

Ep #130 This is not what I signed up for | When ADHD symptoms aren't typical

This is episode 130.

We welcome you to the ADHD Smarter Parenting Podcast. Here to heal and elevate lives is your Parenting Coach, Siope Kinikini.

Well, hello, my friends. Welcome. I'm glad you're joining me. Thank you for being here today wherever you may be, running errands, at home, doing dishes, chores, watching your children.

I'm always amazed when people call in, and they tell me that they're listening, driving around, running errands, or they're jogging. So wherever you are, thanks for joining me this morning.

Today, we're going to be talking about ADHD, specifically when parents are surprised by the behaviors.

Basically, this one is entitled, this podcast is entitled "This is not what I signed up for," and it stems from a conversation that I had with a parent when their child was diagnosed with ADHD. So their child was diagnosed with ADHD, and they were expecting to see a lot of the inattentiveness or the hyperactivity part of it.

But what happened instead was their child ended up being more explosive and angry. Constantly yelling, and calling his mother names, and telling her to F off, and things like that. So very, very aggressive, angry types of behaviors, and so she was shocked. She was absolutely shocked, and she had the evaluation done upon recommendation from a school teacher. She took it into a professional to do some testing and see, and they were able to diagnose the child with ADHD.

So she read up on it, jumped online, and was looking at what to look at as far as ADHD is concerned, and she was getting ready for it. She was preparing. What she found was that the most difficult thing for her was dealing with the angry outbursts.

So today, we're going to talk about this whole dynamic of, "Okay. My child received a diagnosis of something, and it's not quite what I thought it would be because I'm seeing other behaviors that are more strongly manifesting during this time. I'm trying to deal with those because I don't feel like the inattentiveness or the hyperactivity is really much of an issue."

We're going to be talking about that. If you're a parent that doesn't have a child that has ADHD, because we have a lot of parents who are listening that do not have children who struggle with

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ADHD, this is for you because you may think that your child is struggling with one thing, and yet they're manifesting their behaviors in another way.

You may have read every baby book out there about what to expect when you're having a baby, and then the baby came, and it was like, "Okay. This is nothing like what I thought it would be." That tends to happen quite a bit, and as the child grows older, this is the same dynamic. "Hey, I'm reading up. I'm studying. Professionals are telling me this thing, but this is what I'm seeing, and it's not quite the same. So what do I do? What do I do?"

I want to give you some practical answers, things that you can implement. By the end of this podcast, we'll be focusing on skills and on being able to communicate. So we want to be focusing on your ability to communicate what is happening. Now, this is partly for your child, but it's really for you as a parent, and let me tell you why because your assessment of what is happening with your child and the things that are happening to cause all of this concern and panic also is a part of the way that you perceive everything that's happening around you. So we'll be talking about that.

We're going to talk about anger first. We're going to talk about triggers, and then we are going to be talking about what you can do to address these things.

[Now, the skill that I want you to focus on is the skill of Decision Making.](#) You can find this on the Smarter Parenting website. If you have not visited the website, I highly suggest you jump over there and visit. We're at SmarterParenting.com. You can find a lot of different parenting skills.

In fact, during the podcast, I always stress one skill that you can use by the end of the podcast. So the one that I'm recommending for this podcast is [Decision Making](#). When you click on that on the SmarterParenting.com website, a video will pop up, and the video is roughly around six, seven minutes.

It walks you through this process of how to make good decisions based on your values. From there, you can practice this with the way that you engage and interact with your child, and also, in making decisions yourself. Use this as a person. [Teach your child how to do this as well because it really does allow them to see that there really are more options than they think there are.](#)

Is there another way to deal with anger? Absolutely. Are there other ways to process emotions? Absolutely. So you're helping your child expand their understanding by using this skill. So let's talk about anger triggers and what you can do by using the skill of Decision Making. Okay?

Let's talk about anger first off because that's the issue for this parent who is struggling. Again, she took her child in for testing. Her child was struggling in school, based on a teacher's recommendation.

