00:00.80
Sasha Long
Hi, Rachel. Thank you so much for joining me again and being back on the Autism Helper podcast.

00:06.84
Rachel Schwartz
So happy to be here.

00:08.50
Sasha Long
I... I am excited about this topic. Me and Rachel just started like chatting about it too much in the pre-interview here that we almost just went through the whole topic. But today we're going to talk about, in particular, ADHD. And I think this will apply to a lot of unique learning styles. But looking at... common.

00:26.96
Sasha Long
familiar classroom tools and why they can often fail for kids with ADHD. So really broadly, why do you see? Tools in classrooms not working the way maybe an educator intended, especially for this ADHD population.

00:43.60
Rachel Schwartz
um One of the. biggest. I don't want to say mistakes, but one of the biggest. issues that I see is we treat tools as universally helpful. So a fidget, a behavior chart, or a timer, they're not inherently good or bad. It's value.

01:00.96
Rachel Schwartz
depends on the barrier we are trying to change. and the exact deficit that is making the student have struggles. So a fidget may help a student who needs a small amount of movement to maintain an appropriate level of arousal, but it will not teach the student how to remember directions or organize an assignment or understand confusing work.

01:20.57
Rachel Schwartz
So. One of the the biggest issues that I've seen is that we throw a bunch of tools in because we know that in the list of STIs that these things could work, but we mismatch them to the actual needs of the learner.

01:35.48
Sasha Long
Yes, I see this a lot too. And it comes from. a good place, right?

We're wanting to help. We're wanting to to do all the things, but in doing so, it can be confusing and just ineffective.

01:46.78
Rachel Schwartz
Exactly. if it's If it's mismatched or insufficiently taught, depending on the skills a student has or doesn't have yet. it uh it can end up just making a situation work or worse, misleading the team in terms of what the actual problem is.

02:03.65
Sasha Long
Yeah, exactly. Well, kind of rewinding a minute, when we talk about ADHD, what exactly are we describing here?

02:14.70
Rachel Schwartz
Well, you know we all know it's a neurodevelopmental condition and persistent patterns, yada, yada, yada. But it's really... not a disorder of any sort of ability. It's a disorder of performance.

02:26.07
Rachel Schwartz
Many students with ADHD know the rules, they can explain the routines, and they may demonstrate a skill really beautifully. under the right conditions, but the difficulty is using that skill consistently. especially when the task is boring, when they are emotionally overloaded, when they are dependent on using some internal organization skills. And that's where ADHD gets tripped up. It's not that they can't attend. It's that they really struggle to shift their attention across tasks.

02:55.26
Sasha Long
I feel like for a lot of parents, it's probably like, yes, that's exactly my kid. Because we hear so often, you know, maybe school teams like, well, at home, they have no problem doing this. But in school, they can't or vice versa. And that really speaks to the context um that you were just describing.

03:11.55
Rachel Schwartz
Yep, it's... i mean I think attention deficit does not capture the experience. They can focus.

03:17.07
Sasha Long
It's not a great name.

03:18.11

Rachel Schwartz
Very deeply. Yes. You know, I think. um ah Russell Barkley is the one who wants to rename it because he's like, it's not about attention and it's true.

03:25.30
Sasha Long
Yeah.

03:28.29
Rachel Schwartz
Many people with ADHD can focus. deeply. on things they're interested in. they do not have enough dopamine. So the challenge there is that when they're motivated, they're motivated. When they're not, they're absolutely not. So shifting attention to something they do not like is going to be very difficult. And so it's why the same student can spend a long time on a preferred topic and then appear absolutely unable to attend to a worksheet.

03:53.61
Sasha Long
Yeah.

03:53.82
Rachel Schwartz
They have different demands for them. um Novelty really matters. Urgency, the interest. And so the... practical question that we have as educators is What will help this learner?

04:05.94
Rachel Schwartz
enter sustain and exit attention. what What are we doing there?

04:09.01
Sasha Long
So when we're... Exactly. And when we're. So approaching a child that is struggling in school with performance, with all these things you're describing, what are the first questions we should ask ourselves before we pick a support? Before we go to the first then or the the timer or the fidget?

04:27.22
Rachel Schwartz
This is the hardest part and I am the first person to say yep sometimes we rush through because we're so quick. we We are so quick to want to help. And we're so quick to be like, let's be proactive and just do things that aren't harmful that might help. And I've been a person to do this as well. But if we take the time, then the questions we have to ask are first, is this? a regulation problem or a skill problem.

04:50.93
Rachel Schwartz
Basically, can they do this? Is it an academic performance? Do they know how to do this skill or don't they? Or can they do the skill, but they absolutely cannot regulate their body when doing it? Maybe that's an attention issue.

05:03.68
Rachel Schwartz
Is this tool reducing? So if we put this tool in place, will it reduce the demand? Or is it accidentally going to add more demands to them? Is it going to add something that then now they're going to have to focus on another? component.

05:17.74
Rachel Schwartz
is the...

05:17.88
Sasha Long
I see that so often with timers.

