attention
shows children they are valued and loved.**

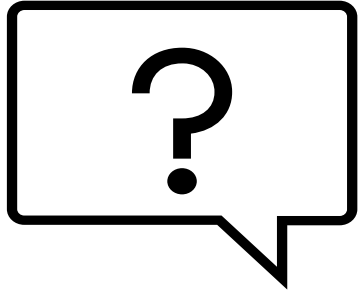
CONNECTION: FITTING IT IN

1. Real-world: **some time on some days** >>> none
2. **Scheduling** time makes it a priority
3. Consider **schedules and biological clocks**
4. Importance of **daily connection, small moments**
5. Weekly/monthly/quarterly **one-on-one “dates”**
6. **Include them** in your life – errands can count!



There is no right or wrong way to give individual attention:
do what works best for you and your family.

COMMUNICATION: KEY SKILLS



Ask open-ended, neutral questions:

- "How are you feeling about...?"
- "What do you think ...will be like?"
- "Can you tell me about...?"



Actively listen to the response:

- Full attention; verbal & non-verbal cues
- Reflect: "You feel..."
- Clarify: "What I'm hearing is...Is that right?"
- Follow-up



Empathize and affirm:

- "That sounds..."
- "I hear you."
- "I understand you feel..."

COMMUNICATION: HANDLING CONFLICT

Facilitator, not Referee

Equip your child(ren) with conflict resolution skills and support their efforts to problem solve.

- Importance of **break/pause/breath**
- **Reframe conflict:** you vs. your child (or sibling vs. sibling)
---> you and your child vs. the problem
- **Collaborate** on solutions and **find the “yes”**: often, there will be something everyone can agree on/to.
- Establish family rules that are **clear, consistent and fair.**



BUILDING PEER RELATIONSHIPS

BUILDING PEER RELATIONSHIPS: KEY QUALITIES



Emotional Intelligence

Self-Regulation

Social Competence

BUILDING PEER RELATIONSHIPS: REQUIRES SKILLS

Emotional Intelligence

Understand *others'* emotions and perspectives

Show sympathy, offer help to friends in need

Self-Regulation

Be understanding of others' mistakes (self-regulation/emotional intelligence)

Manage reactions to strong emotions

Social Competence

Apologize, make amends

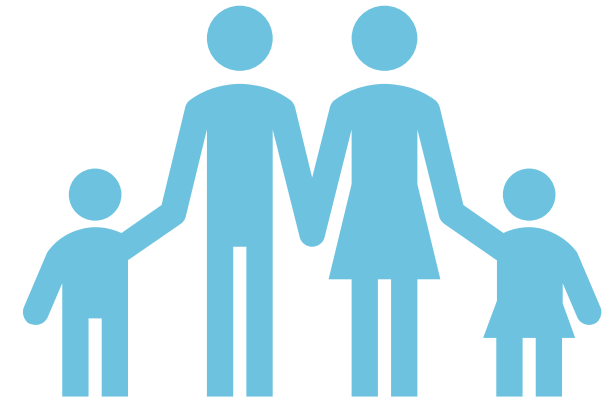
Handle **introductions** and participate in **conversation**

Cooperate, negotiate, and compromise

HOW CAN I HELP: POSITIVE PARENTING

Kids of parents who use **positive parenting**:

- are more likely to treat others with **kindness and sympathy.**
- tend to be **less aggressive, more self-reliant, and better-liked** by peers



Pastorelli et al 2015; Brotman et al 2009; Sheehan and Watson 2008; Hastings et al 2007).

HOW PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN HELP:

- Discuss **what makes a good friend/bad friend** (praise their positive friendship traits)
- Teach your child **how to engage in conversation** and be a good listener (it doesn't come easily for everyone!)
- Give them **opportunities to socialize**



HOW PARENTS/CAREGIVERS CAN HELP:

- Talk about the **different kinds of friendships** (remind your child that not every acquaintance will become a BFF)
- Help your child understand that **conflict is a natural part** of relationships (conflict resolution skills)
- Help foster positive friendships by **modeling positive friendships** (invite your child to do some reflecting)



MY CHILD IS SOCIALLY ANXIOUS, WHAT CAN I DO?