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After the professionals had done an assessment, they realized that he qualified to be diagnosed as ADHD. So she's like, "Okay." So she, like a diligent parent would do, jumped online, did all the research. "ADHD. This is what I'm dealing with. These are the behaviors I should be looking at." Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.

She made a list, and she was planning out her strategy. I think a lot of parents are that way. Once you realize, "Hey. Okay. Now, I know something. Let me establish a game plan. This is what I'm going to do." So in a way, she was establishing, "These are the decisions I'm making." She's problem-solving. She's trying to work through, "How do I best address these things?"

Now, when she was speaking with the medical professional on the diagnosis of her child, the medical professional gave her a couple of options to deal with a child's behavior. This is where the skill of Decision Making would have been more effective in helping her know how to go about what to do. He recommended medication, and he recommended follow-up with behavioral interventions.

Those are great options, right? Now, when I communicated with this mother, she felt like he was saying, "Choose one, not both." The reality is, is there's a third option, and that is to do both. You can do both, and there are multiple options for parents who are out there.

As she was formulating her game plan, she decided, "Okay. I'm going to focus on behavioral interventions now. If the need to be greater in the future, then we'll move to medication and then stop the behavioral." Big mistake. You want to do both. You want to do both. You're going to have greater impact.

The medication will help alleviate some of those stressors in your child to help them focus, but it doesn't necessarily teach them how to engage and interact with ADHD. Again, do both. Okay? So you want to be very clear about doing that and making great decisions when you're deciding how you're going to interact with your child.

While she was going through this process, she started to notice that her child was becoming more and more angry and frustrated. The anger started to manifest in him yelling things and swearing. So they don't allow swearing in their home. Soon, she heard her son say, "Why don't you just F off? Leave me alone. I hate you. Get out of my face," and calling her the B-word. Okay?

[These things are difficult for any parent to hear, especially a parent who is as dedicated as this parent is in trying to help her child. I mean, I want you to think of the hours and the time spent in helping this child, and that's the response she gets from him. So it was crushing for her.](#)

So we started to talk about anger and the emotions of anger, what is underlying anger. There are some that believe that anger is a secondary emotion, that there are other things going on, and that anger is the manifestation of frustration or disagreement, but that anger itself is

secondary to something else. I tend to agree. There are thoughts that the child is having right now they're unable to process, and anger is speaking.

So helping this mom understand when your child is speaking this way, it's not your child. It's the emotions your child is feeling manifesting in a way to try and resolve them, to get ideas out there, to get a response. But if your child could communicate what emotions and feelings they were having, then it would be much easier for them to not do that because it's counterproductive.

We started to talk about how you can help your child make better decisions in regards to Decision Making skill. [So, I jumped into the skill, and I worked with her. So the method that we use is called the SODAS Method, and the SODAS, S-O-D-A-S, is an acronym. The situation for the first S. Options for the O. D for disadvantages. A for advantages. And the final S for Solution.](#)

You want to write these things down on a piece of paper. You want to come up with a very specific situation, and then you want to look at your options on your ways that you can interact with your child.

Now, after I talked to this woman about the anger outbursts, and separating her child from the behavior, and understanding that the behavior is based off of the thoughts, and the thoughts are based off of emotions he doesn't know how to express yet, let's focus on problem solving other ways that he can express.

We did that as an exercise, so she could eventually do it with her child, but the situation is, "My mom is asking me to do my homework, but I don't want to." So you fill out the situation. That's the situation that we filled out, and then we went through the options.

What are some options that you can do? I phrased it in the way that the mom would answer it because I wanted her to make it very personal in using this method. "So, what are your options?" "Well, I can yell and scream. Yeah, I can do it. Yeah." And then you're supposed to come up with three options. She struggled with the third option.

A lot of times, people think there's only one or two. Now, this is part of this black and white thinking, and this is part of the way the mom interpreted what the doctor was saying. "You can do medication, or you can do a behavioral intervention."