05:18.83
Rachel Schwartz
Oh yeah, go ahead.

05:19.74
Sasha Long
Sorry to interrupt you, but like, oh my gosh, like the visual timer that every teacher has.

05:20.29
Rachel Schwartz
Ugh, no, yes.

05:24.62
Sasha Long
works beautifully for some kids, some kids just stare at it. And now it's completely kind of ruined any focus they might have had.

05:31.47
Rachel Schwartz
Right, or it adds stress. Suddenly we have stress.

05:32.98
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

05:33.95

Rachel Schwartz
Urgency works for some kids where they want to beat the timer. Some kids find it absolutely stressful. My son cries when there is a timer.

05:41.30
Sasha Long
Yeah.

05:41.46
Rachel Schwartz
like I've noticed this in schoolwork. They say do it under five minutes if he knows there's a timer. And it's just you know different strokes for different folks. And that's one thing when we introduce a tool is it.

05:51.94
Rachel Schwartz
adding something there? Is it adding a demand? and then looking at their feedback. Is it immediate? Does it affect the behavior? And of course, the the big pieces are. Has the student been taught how to use this tool?

06:04.64
Rachel Schwartz
Do they know when to use it? And is the environment somehow undermining the tool? Meaning that, is it being used inconsistently? Are we struggling to follow through with it? Is somehow it's um dependent on the day? Is it dependent on the schedule? Like what's going on in the environment that may impact?

06:22.59
Rachel Schwartz
if this tool can be used. So.

06:24.94
Sasha Long
So I mean, yeah.

06:25.66
Rachel Schwartz
Yeah.

06:26.01
Sasha Long
ah complex answer to a complex question when you said um you know that is the tool taught this is something i talk about a lot too because I think that...

06:37.44
Sasha Long

We. kind of subconsciously have this. expectation that these tools are like magic wands like well I gave him a visual schedule but like we didn't teach it can you talk a little bit about how that can cause problems because it might have been the right tool, but we just didn't teach it.

06:52.85
Rachel Schwartz
Yeah, I mean, it's because then it's just another barrier. So if we say we want to use a checklist, this kid has organizational problems, let's use a checklist. We can give them a checklist of everything they need. But.

07:03.31
Rachel Schwartz
If it was just that simple, we wouldn't have any more problems. So it's going through and saying this this checklist.

07:06.51
Sasha Long
Yeah.

07:09.80
Rachel Schwartz
is for you to know what you're taking home. It's for you to get out the right materials. Every time we start a task, let's go through the checklist together. And it's taking the time to teach. that plan so that they're understanding how to use it by themselves.

07:23.73
Rachel Schwartz
you know a visual timer you talked about you know that is a It's to help them understand the interval. and make the endpoint predictable. But if they just think the timer is to say you only have five minutes to do this, that can be a stressor.

07:33.40
Sasha Long
Yes.

07:38.50
Rachel Schwartz
So we really need to explain this timer is to help you know when we're about to move. So when it gets down to one minute, you know that we're about to go. And at one minute, this is what I want you to do. And you just have to explicitly teach it.

07:49.72
Rachel Schwartz
I mean, it's a problem. and I think anytime we don't. kind of treat

tools. as It sometimes has important components of behavior change programs, but like it's like you are teaching math facts.

08:01.47
Sasha Long
Yeah.

08:01.54
Rachel Schwartz
this is the same thing as teaching literacy and math. You have to just... Do rote practice. until it becomes fluency.

08:10.88
Sasha Long
So something I hear from teachers a lot around this conversation, and I totally understand what they're saying and hear and validate it, but you know dot, dot, dot, is I hear a lot like, I don't have time to do this. Like, when would I find time to teach this and go through the checklist together? What advice do you have for that situation?

08:30.59
Rachel Schwartz
If you match... the right support. to the right need. You won't. have to spend all your time doing 10 different supports or SDIs.

08:40.77
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

08:41.46
Rachel Schwartz
It's one Good support. So Part of this is a lot more front end work of matching supports to needs. And then once you identify that.

08:53.66
Rachel Schwartz
Teach it in the moment. And those should not be. 20 minutes of explanation. Those should be a quick. three-minute detour to say hey this is how we're going to use this

09:04.53
Sasha Long
Yeah.

09:05.39
Rachel Schwartz
it in the moment. um Before school, maybe it's 10 minutes before school and I do understand teachers might have five different kids are checking in on in um in the moment, and you know, for check in, check out, let's say. But.

09:18.00
Rachel Schwartz
If you spend five minutes on the right tool. It will. behave for itself, so to speak.

09:23.42
Sasha Long
Yeah. It's like an investment

09:25.16
Rachel Schwartz
It is. It is. Instead of doing 10 STIs. Due to... That. actually a align.

09:32.32
Sasha Long
Yeah, love that. And I like that. you know, emphasis on the right tool. And you talked a little bit before about like. A mismatch, how the wrong tool can be a barrier. What's a good sign to an educator or to school teams that...

09:47.05
Sasha Long
It's maybe the wrong tool. What are some things you might be seeing?

