

When a parent struggles with denial of ADHD symptoms

I want to share a personal experience that I had in the past couple of weeks with someone who brought their eight-year-old child into my office for a counseling session. Of course, I can not be specific and can give any confidential information, but I think the following scenario will send familiar to a lot of parents out there.

A mother comes into my office and I complete a diagnostic interview with her and her daughter. She tells me that her eight-year-old daughter is failing in all of her classes, refuses to complete any of her school work, and is angry at her poor performance in school. The child's mother tells me that her daughter really wants to do well in school, but just does not know why she can't sit still and pay attention. Her daughter's school is calling her every day at her job to come and pick up her daughter, because her daughter has hit one of the other kids in school and is angry that the other children are making fun of her because she is always in trouble for not sitting in her chair.

The mother continues to tell me that she does not know what else to do, because the school is upset with her and wants her to do something about her daughter. The child's mother has already taken her daughter to her pediatrician and was told that her daughter's behavior was the result of 'bad parenting'. By not the little girl's mother is crying and she was told to take her daughter to counseling. Hence she shows up to see me.

I met with the little girl separately at her next scheduled session and observed her for about an hour. She spent the entire hour looking around the room, getting up out of her chair, touching everything in my office, and generally could not “tune in” to anything said to her. To say that she was hyperactive would be an understatement. Even when her name was called, she could not focus on what was being said to her. Sometimes, the symptoms of ADHD are so obvious and blatant that you don’t need hours and hours of testing by a psychologist to see it. Now, although I can not diagnose ADHD, I can certainly tell parents my impressions and what I recommend needs to be done from here. After all, that is what a therapist does!!

After telling the child’s mother that I recommend that her daughter being tested for ADHD, she tells me that her daughter can not have ADHD and I have to be wrong and it must be something else. She then tells me that she is going to keep looking for what is wrong with her daughter and leaves my office.

Sometimes acceptance of what is will save you a lot of time and energy!! Please don’t let this be you!! Sometimes when we are told things about our children that we do not want to hear and believe, we refuse help that is right in front of us. What is difficult here is that an eight-year-old child is going to continue to struggle in school with anger and failing grades as a result of her inability to pay attention to what is being taught. By the time the mother had come in to see me, her daughter had been exhibiting these symptoms for the past three years and had failed the first grade and was in danger of failing the 2nd grade.

Denial of a problem will not change a situation and it certainly will not help a child who is struggling in their life. Acceptance of our children for who they are is the key towards getting them the help that they need.