

# Mentors Act as Co-regulators for College Students whose Occupations are Constrained by Learning Disability and/or ADHD

Sharon Medina, MOT, OTR/L, Consuelo M. Kreider, PhD, OTR/L  
Department of Occupational Therapy, University of Florida



2019 American Occupational Therapy Association Annual Conference & Expo  
New Orleans, LA April 4-7, 2019  
www.kreiderlab.phhp.ufl.edu

## Introduction

- Effective self-regulation is a critical skill for young adults transitioning into adult roles and engaging in the college process<sup>1</sup>.
- Self-regulation** refers to the cognitive and emotional processes needed to engage in goal directed behavior while faced with a challenge or adversity<sup>1,3,4</sup>.
- The availability of supportive others who can serve as co-regulators is vital to the development of strong self-regulation skills<sup>2</sup>.
- Co-regulation** is the process used by supportive others that foster the self-regulation abilities of young adults<sup>2</sup>. Undergraduate participants reported that mentors helped them cope during difficult times.
- Purpose:** What information and roles were used during mentorship of undergraduates with LD/ADHD?



## Results

**Table 1. Knowledge needs for mentoring undergraduates with LD/ADHD from 20 graduate student mentor group meetings**

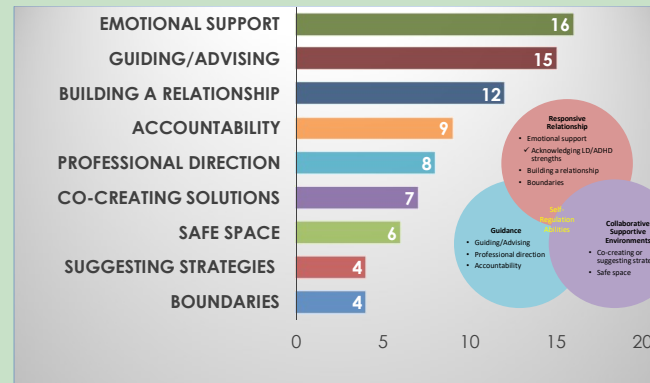
| Disability-specific information (%)  | Approaches for ↑-ing LD/ADHD focused mentorship (%)  | Strategies to help mentees with LD/ADHD succeed (%)   | General mentorship skills (%)  |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General and on-campus LD/ADHD resources (45%*)</li> <li>• Defining LD/ADHD (30%)</li> <li>• Accommodation support (30%)</li> <li>• Understanding common cognitive styles in LD/ADHD (25%)</li> <li>• LD/ADHD symptom manifestation in everyday life (25%)</li> <li>• Disclosing LD/ADHD (25%)</li> <li>• Maintaining privacy (20%)</li> <li>• Common strengths of LD/ADHD (20%)</li> <li>• Federal laws that impact LD/ADHD services (10%)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Defining mentorship roles (40%)</li> <li>• Sharing personal mentorship experiences (35%)</li> <li>• Noticing positive changes in mentees (20%)</li> <li>• Barriers to communication (20%)</li> <li>• Additional disability-related topical information (15%)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health system management (40%)</li> <li>• Organization &amp; time management (30%)</li> <li>• Pushing past personal doubts (30%)</li> <li>• STEM professional development (25%)</li> <li>• Don't know how to help (20%)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building relationships with mentees (30%)</li> <li>• Strategies for healthy communication (20%)</li> <li>• External mentorship supports (20%)</li> <li>• Signs of distress (15%)</li> </ul> |

\* Included via presentation slides and/or discussion prompts/probes

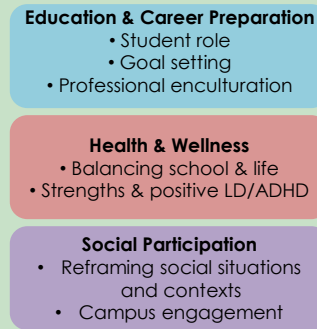
## Methods

- Design & Setting**
- Qualitative description and content analysis of data from 20 group meetings attended by graduate student mentors of undergraduates with LD/ADHD in a similar STEM field of study<sup>6</sup>.
  - Data: transcripts from mentor group discussions held 2-3 times a semester (fall 2013-spring 2017).
  - Participants: 57 Graduate students who were paired to mentor 52 undergraduates with LD/ADHD.
  - Setting: a larger study at the University of Florida testing a holistic, multi-level model of campus supports for students with LD/ADHD (doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01466).
- Analysis**
- Structural coding was used to identify data relevant to the research question. Followed by focused coding to identify most salient categories related to information needs and roles assumed by mentors<sup>5</sup>.

**Figure 1. Mentorship roles and number of mentor group meetings where the role was discussed and model of co-regulation via mentorship**



**Figure 2. Undergraduate occupations supported via mentorship**



## Discussion & Conclusion

**Targeted understanding about LD/ADHD was critical in meeting the diverse occupational needs of undergraduates with LD/ADHD.**

- Mentors assumed roles that may have contributed to the self-regulation skills of the undergraduates with LD/ADHD.
- Notably, mentorship was primarily about emotional support and guiding/advising.
- Mentors' co-regulation skills were facilitated through the delivery of information about LD/ADHD and support for mentoring skill and co-regulation strategy development.
- Mentors as co-regulators supported areas of responsive relationships, guidance, and collaborative supportive environments for undergraduates with LD/ADHD.
- Mentorship was intended to support academics and professional development however, mentorship extended to support social participation and the health and wellness of undergraduates with LD/ADHD.

## Limitations

- This is a secondary analysis from a larger study where data was not collected to answer these specific research questions.
- More research is needed in this area, exploratory nature of this study limits generalizability.

## Implications for Practice

- Clinicians can facilitate mentors' ability to guide and support mentee's skill development and self-regulation, especially mentees with clinical conditions that affect participation and performance.
- Understanding the occupations of undergraduates with LD/ADHD supported through mentorship activities can guide interventions for transitioning youth.

Funding: (1) NSF HRD-1246587; (2) NIH K12 HD055929

1. Murray, D.W., Rosenbalm, K., Christopoulos, C., and Homoudi, A. (2015). Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress: Foundations for Understanding Self-Regulation from an Applied Developmental Perspective. OPRE Report # 2015-21. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2. Rosenbalm, K., and Murray, D.W. (2017). Caregiver Co-regulation Across Development: A Practice Brief. OPRE Report #2017-50. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

3. Murray, D.W., Rosenbalm, K., and Christopoulos, C. (2016). Self-Regulation and Toxic Stress: Seven Key Principles of Self-Regulation in Context. OPRE Report #2016-39. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

4. Murray, D.W., and Rosenbalm, K. (2017). Current Gaps and Future Directions for Self-Regulation Intervention Research: A Research Brief. OPRE Report # 2017-93. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

5. Saldana, P. (2013). The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Inc.

6. Sandelowski, M., & Barroso, J. (2003). Classifying the findings in qualitative studies. Qualitative health research, 13(7), 905-923.