09:51.95
Rachel Schwartz
It's looking at where are the big problems. So for example, if it's... Someone who can't organize, they're always messy. let's say they're always messy and they can't find any of their things their desk is a mess they never know when things are due they never have anything even if they have it on the calendar they're not getting anything done you know that those

10:11.58
Rachel Schwartz
kids, those learners are having difficulty with planning, prioritizing, working memory, those sort of skills. So you're going to focus on anything that is called like a top-down approach, meaning that starts with cognition.

10:27.61
Rachel Schwartz
It's helping those strategies that help you think about how you're thinking, like, you know, sort of sort of meta in that way.

10:33.25
Sasha Long
h

10:34.97
Rachel Schwartz
So those are your checklist, your calendar, your visual task analysis, your task chunking routines. that That matters because... that will give them a tool that aligns to their actual skill deficit. which is helping them to plan, prioritize, remember.

10:52.10
Rachel Schwartz
organize their behaviors.

10:54.71
Rachel Schwartz
If it's a kid who has, ah you know, moving around all the time, really struggles in just regulation, what we would call initially self-regulation in the environment. So running around. jumping up all the time, blurting out. Those are kids who are more bottom up. Those kids who we need to have tools that begin with the body, begin with just that physiological state. So that might be looking at movement. That might be looking at progressive muscle relaxation. breathing, practicing pauses.

11:23.92
Rachel Schwartz
That's where you start with those kids, the bottom up, meaning the body. First, where are you in space and time? get your body regulated, and then we can work on the other pieces. So the order. really matters here. So if a student is really dysregulated, start with regulation and then you return to the cognitive strategies. but your regulation tools are the first ones you pick from.

11:45.11
Rachel Schwartz
If the student is regulated, so they're physically present in the desk, but they are disorganized. They don't know how to start. They have no task initiation. so we're going to look then at the top down. We're going to look at the checklist at the timers. That's where you start. So I put those into two different camps. and you look at the student and say where is the biggest problem for them And then you pick a tool.

12:08.09
Rachel Schwartz
from those camps, top down, bottom up. And then, you know, we can get even more in the weeds in terms of what exactly it is, is it working memory? Is it task initiation? you know Which piece there? And then we can get even further into picking and isolating.

12:22.18

Rachel Schwartz
tools there.

12:23.20
Sasha Long
Okay, I love how you explain that because I think you can picture right away. And answer this quickly, like, is this child regulated? And that can then point you in the right direction of do we go top down or bottom up?

12:34.98
Rachel Schwartz
Yes. Exactly.

12:37.24
Sasha Long
And I.

12:37.50
Rachel Schwartz
X.

12:37.59
Sasha Long
I love talking about executive functions, like with every teacher and every scenario.

12:38.24
Rachel Schwartz
Exactly.

12:41.54
Sasha Long
And this all is, I mean, you've been just listed like eight executive functions without explicitly saying this phrase, but like, this is all. looking at executive function skill deficits.

12:51.10
Rachel Schwartz
Yep. yep exactly so you know to to kind of go through the list here you know working memory they don't remember your directions you say hey get out a pen and paper and your math notebook they only get out a pen and then they're just sitting there.

13:04.14
Rachel Schwartz
Those are kids who cannot remember directions.

13:04.18
Sasha Long

Mm hmm.

13:06.31
Rachel Schwartz
So they'll need those visual checklists. That's a top-down issue. Task initiation, they cannot begin the first step. They just can't begin the first action. So how do we get them going? You're looking specifically again at a top-down strategy.

13:20.49
Rachel Schwartz
Planning. know how to organize the assignment those are all the top downs but when you get to like inhibition response inhibition deficits making it difficult to stop an activity, move to the next one, shift that attention. That's when you're looking at the bottom up, the regulation.

13:34.62
Rachel Schwartz
those and cognitive flexibility, all of that. Those regulation issues, that's when we're trying to look at, okay, how can we help your body feel calm so that we can get your mind working?

13:44.59
Sasha Long
It's like in those scenarios, they might not even be ready for that checklist yet because their body isn't and they're, you know. brain in space, like they're not ready to attend to that.

13:54.43
Rachel Schwartz
Exactly. these are just and And then we kind of test it, just small little tests to our hypothesis here. If you know we give them those plans and suddenly they're able to independently work, then we know that working memory was probably contributing. And if movement, some kind of maybe movement break improves regulation, then we know that, that okay, so they're regulated. They still can't start their assignment, so we might still need to add some strategies there. But we know that regulation was part of a problem.

14:19.68
Rachel Schwartz
So that's where that that match happens.

14:19.72
Sasha Long
So talk to me. ah I that makes perfect sense. And I you know, for these kids that are super dysregulated, talk about what movement like you just said, and other sensory supports could look like in practice, you know, in the school setting.

14:34.16
Rachel Schwartz
Right. um Movement. I mean, everyone has in there. A lot of kids, I say anyone who has ADHD, AUHD typically has sort of breaks as needed in their behavior plan, which is great. They should have opportunities to take breaks. Every kid should. But effective movement support is not some unlimited escape hatch.