She saw it as two separate things rather than a combination of things, right? So she's like, "I can't even think of a third option." So we started to explore. "Okay. When you're angry, in what ways can you react in order to get that cleared?"

For her, it was after doing some exploration, it took a little bit of time, she would retreat sometimes. She would go on a drive sometimes. She found ways to herself down when she was angry.

I said, "Okay. Great. Those are great things. So let's focus this on you, and then you can teach this to your child." So we came up with three options.

So we have this situation. We have the options of what you can do when you are angry, and she chose to leave the situation for a bit and then come back. So she could scream and yell, she could do what's asked, or she could step away for a bit, take a breather, and then come back and address the issue.

After you list the options, you want to list down the disadvantages to each of the three options that you have outlined. You want to list down disadvantages. So the disadvantages of yelling, for example. You want to list as many as you can.

"Okay. If I yell and scream, people get upset with me, and they yell and scream back. If I yell and scream, it makes me look immature. If I yell and scream, I don't feel good afterward." We went down, and we listed disadvantages for that.

Then, we moved on to the next option, which was just doing what is asked. What are the disadvantages of doing what is asked?

Now, it's important for you, even though you as a parent may know what the answer should be, allow your child the opportunity to work through this. Because with them working through this, they're going to be able to come to conclusions that make sense to them. If you just answer every time, "That's the right answer," your child doesn't have the experience of figuring it out themselves.

So, the second option was just to do it, get it over with. What are the disadvantages? "I'll be grumpy because somebody is telling me what to do. I'll be upset, and I may just bottle it up and explode later." So we started to list the disadvantages to those.

Then, we moved to the third option. We did it until you couldn't think of any more options, and we moved over to the third option, which was step away, and give some time, then come back. So what are the disadvantages? "Well, that may make the other person angry, right? That may not get the thing done for a long time, and I'll just stew in it. It may take me a really long time to calm down." So we listed multiple things under disadvantages.

Then, we moved on to the advantages part, and here, you're going to list down as many advantages for each of those options as you possibly can. At least three, but you want to list down as many as you can. So what are the advantages of exploding? "Well, I can get the other person off my back. I can let them know that I'm upset. I can set the tone, and sometimes I get away with it. Those are the advantages."

What are the advantages of just doing it right away? "Well, I can do it right away, and then I can move on with my day." Again, you as a parent are going to have already some ideas of what you think should be the right answer, but this isn't about you.

It's about your child figuring out what are the disadvantages to behaving a certain way and what are the advantages of behaving a certain way, and then you want to continue on to the third option. List as many advantages as you can.

As you start to work through this, your child is going to start to see that there are greater disadvantages for one behavior and greater advantages for another. That's what you do is you do an assessment. You want to look at the columns and say, "What disadvantages are the worst outcome for you?"

Have them make a decision, and then have them look, "What are the advantages that are best for you?" They will choose one, and based on those, you're going to be left with the two options.

Now, they can choose from those two options how to respond, but then you can dig deeper and talk to them. "Okay? Which one do you want to happen most? Which advantage is most important to you? This one. Okay. Then, I guess it's option number two; just do it when I'm asking you. Get it done quick. Get it over with. Move on with my day." Okay? Come up with that solution.

So with this parent, we wrote it out. We walked through the whole process so she could understand how she could teach it with her child and then how she could use it for herself. This was in regards to the anger outbursts from her child. And her child was a little bit older, so he can work through the SODAS method, and she could explain it.

Some parents have asked, "Can I do this with younger children?" Absolutely, you can. In fact, younger children are more likely to come up with more options and disadvantages than a teenager would. Teenagers tend to start thinking more in like black and white as time goes on.

Younger children are highly creative, and they will come up with wild options. But when you're dealing with a younger child, let them try out those options. You don't want to do more than three options when you do this exercise. Help them come to a solution.

