Mentors Serve as Co-regulators within the Natural Environment of College Students with Learning Disabilities and Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Introduction

- Effective self-regulation is a critical skill for young adults transitioning into adult roles and engaging in the college process[1].
- **Self-regulation** refers to the cognitive and emotional processes needed to engage in goal directed behavior while faced with a challenge or adversity[1,3,4].
- The availability of supportive others who can serve as co-regulators is vital to the development of strong self-regulation skills[2].
- **Co-regulation** is the process used by supportive others that foster the self-regulation abilities of young adults[2]. 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?

Build Warm, Responsive Relationship / Coach / Collaboratively Identify and Create Supportive Environments / Self-Regulation Skills
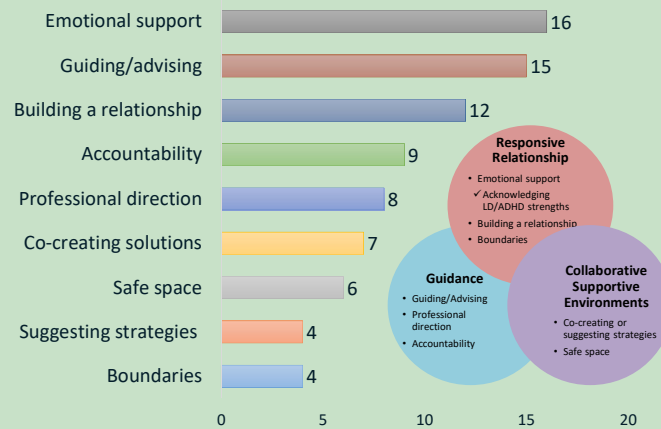From: https://fpg.unc.edu/node/9541

Methods

- A qualitative analysis was used to assess the mentorship intervention within a larger study that tested a campus-based model of holistic supports for students with LD/ADHD.
- Mentors met as a cohort to receive ongoing mentorship and LD/ADHD-related training. Mentees also met as a cohort to engage in disability related psychoeducational group meetings. Mentor-mentee dyads met individually every two weeks.
- Data were transcripts from mentor group meetings (n = 20) and undergraduate group meetings (n = 13).
- Participants were 57 Graduate students who were paired to mentor 52 undergraduates with LD/ADHD.
- 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[5,6].

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 (%)
• General and on-campus LD/ADHD resources (45%*)	• Defining mentorship roles (40%)	• Health system management (40%)	• Building relationships with mentees (30%)
• Defining LD/ADHD (30%)	• Sharing personal mentorship experiences (35%)	• Organization & time management (30%)	• Strategies for healthy communication (20%)
• Accommodation support (30%)	• Noticing positive changes in mentees (20%)	• Pushing past personal doubts (30%)	• External mentorship supports (20%)
• Understanding common cognitive styles in LD/ADHD (25%)	• Barriers to communication (20%)	• STEM professional development (25%)	• Signs of distress (15%)
• LD/ADHD symptom manifestation in everyday life (25%)	• Additional disability-related topical information (15%)	• Don't know how to help (20%)	
• Disclosing LD/ADHD (25%)			
• Maintaining privacy (20%)			
• Common strengths of LD/ADHD (20%)			
• Federal laws that impact LD/ADHD services (10%)			

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

Emotional support — 16
Guiding/advising — 15
Building a relationship — 12
Accountability — 9
Professional direction — 8
Co-creating solutions — 7
Safe space — 6
Suggesting strategies — 4
Boundaries — 4

Responsive Relationship
- Emotional support
- ✓ Acknowledging LD/ADHD strengths
- Building a relationship
- Boundaries

Guidance
- Guiding/Advising
- Professional direction
- Accountability

Collaborative Supportive Environments
- Co-creating or suggesting strategies
- Safe space

Figure 2. Mentorship roles and number of mentor group meetings where the role was discussed and model of co-regulation via mentorship

Education & Career Preparation
- Student role
- Goal setting
- Professional enculturation

Health & Wellness
- Balancing school & life
- Strengths & positive LD/ADHD

Social Participation
- Reframing social situations and contexts
- Campus engagement

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.
- 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.

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.

Acknowledgements

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