14:53.07
Rachel Schwartz
and some random activity that they get to do, right? So it is a planned way to adjust their physiological state so that they can reenter instruction.

14:55.69
Sasha Long
Yes.

15:02.34
Rachel Schwartz
It should have a clear beginning, a clear endpoint, a clear return step when you come back in the classroom. What do you do? the timing is usually more important than how intense it is or how long the movement break is.

15:14.39
Rachel Schwartz
We need to know when they start to struggle. When is their stamina failing? So when can movement help them become more productive? We don't want them to be dysregulated and then ask for a break. We want to you know catch it beforehand.

15:28.17
Rachel Schwartz
and you know The reality is here is that the pushback I always get with breaks is, well, then they're just avoiding. um which half the time i'm like okay yeah they're avoiding something because they can't attend to it and it feels painful for them just to sit there.

15:42.25
Rachel Schwartz
So we have to still deal with their body before we can deal. with anything else. So I sort of put avoidance on another team. You know, we can talk to the day's end about, well, what do we do with kids who avoid? We all avoid things we don't like.

15:56.57
Sasha Long
Yeah, 1 ,000%.

15:57.21
Rachel Schwartz
So what we're... Yeah, so so to what we're trying to do here is... Pair that break with a return plan. and teach a sequence where the student is calm. So we're trying to get them calm. We're trying to get them regulated and then get them.

16:10.21
Rachel Schwartz
back into their classroom and see, how camp is engagement improved? Did the break serve a purpose? if they're becoming repeatedly less available for instruction,

16:21.12
Rachel Schwartz
after breaks, then we need to revise the duration, the timing, the activity during the breaks, or the expectation of those breaks. that's where your data comes into play i mean this is when you take those movement breaks Is it actually helpful or is it escalating? What's the purpose of the break?

16:37.27
Sasha Long
I think this example is really good because I hear that a lot too. like you know, oh, they're avoiding or we're reinforcing this behavior. And I'm always like, kind of like, well, all right, let's reinforce it and see what the breakdown, I don't know, like.

16:48.41
Rachel Schwartz
I know.

16:48.76
Sasha Long
yeah yeah

16:48.59
Rachel Schwartz
i I always say, you know, when someone's dysregulating in classroom and they're like, well, we just want them to persist. I'm like, yeah, but you can't persist when you're sobbing in your math homework.

16:56.38
Sasha Long
Yeah, I mean and then this is just gonna escalate things like

16:57.13
Rachel Schwartz
Like. You know. Right. Yeah. So look, we want movement breaks. We want

kids whose body needs to move to be regulated to be able to do that. And we want to honor it. We can still have. boundaries and we should have boundaries.

17:12.90
Rachel Schwartz
to that break. And they can't take breaks every two minutes because they hate math. Right.

17:17.26
Sasha Long
Yeah.

17:17.37
Rachel Schwartz
Like we we have to still teach some tolerance and some stamina building. But for some kids, it might be every 15 minutes of math instruction, you need to take a two minute walk down the hallway. And I think that is totally fine as we're trying to build.

17:27.35
Sasha Long
Yeah.

17:30.75
Rachel Schwartz
skills and actually attending to a difficult non-preferred topic.

17:36.35
Sasha Long
And I mean, everyone hates to hear it, but like, as you said, data plays a big role in this because yeah, the, you know. every two minutes might not be something that's feasible, but like setting the expectation of like, hey, you got to sit here for 30 minutes when the kid can't even sit for five.

17:49.38
Sasha Long
Like it's going to help us have, I think, a reasonable expectation too.

17:53.63
Rachel Schwartz
Absolutely. The goal is not to prevent the student. from escaping every demand. We know, like, sometimes you need to. Sometimes a demand is difficult and genuinely needs to be reduced or modified.

18:04.35
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

18:04.39
Rachel Schwartz
I am all for like, sometimes we do need to modify that. The goal is to. create a regulation support. for that student that will give them a pathway back to learning And that is a support they can use forever.

18:17.18
Rachel Schwartz
Learning how to take a walk.

18:17.17
Sasha Long
Yeah.

18:19.09
Rachel Schwartz
is really important when you're upset. Like as adults, I'm always saying, one of my things with high schoolers, I'm always like, you know what?

18:22.82
Sasha Long
Yeah.

18:25.51
Rachel Schwartz
Cry in the bathroom.

18:26.93
Sasha Long
Yeah.

18:26.88
Rachel Schwartz
that's a skill we all learn like don't you know like like when you have to when you're upset

18:28.62
Sasha Long
Yes.

18:32.23
Rachel Schwartz
That's okay to be upset. The feeling is not the problem.

18:35.67
Sasha Long
Yeah.

18:35.77
Rachel Schwartz
It is the behavior along with those feelings. So if you need to take a walk because you're about to bang your head on the desk because you hate. Math. Let's just take a walk. It's okay.

18:43.52
Sasha Long
Yeah. I mean, adults don't have great coping skills always.