Many **effective treatments exist** for clinical anxiety, including individual/group therapy, and cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), designed to re-train your child's misperceptions and overreactive emotional responses.

But it's also important to remember that you can help at home!

- ☑ Model communication skills
- ☑ Roleplay/practice at home
- ☑ Share conversation tips
- ☑ Open-ended vs. closed-ended questions
- ☑ Help your child explore the type of friend they want to be.



QUESTIONS

RESOURCES

EVALUATION AND SUPPORT



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Developmental and behavioral pediatrics

(516) 802-6100

Fax: (516) 616-5801

1983 Marcus Avenue, Suite 130

Lake Success, NY 11042

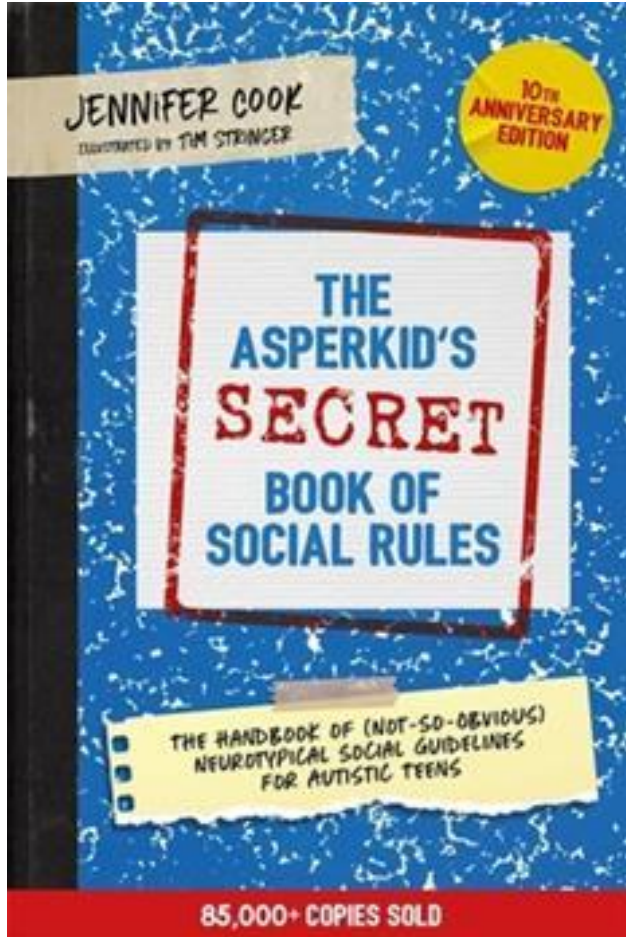
Family-based group treatment

The ADHD Group Treatment Program consists of weekly groups for parents and children. Parents meet in a group to collaborate with one another and enhance parenting skills. Children meet with their peers to learn the tools and skills necessary to improve their social skills and their well-being. Families are brought together for the last portion of the group to work on a task or review key concepts.

Family based group care for children with ADHD and their parents

- Increases parental knowledge concerning ADHD and other disorders
- Increases compliant behavior and decreases defiant behavior by your child
- Promotes empathic, effective methods of discipline
- Improves communication between you and your child
- Helps parents to help children navigate social situations
- Enhances collaboration skills with teachers and the educational system
- Provides a group setting where parents can receive support from peers

RESOURCES



1 Dealing with Digital Drama



We've all seen it. Learn how drama escalates online, and help older kids and teens avoid and de-escalate mean or harmful online behavior.

2 Friendships and Boundaries



Communication is key. Reflect on text messaging, and learn new ways to help older kids and teens set boundaries.

3 Who Are You on Social Media?



Social media can be complicated for all of us. Reflect on social media use, share experiences, and learn new ways to talk to older kids and teens about their online lives.

<https://www.commonsense.org/education>

SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

Please join us on **March 8th**, 2023 at 7PM for a workshop, or **March 29th**, 2023 at 12:30 for an interactive lunch-and-learn session for parents and caregivers on promoting positive sibling relationships.

Learn about encouraging healthy, supportive sibling interactions and discuss the common challenges of conflict, comparison and competition.



THANK YOU!



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