Then, once you come up with a solution, you're going to practice it. "So as a young child, you would practice it. I'm going to ask you to do your homework. We're going to [Role-play](#) option number two, which you said has the best advantages for you. So you need to do your homework. You're going to do this, and this is all part of Following Instructions."

So what that would sound like then would be, "I would say to my child when my child is calm, 'Okay. Tomorrow, I'm going to ask you to do your homework, but I want us to practice this. I want you to know what it sounds like, what it feels like, what it looks like first, and what the expectation is. Okay?' So I'm doing this the day before we're actually going to implement it."

They say, "So I'm going to come up to you, and I'll be like, 'Hey, I need you to do your homework. You need to say, 'Okay,' do the homework, and then come back and tell me when it's done.'"

So I would say, "Okay. I'm going to be you. You be me. Let's practice this." So he would say to me, "Okay, mom. I need you to go do your homework."

"Okay." Write it out. "Okay. I'm doing my homework."

"Okay. Great. Okay. Now, you do it."

Then, you would practice this until it became routine, became normal. What you're doing is you're teaching your child a new way to engage and deal with some of those aggressive behaviors.

You're problem-solving, helping them make decisions around this issue of anger, and you can do this with any behavior. Really, you really could. You just need to specify what the expectation is or what the situation is, work through the options, disadvantages, advantages, and then the final solution.

Again, I cannot recommend enough--well, I can. I am going to recommend that you jump over to the [Smarter Parenting website](#) to watch the video because the video is fantastic. In fact, watch the video with your child. There on that page for Decision Making, you're going to have a printout, and you'll have worksheets you can print out as well to do this activity with your child. It's highly effective, and it's better if they can see it. Then, you can discuss it, and you can work through it all together, and that your child sees that you can do it, that you use this as a way to make better decisions.

This is the way that I wanted her to interact with her child to decrease the name-calling. Now, as we came up with a solution to helping to challenging then what they need to do instead of the angry outbursts, the yelling, and the screaming, we had to focus on the second topic I wanted to cover today, which are triggers.

Before we start talking about triggers, we need to take a break.

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Okay. Welcome back. Let's talk about triggers. I love the name "triggers" only because I am a huge fan of The Lone Ranger. I love that show. He had a horse named Trigger. The trigger was

something that was reliable, and triggers are reliable in some ways because when something is triggered, a response happens right after it.

In the case of The Lone Ranger, and whenever he called, the horse showed up. It was pretty consistent. Triggers are the same thing. When something happens and it triggers us, we go into almost an automatic mode on how we're going to respond to things.

So with this mother, we had to sit down and talk about the triggers for her. They do not allow swearing in their home. Their children are not allowed to swear, and yet this child is swearing in the home and calling her names, and that's very triggering for her.

We had to evaluate the triggers and how she could respond to those triggers in a more productive way. So guess what we did? We did a Decision Making SODAS exercise on how she should respond when her child calls her names or uses the F-word in the house.

The reason that we did this is because by writing it out, laying down the options on paper, she could see, and visually process, and work through how to best deal with her trigger when he starts using those words in the home.

She had a couple of options listed out, "What are my options? I could become angry or upset. I could cry. I could give him a consequence every time he does that." So we worked through the SODAS method in regards to her triggers.

Now, I hope you can see just how effective this skill is. Decision Making is so effective for parents and for children when you're dealing with a situation that you're struggling with.

You can do this with any situation. If you're at work and you have to make some decisions, do a SODAS worksheet. Do that. Go to the [SmarterParenting.com](https://www.smarterparenting.com). Print out a worksheet. Write down the situation. List down the options. Go through the whole process. Very, very helpful.

What she was able to discover is there are multiple ways to deal with this type of angry behavior from her child rather than what she was doing, which was getting more upset with him.

We focused on, "What are the triggers? Him calling you names. What are your options? What are things you can do? What are the disadvantages to those options? What are the advantages to those options? What are you going to do?" It gives her a blueprint and a framework in order to work with her child instead of against her child.