18:46.33
Rachel Schwartz
No.

18:46.30
Sasha Long
we ah we Everyone has one of those in their life, right?

18:48.76
Rachel Schwartz
Everybody does.

18:48.61
Sasha Long
but At least one.

18:51.63
Rachel Schwartz
Everybody has something they hate.

18:51.60
Sasha Long
So.

18:52.85
Rachel Schwartz
Yep.

18:52.91
Sasha Long
I know taking kind of a sharp right turn on this, because I think when when I at least think of the diagnosis of ADHD, the first conversation or one of the first conversations quickly seems to be about medication, because I think there is.

19:06.42
Rachel Schwartz
oh ye

19:07.88

Sasha Long
A little bit of a misconception that wick if we find this perfect perfect dose and this perfect combination of meds, it will like. quote unquote, cure, you know, or get rid of these symptoms.

19:19.63
Sasha Long
I mean, not as a doctor here, but like from my perspective, We don't always see that happening. So what can we think about medication and the fact that maybe it might help some kids and not others?

19:29.65
Rachel Schwartz
That's a great question. um And I'm not a medical doctor. I work with a ton of kids with ADHD on various medications. I will say medication is a really well-supported intervention for ADHD and something that if families feel comfortable with.

19:46.63
Rachel Schwartz
the the chemical a chemical tool it's very useful for many kids and some students show very noticeable changes. Other students have kind of partial responses. inconsistent responses that might have side effects or very little change individual variation especially in the pediatric world is expected.

20:07.23
Rachel Schwartz
I feel that for everyone, you have to know what feels right to you for your family and for your kid. and as someone who works with families and students in schools.

20:18.21
Rachel Schwartz
All I will, ah what we can provide to you. is objective information about functioning about how the student is doing in schools and their patterns in schools. Medication can be effective. and it can help with that regulation and with that attention. It does not replace. Instruction. or environmental supports or helping a student.

20:40.64
Rachel Schwartz
develop supports and tools for themselves. so that as they get older, they're able to understand their needs. So. it is an important evidence-based component that can be very effective in treatment. But. There's never going to be a one size fits all. It is a very personal decision. And there are kids who simply. it is not a magic wand. It does not suddenly make every kid with ADHD attend.

21:08.12

Rachel Schwartz
or suddenly make them more regulated. It's very it's variable.

21:12.47
Sasha Long
Yeah.

21:12.80
Rachel Schwartz
so you know i and i think For educators, I would caution them. Many educators say, well, they just need medication. And what I want to and I do say to them is. That is just one small piece of this puzzle. We can give them a chemical prefrontal cortex. And that sure will help us in many ways, but it will not replace. instruction.

21:33.03
Rachel Schwartz
and it will not replace. finding good environmental supports for a student.

21:39.61
Sasha Long
That's like the clip right there. That's I mean, that's like 1000 % it like Because I hear that too.

21:42.59
Rachel Schwartz
ah

21:45.18
Sasha Long
Like, well, if we have the meds and it's like the meds make the learning accessible.

21:49.06
Rachel Schwartz
Mm hmm.

21:48.92
Sasha Long
So we still need the instruction piece there.

21:49.46
Rachel Schwartz
Mm hmm. Yep. Yep. And sometimes they're open for learning.

21:53.65
Sasha Long
And.

21:55.04
Rachel Schwartz
Sometimes the medication allows them to be open for learning the tools, but it doesn't replace the tools.

21:55.52
Sasha Long
Yes.

21:59.56
Sasha Long
Yeah, we still need all of this stuff we're talking about. You know a lot of you know you talked a little bit about the emotional regulation piece and ADHD isn't necessarily a mood disorder, but emotions and rejection.

22:12.61
Sasha Long
can feel very central for students here. Why do you think that is?

22:16.69
Rachel Schwartz
Yeah, it is, you know, some students. Get. stuck. on the feelings and executive functioning. deficits which are within adhd auhd affect the ability to inhibit a response to shift away from feelings so often if you're feeling suddenly overwhelmed you have adhd to retrieve a strategy or a tool or figure out the appropriate response under pressure that's just not going to happen because

22:42.59
Rachel Schwartz
if you think about you know their the brain the adhd brain being um you know, what like a. security at an airport. And you're checking the bags, you're checking situations. And in that. you know through the security, they're saying, okay, your brain is going through security and saying, what is their appropriate response to this?

23:01.12
Rachel Schwartz
stimulus to this. you know whatever i'm getting whatever is coming at me in this environment what's the appropriate response and most brains are able to filter that out and figure out the corresponding response to that situation if you have adhd your security gate is broken. So you're trying to find the appropriate response, but you don't always. Sometimes you go way overboard or you have sort of an under-responsive. way to deal with something that should be exciting. so

23:27.41
Rachel Schwartz
We just need to recognize that the emotions can be disproportionate.

to the situation They are. all um mood know mood disorders are distinct issues, but executive functioning and regulation difficulties will affect your emotional intensity, will affect your ability to recover. So we don't want to label. kids with ADHD who are stuck on a feeling because of corrections or rejections or tasks or time pressures.

