Social difficulties are common among children who have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This can lead to negative interactions with others. William Pelham, Ph.D., director of the Center for Children and Families at the State University of New York, and an expert on ADHD, says, “Studies show that the average child with ADHD has one to two negative interactions per minute with parents, peers, and teachers if you extrapolate, that’s half a million negative interactions a year,” he continues, “What that means is that most of these kids’ interactions with other people are negative. They’re not the ones invited to birthday parties or over to another kid’s house to play. Either you sit back and let your child have those negative experiences, or you intervene early and do something to stop them.” (McCarty, 22).

One strategy that parents can implement as an early intervention is the idea of a growth mindset. Growth mindset teaches that the brain is always growing, and that children and adults can learn new things and improve their abilities if they apply hard work and effort. Research findings show that growth mindset among those individuals with ADHD helps them to self-regulate and cope more effectively. (Burnette, et al,
One of the benefits of fostering a growth mindset in ADHD children is helping them to understand that they do have some control over the way they think, which encourages positive and flexible thinking. Psychologist Alana Yee shares several approaches parents can take to teach their child to have a growth mindset. More information and details about these approaches can be found in the full article which is linked in the Additional Resources at the end of this article.

- Use daily growth mindset conversation starts.
  - “What did you do today that made you think hard?”
  - “What challenge or problem have you worked on today?”
  - “What is something new you worked on today?”
  - “Was there anything that make you feel stuck today? …Great! What other ways could there be to solve this?”
  - “Can you think of a mistake you made today?”…Great! How can you use this mistake to do better next time?”
  - “Can you think of anything today that was easy for you? How can you make this more challenging?”
  - “What is something you would like to become better at? Who can you ask to help you with this?”
- Share information about the brain. Encourage child to learn about the parts of the brain, how feelings are expressed, and how new information is processed. Reinforce that their brain can learn new skills and improve old ones.
- Focus on the process of goal setting rather than on the goals themselves.
- Make space for failure. Address the set-back and the skills they are lacking head on and talk to your child about the next steps for learning. Problem solve with them rather than dictate what they should do.
- Anticipate explosive behavior and use it to their advantage. Learning about a growth mindset helps a child
in the moment, during explosive behavior, and helps to decrease it in the long run. When you notice your child beginning to escalate, remind them in a calm and reassuring voice of what they have been learning about growth mindset. Once they have calmed down completely, review what worked and talk about how to implement this type of thinking again in the future.

- Share stories of other people’s success. Sharing real-life examples of people who have overcome negative mindsets and find success through growth mindset are not only encouraging but illustrative to a child struggling to understand how to adjust negative thinking patterns. (Yee, 2018)

**Additional Resources:**

Being Strength-Minded: An Introduction to Growth Mindset

Developing a Growth Mindset with Carol Dweck

Growth Mindset for Children with ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, and Other Challenges

Growth Mindset for Younger Students

Growth Mindset

What Should I Do When my Child says “I’m Dumb”? 5 Powerful Ways to Teach Growth Mindset to Children with Special Needs

**References**


By Christina Pay, Extension Assistant Professor