She decided that she was going to focus on remaining calm when he did that because part of the engagement, part of their dance between each other when he was angry was that he would do something, and then she would react in a way that escalated the situation. Then, he would raise it up, and then she would raise it up. Pretty soon, it was out of control, and the child left feeling largely unfazed, but mom was a frazzle by the end of it. Which just deteriorated her self-confidence and her ability, and her strength actually to continue.

So she decided, "I'm going to remain calm, use a calm voice tone, not react to it. So, it takes power away from those words and using those words in our interaction until I can teach my child how to work through their anger in more proactive ways." So we practiced it.

Now, it's an interesting thing because I personally don't like to swear—nothing against people who swear—I just choose not to do it. However, during this Role-play, we used it. I did in order to help prepare the mom for the situation where this child is going to be using these words. Yeah. You can't substitute some of the emotions that come up when you hear certain words. So we practiced it, and I could tell she struggled a bit. So we continued to practice it until it became okay routine.

This is the part of Role-playing, and that's a skill too you can access at [SmarterParenting.com](#), which is helpful because not only are we building muscle memory in the way that your children should behave. By using these skills, we're actually teaching parents, you, how to do it as well and building muscle memory in your reactions with your children. It's really, really powerful. So, so many resources on [SmarterParenting.com](#). You want to jump over there and check it out.

So we practiced it. We practiced me being the child and her, what her reaction would be, what she would say, how she would say it. We practiced, practiced, practiced until she was like, "Yeah, I can do this. I can do this. If I hear it, I'm going to be okay because I know exactly what to do. I'll just react the way that we've been practicing, and we will work through it. We'll absolutely work through it."

I received a call from her a little bit later that week, and she had mentioned that she did it. At first, he escalated it and started getting even more upset, but she remained calm, collected, and did exactly as the way we practiced it.

She noticed that after a while, he started to deescalate. Then, the next time, he escalated to a point. It didn't get as bad, and then he started to calm down a lot quicker. Then, by the third day, she had taken the wind out of the sails by reacting more calmly.

He didn't have someone to dance with in calling her names or swearing at her. There was just no reason to keep behaving that way because he wasn't getting the response that he expected or that he wanted from her.

She's like, "Wow, that was really interesting to see that dynamic change just by me being able to control the triggers that I'm feeling and practicing those triggers." Again, we did this through the skill of Decision Making, the SODAS method. It's a wonderful skill, wonderful skill. Everyone should know how to do it. We would all make better decisions if we use the SODAS Method.

Now, let's talk about how you're going to implement Decision Making into your home environment. What are you going to do? How is it going to work? When you are dealing with a

skill like Decision Making, this is a family skill. It's not just one child or you. It's everyone in the home.

In fact, this is one you want to teach to everyone in the home to understand and you want them to use. Parents don't realize that once you teach your child this, if they ever come to you with a question that you feel like they need to learn from or to figure out, you can say, "What I want you to do is go do a SODAS Method. Bring it back to me when you're done, and let's talk about what options do you think are best for you?"

I mean, think about that. Instead of giving them just the answer, you're saying, "Go process this. Go think it through. Go work it out, and then come to me, and let's discuss from there." What it does is encourages your children to think outside of the box. It encourages your child to feel independent, to feel secure, and that they have a say in how things work. What it does for you as a parent is it gives you some time, some time to watch them develop the skills of making decisions and guiding them along this whole process. It also gives you an opportunity to communicate.

One of the things that I have learned in implementing SODAS with my own child though, and this is powerful, is that I can gauge where she's at, where she's thinking, what she's thinking by the option she chooses. That increases our communication in the long run.

If she's struggling with a friend at school who's behaving a certain way towards her, what are her options? What can she do? Bring the SODAS. "Oh, okay. You've come up with these three options. You've chosen this one. Let's try it." So we'll Role-play it and practice it to see if it feels good. Sometimes she'll be like, "Okay. That still feels kind of not right." I'll say, "Okay. Choose three different options, and let's do it again," until she can figure it out. There's a sense of autonomy there in being able to do this.