23:55.43
Rachel Schwartz
We need to not label those moments as manipulation. just because that response seems. disproportionate to us. you know we We have to validate that emotion.

24:03.53
Sasha Long
oh

24:05.91
Rachel Schwartz
It doesn't mean we remove every expectation, but we do want to communicate. i know this you I know this feels very hard to you, but we're still going to have to teach this new skill and you know learn how to handle this. But that's why many people say, well, they have ADHD or AUHD, but they also have a mood disorder. It's usually not that. It's just...

24:24.33
Rachel Schwartz
Your mood is... tied to your executive functioning.

24:27.40
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

24:27.91
Rachel Schwartz
So if you have any deficits in in the ADHD print brain, it's really difficult to retrieve.

24:28.81
Sasha Long
Yes.

24:35.59
Rachel Schwartz
a coping strategy or an appropriate response when you're under pressure.

24:40.31
Sasha Long

I mean, yeah, they're so intertwined. it's it It's hard to see. not having these kind of struggles here. and And what kind of tools would work, can work to help with these like imbalance of emotions and things like that?

24:55.36
Rachel Schwartz
The, you know, it it all. Depends on the kid, but across the board. clear consistent expectations, predictable routines. visible time, just knowing not always a timer, but just knowing when things are happening and preview changes help to reduce ambiguity.

25:10.93
Rachel Schwartz
which is most of the time going to help all kids and especially kids with ADHD who might have trouble organizing, who might be forgetful or who might be. sort of uncertain or anxious about well what is the order of events here they're you know, calming spaces, sanctuary spaces can be helpful.

25:28.08
Rachel Schwartz
But. That plan needs to be very detailed. Why is the student accessing it? Why are they requesting it? What happens there? Again, this can't just be like a break. That's just you can go here and. Chill out, you know, what what are we doing in this space? ah Routine stacking is another really good tool as well.

25:45.96
Rachel Schwartz
Um. But really, you know, any clear expectation and routine that can reduce ambiguity is going to help in difficult moments.

25:53.76
Sasha Long
Yes, love that. Okay, it's detour for one second because you said a topic that I'm like, this could be its own episode. Let's talk about column spaces for a minute. and some

26:00.74
Rachel Schwartz
ah

26:01.84
Sasha Long
Potential misuses of this?

26:06.49
Rachel Schwartz
this is It's like the timer. It's like a break. What is the purpose?

What's the activity there? What's the end point and what's the return? calming spaces.

26:18.60
Rachel Schwartz
to me are are for Student directed. I need to go here and I need to go here and do this activity that calms me down and then come back. It cannot be. I'm going to just hang out in the calm space.

26:31.84
Rachel Schwartz
read a book and chill out because I don't want to do this instruction. Like we have to make sure again, it is very purposeful.

26:36.89
Sasha Long
Yep.

26:40.10
Rachel Schwartz
And I, you know, I. Edmund costumes all the time and you see like here's a pillow with a calm sign next to it

26:44.77
Sasha Long
Yeah.

26:45.63
Rachel Schwartz
What are we doing? It's not a bad thing. It can be very useful in elementary classrooms specifically.

26:48.19
Sasha Long
Yeah.

26:52.98
Rachel Schwartz
But there has to be routines associated with it. And those are another thing that needs to be taught by the teacher. When you're in the calming space, these are the things you can choose from. This is what you do, and then you leave.

27:03.25
Sasha Long
Yeah. Oh my gosh, I could like... So... You know, my personal life at my kids' school, maybe my kids' teachers will listen to this. Who knows? They're actually doing, the PTO is raising money to put a calm space in every class, which great. But I kind of wanted to be the nerd of like.

27:17.29
Sasha Long
well is there going to be a training like are we going to have training involving like how to use column spaces because like exactly is it just going to become a beanbag where I get to read my book because I have to say I see these used wrong more often than well.

27:32.04
Rachel Schwartz
Yep. I agree. I agree. I think it. I think it becomes sort of the. And I understand if you have a classroom of 30 kids. One kid is so dysregulated. You don't have staff.

27:44.47
Rachel Schwartz
to let them leave the classroom if they need to so they go to the calming space. Okay. I get it and it makes sense. They just need to have a clear routine for when they're there.

27:55.26
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

27:55.36
Rachel Schwartz
and what lets them know. that they're done. and they're coming back. You know, that that is. That is the biggest problem. If we took time to teach that. then i'd I'd be all for them.

28:05.82
Rachel Schwartz
have them in everywhere let's have calming spaces wherever we go but there just has to be those expectations how are they accessing it what signals the return what happens when they're there how long can they be there and it might be that the timer is

28:07.14
Sasha Long
Yeah, exactly.

28:11.24
Sasha Long
Yes.

28:17.43
Sasha Long
Yes.

28:19.32

Rachel Schwartz
create too much pressure, you know, as we talked about. So then what's the other endpoint? what is the thing they're looking for in their bodies to know, i okay, I'm ready to go back.

