

Testing the efficacy of the Nurtured Heart Approach® among Children with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Children with ADHD have high levels of energy that adults find extremely challenging to manage. Parents report dissatisfaction with the child because they cannot change the child's behavior with traditional parenting styles. The reason traditional styles do not work is high-energy children, like those with ADHD, require a different type of parenting that harnesses the energy in a positive way. Most children with ADHD tend to have a difficult time focusing (inattention), act without thinking (impulsive) and cannot sit still (hyperactive). Treatment for ages four through 11 is behavioral therapy with or without medication based on recommendations from The American Academy of Pediatrics. The Nurtured Heart Approach® (NHA) introduces a parenting approach that shows promise with high-energy children. NHA refuses to reinforce any negative behavior and overemphasizes when the child is engaging in appropriate behavior or not engaging in negative behavior. Moreover, rules of behavior are clear. This gives children a sense of structure and opportunity to manage emotions successfully.

The purpose of this study is to test the efficacy of the NHA among children ages five to eight years old with ADHD using a randomized controlled trial study design. Parent and child pairs will be enrolled in the study then each pair will be selected at random to be in either the NHA group or wait-list comparison group. Parents in the NHA group will be trained in the NHA. After study data is collected, pairs in the wait-list comparison group will receive the NHA training. Data will be collected with questionnaires and saliva samples from children and parents before and after the study. Teachers will complete questionnaires only. It is anticipated that children and parents in the NHA group will experience a transformation such that ADHD symptoms will be reduced or eliminated. Parents will report a higher level of competence in parenting their child resulting in less stress, and greater relationship for both the child and parent.

The potential public health impact is a new approach to children with ADHD. This may result in less medication use which translates to less side effects, greater self-management, and lower healthcare costs.

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