I think as adults, we take advantage of the idea that we just make decisions and that they're just boom. But if we can formulate the process of making decisions for ourselves and for children, the decisions that we make are going to be of greater impact in our lives, and they're going to make sense based on our values.

This is how you're going to implement it. Learn it first. Practice it first. Watch the video. Then, you are going to have your child watch the video. You'll have them work through one, a simple one first, and you will teach them how to do it. Then, when your child has a question, you are going to just say, "You know what? Do a SODAS on it. Let's figure it out. When you're done with the SODAS method of Decision Making, bring it to me. Let's take a look at it, and let's talk about it. Okay?"

So, these are ways that you can implement this skill in your home. In addition, when you have to make it a family decision, whether or not you're going to get a pet, where you're going to go on vacation, this is an excellent time to pull out a SODAS worksheet and work it out. Now, the more and more you do this, the less time it takes to actually go through each of those steps because

it becomes second nature. You just automatically start recognizing ways that you can weigh your options, the disadvantages, advantages, and come up with a solution.

With children, it's important for you to practice what the solution is. Practice it with them because on paper, it may look one way. But when they actually experience it, it may feel different. So you need practice that as a parent when they come with their sheet and they say, "Okay. This is the option I think is best."

Your response should be, "Okay. Let's practice it. Let's see how it feels." Practice it. "How does it feel?" "It feels good. I can do that." "Okay. Great. Well, that's what you're going to do," or they may come back and say, "It doesn't feel quite right." "Okay. Well, do it again. Choose three different options, and then let's try it again."

Work through that whole process, and pretty soon, you're going to have some really independent thinkers who can work through difficulties, work through their issues.

So we've covered a couple of things here. We've talked about, this isn't what the parents signed up for was ADHD, and yet, she was seeing other behaviors and in what ways could she help her teenage son work through those.

We focused on the skill of Decision Making and dealing with his anger. How does he want to work through his anger? What options are there for him to work through his feelings of frustration? What can he do? I did this by working with the mom on a SODAS with her. So she knew how it worked and how it felt to do one. Then, we talked about triggers for her. So in this way, the child has a SODAS, the parent has a SODAS, and this is a family skill.

Then, finally, how you can implement this with your own family.

So it's a wonderful, wonderful skill. In fact, one that is very helpful. I know I've used it professionally in my own professional career as I've worked with families and with children. Sometimes I'll pull out a SODAS sheet and be like, "Here's the situation. What are some options on ways that we can help? Disadvantages, advantages, and solutions?"

Once I go through this whole process, I find that I'm more effective in my ability to interact and engage with people. It's usually on a different level. It's a lot more profound rather than just making a decision, and trying to figure it out, and making it work. There's actually substance behind the decisions that I make. So it's very, very powerful.

Use it anywhere that you come across a situation where there's a difficulty. Teach your children how to use it whenever they are faced or confronted with something that's difficult. Allow them the opportunity to work through it so you can see where their values are and what's important to them, and be open to practicing that solution and discussing the solution with them so they know beforehand. This will help them work through it.

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Again, shout out to this mom. Thank you for sharing that you saw an improvement by handling your triggers to his behaviors helped to deescalate that. Now, the focus is, "How do we help him deal with his anger in other ways other than reacting that way? What options are there, disadvantages, advantages, and finally, solution?"

So it's a wonderful skill. You should do it. Again, jump over to [SmarterParenting.com](https://smarterparenting.com). You can find all of the information there, including printouts, and games, and activities that you can use with your children. If you want to teach them the skill through a game or activity, you can. This helps younger children specifically understand the concept of, "Hey, I have multiple options. I can make choices."

That's it for me, and I will talk to you next week. Have a good one. All right. Bye.

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