28:27.28
Sasha Long
Yeah, I mean, you're right. It's a great like logistical solution in schools. Like, you know, I always tell like clinicians that have never worked in schools. I'm like, well, get ready because like logistics rule the world here. Like if there isn't a space or an adult for that, it just does the intervention doesn't happen. So what allows I think an intervention to happen in a way that, yeah, with 30 kids and no so extra staff, like we can still meet these needs. but that instruction piece as you said is so important.

28:53.96
Rachel Schwartz
It's so important and it's really hard to do and you're right. There needs to be a training. I mean, these the yeah these these things should be their own training. I mean, this whole calm space, how do you use it?

28:59.91
Sasha Long
Yeah. Yeah. ah

29:01.48
Rachel Schwartz
that's That's a complete, that's a PD.

29:03.09
Sasha Long
So now... that literally

29:04.35
Rachel Schwartz
That's what you need to run for the next PDs. There.

29:06.09
Sasha Long
I know. um Okay, so switching gears, let's talk goals for this because as we're as we've kind of discussed all these things, this this can take some time, right? Teaching these strategies, embedding this into our day can definitely justify a goal here. So how can we write meaningful goals for regulation and executive functions and kind of everything we've been talking about?

29:28.31
Rachel Schwartz

It's really hard. Sasha. It's really hard to write good goals.

29:30.95
Sasha Long
Yeah. much time you got?

29:32.93
Rachel Schwartz
Look, and I feel like I'm i'm constantly changing my mind on this. Like, oh, we should do it this way. but I think you know ideally if it's a regulation goal so the bottom up they're they're completely sort of all over the place physically and everything we need to know when they're likely to struggle so we need that sort of Classic.

29:50.62
Rachel Schwartz
abc data what's happening here and then that goal is related to that context right because we don't want to eradicate the stressor We...

30:01.63
Rachel Schwartz
don't want to necessarily even require a student to appear calm because frustration is a part of life and learning.

30:07.50
Sasha Long
Mm hmm.

30:08.69
Rachel Schwartz
so I think there, for regulation, the goal is to help the student recognize What is happening? communicate what they need. their strategy and engage in a more safe or more effective solution the next time so if they're Stage one is just.

30:24.23
Rachel Schwartz
Anytime, you know, figure out what's the strategy that we're going to use that seems to be something that's useful for that kid that relates to regulation. We're going to try it. They're going to use it. and um and i prefer opportunity based measurement so for example like you know when presented with a difficult or not preferred task, and early blah blah blah is observed, the learner will select one of three taught responses.

30:47.02
Sasha Long
and

30:47.13

Rachel Schwartz
blah, blah, blah. And then, you know, for four out of five opportunities and then return to, you know, the next. ah the agreed upon place and four out of five opportunities rather than they'll be regulated in 80 % of intervals or something like that, you know, or or definitely no accuracy.

31:01.66
Sasha Long
So hard to take data on.

31:03.56
Rachel Schwartz
It's so hard. And I think opportunity-based, we never know when a student will be dysregulated. So we have to do opportunity-based because it helps us figure out, okay, was four out of five reasonable?

31:07.95
Sasha Long
Yeah.

31:11.32
Rachel Schwartz
Is it not reasonable? We'll kind of figure out. but But there, we're just really trying to teach a strategy. So if you're looking at regulation, it's a strategy. And honestly, it's the same, a regulatory strategy, a bottom-up strategy. if you're looking at other executive functioning deficits you know how to task initiation getting started, um remembering directions and following directions, all of those pieces. That that is those those top-down tools. i mean

31:38.04
Rachel Schwartz
Those can be when given a checklist. a Again, opportunity-based. When given a checklist and taught how to use the checklist. they will but when given the instruction use the checklist to get out the materials for X amount of opportunities.

31:53.19
Sasha Long
Yeah.

31:53.48
Rachel Schwartz
You know, that's what we're looking at making it. one relaying making sure that the goal aligns to the tool we're using or the strategy we're using. which aligns to the deficit we've. described whether it's a top cognitive deficit or a regulatory physical deficit so once you pick those tools and again it Trial and error.

32:13.88
Rachel Schwartz
You pick the tools. You figure out, okay, on the opportunities, when does this happen? And then you create that goal. and And I think people get really caught up in goals being this thing that can't be changed. We can modify goals.

32:27.00
Rachel Schwartz
whenever we need to.

32:28.01
Sasha Long
Yeah. Exactly.

32:28.54
Rachel Schwartz
I mean, that's the thing. it is not a you know And also a goal can honor. discomfort. When corrected, the student will be taught a response such as, I need a minute or help or can you explain?

32:40.61
Rachel Schwartz
before leaving an area. um And, you know, not arguing. four to five opportunities. Like it's okay that we have something about. a student being uncomfortable and what they're doing about it.

32:51.73
Sasha Long
Because those situations are definitely going to happen and we may as well.

32:54.31
Rachel Schwartz
We cannot be snowplows.

32:55.97
Sasha Long
now No,

32:56.23
Rachel Schwartz
We have to. I mean, we. you know, It is a really tall order. I think in schools when. We have kids who have who really struggle with discomfort. which everyone does, but who really...

33:10.18
Rachel Schwartz
it You know. ah objectively and externally struggle. in a way that's disruptive in a classroom. with any sort of discomfort. And our task

in those environments is to help them handle that.

33:22.02
Rachel Schwartz
And it's really difficult to do. And we often want to remove the discomfort. But it's such a slippery slope if we do that.

33:27.75
Sasha Long
Yeah.

33:28.33
Rachel Schwartz
So we are trying to create goals. that help them. use strategies and maybe we use one it doesn't work we try another one from that regulation regulation toolbox And we just.

33:40.61
Rachel Schwartz
choose those, teach those to the kid and try to help them learn them so that they can use them independently in those settings. And that just might take a long time because stressors. The minute you have some under your belt. Guess what? It's a new school year. You have a new teacher, a new class, new team.

33:53.52
Sasha Long
Yeah.

33:54.07
Rachel Schwartz
We started all over again.

33:54.01
Sasha Long
Newt. New stressors. And I like how your first example, because I think, as you said, we get very stuck in a goal, but your first um example of the goal said, like, use one of three taught strategies. So you don't feel like so locked in, like, well, I tried the checklist and it didn't work, but it's in my IEP goal, so I got to power through.

34:11.01
Rachel Schwartz
Yeah, three pre-taught strategies. Ask for help. as um One of my biggest tools I always use is, you know, as it is it too much? Is it? you know Have you been given too much work? Do you need to cut it in a half? Do you need...

34:23.40

Rachel Schwartz
Is it do you need a break? Do you need time? Do you need a two minute pause? Is it sometimes like for a kid I had, it is it? Is it too hard? So you just you need help right away and you can't ask for help.

34:34.24
Rachel Schwartz
So like, what are the things that is the problem?

34:34.42
Sasha Long
Mm-hmm.

34:36.32
Rachel Schwartz
If you can name it. You can point to it and then, okay, let's help solve it. Let's rip it in half. Let me solve the first three for you and give you a model. Let's go take a break, pass and.

34:47.46
Rachel Schwartz
go get a drink of water and come back you know whatever it is we have to teach those different things because then they also know Okay, I have options. There's not just one thing. Breaks, as we talked about, do not work for every kid. Sometimes it makes it so much worse to get up and have to leave and then reenter a classroom.

34:57.69
Sasha Long
Yeah.

35:02.09
Sasha Long
Yeah, 1000%. All right, we've gone over, I could talk about this for like days.

35:05.96
Rachel Schwartz
I know.

35:06.07
Sasha Long
We've covered so, I mean, it's a big topic and we've covered a lot and I ah really appreciate all the examples and the actionable tips you've given.

35:06.50
Rachel Schwartz
i

35:13.88
Sasha Long
So for someone listening that is like, this is half my class, like I, these are, you're talking about my students.

35:18.07
Rachel Schwartz
I know.

35:19.77
Sasha Long
What is one actionable thing that you would recommend kind of focusing on right away?

35:26.29
Rachel Schwartz
Um, If I could leave listeners with one. idea. it would be The goal is not more tools. It's a better alignment between the learner's brain and the classroom. Start with one. Difficult moment Identify your barrier.

35:40.96
Rachel Schwartz
or whatever you think the barrier is. Select one support that has a clear job aligning 2. That. brain. to that deficit Is it cognitive? Is it regulatory?

35:53.76
Rachel Schwartz
Teach that and then see what the students does see their performance change Just. It's not getting all the things. Just pick one moment. that is not going well

36:04.42
Sasha Long
Hi.

36:04.23
Rachel Schwartz
and then think about one tool that has a clear job that you could teach that student. and see what happens.

36:10.71
Sasha Long
I love that because it's making your life easier and not doing more things, doing less, hopefully.

36:13.64
Rachel Schwartz
Yeah. Yeah. Replace one repeated verbal direction. with two or three

step visual. and see whether independence changes. Stuff like that.

36:22.80
Sasha Long
Yeah. Oh, love that. um All right. Where can people go to learn more from you?

36:29.78
Rachel Schwartz
i um I am in Pittsburgh, PA. I work for the Watson Institute where I consult for them. um both in person and I can go anywhere, talk to anyone about anything.

36:41.57
Sasha Long
but

36:41.63
Rachel Schwartz
ah yeah You can find me here. You can find me. um I do work on attitude. ah Yeah. But you can find me Watson Institute. Check it out. We ah I'm one of the consultants there. And so I work with school districts.

36:53.85
Rachel Schwartz
I work with families. I work with organizations, sometimes top down level of how are you. running special education? How are you running your programs and sometimes the student level? What does the student need? So it's really whatever.

37:05.95
Rachel Schwartz
The problem is, and I love challenges. So bring them my way.

37:10.16
Sasha Long
ah all right well thank you so much for joining us again on the podcast

37:15.08
Rachel Schwartz
Thanks, Asha.