

## Psychological Services & Programs

### **Survive & Thrive in Junior High:** **Program Topics and Description**

Junior high school (and even middle school) can seem like an entirely new world and can be especially hard for students with LD/ADHD. With multiple teachers, increased workload and a lot more students, transitioning to junior high can be an overwhelming experience. As exciting as it is to be moving beyond the comforts of elementary school, positive feelings are often overshadowed by anxiety and apprehension. Therefore, the purpose of this program is to provide a fun and interactive environment to better prepare students with Learning Disabilities, AD/HD, and associated disorders for the transition to junior high school to assist in making the experience a successful one.

#### *Week 1: Introductions, Identifying Personal Learning Strengths, and Goal-Setting*

Purpose: This lesson seeks to lessen student anxieties by providing them introductions to each other, the counselors/facilitator, and the program format. It also provides an opportunity for the students to acknowledge the transition that is coming. Additionally, students get an introduction to ‘Growth Mindset’ as well as an overview of executive functions (and why they are important). Finally, the students use this information to identify their personal learning strengths which will be used later in the program to support self-advocacy, study skills, and test-taking skills. Each student will set a SMART goal that will be reviewed throughout the course of the program.

#### *Week 2: Identifying Learning Challenges: Common Diagnoses & Self-Advocacy*

Purpose: Students with LD/ADHD may encounter challenges as a result of their disability. This lesson provides them assistance in understanding their diagnoses and their impact on both academic and social areas. The students are also provided with the knowledge that they can achieve success. Examples of other successful individuals with disabilities are given. The lesson concludes with a discussion on self-advocacy as the students work through scenarios and brainstorm self-advocacy statements.

#### *Week 3: Building Communication Skills in School and Social Environments*

Purpose: Students with Learning Disabilities and/or ADHD often have difficulties responding with appropriate behaviors in various social settings. This lesson helps them to recognize social norms, and it provides them with strategies on how to work productively in groups at school, how to interact and initiate conversations with others, and how to advocate for themselves in social situations.

#### Week 4: Friendships and Dating: “How-Tos” and Social Responsibility

Purpose: Youth with LD and AD/HD often have difficulty interacting with others, being aware of social expectations, and having awareness of the importance of commitments. This lesson is meant to assist the students in identifying what “hanging out” with others might look like in different settings (e.g., in school hallways and at lunchtime) and what might be expected of them. Additionally, this lesson provides insight on how to form friendships and how to determine what a good friendship looks like. This lesson also provides information on the importance of respecting one’s self and others as well as social etiquette in the contexts of friendships and dating. This will be important for students who may be just beginning to date and are unaware of dating etiquette.

#### Week 5: Study Skills & Test Taking Strategies

Purpose: Many of these children tend to have higher anxiety levels and lack effective study skills compared to children without AD/HD and/or Learning Disabilities. Often, students with LD/ADHD struggle with their time management and organizational skills as they are not aware of effective strategies to help them plan and organize their time. As the students will be transitioning into junior high school, greater independence will be placed upon them to manage their time effectively as well as to cope with the new demands in classroom routines (e.g., multiple classrooms and different teachers). As such, this lesson will provide students with helpful strategies to prepare them for exams as well as relaxation strategies to help them remain calm and focused while in an exam.

#### Week 6: Becoming a Teenager & Staying Well

Purpose: Students learn about what self-esteem is and how to empower themselves and make decisions. As a part of adolescence, children need to become aware of how their body changes and the need for maintenance of personal hygiene. As such, this lesson also provides basic insight into bodily changes as well as necessary hygiene. They will also learn about how these physical changes coincide with emotional changes. Youth with LD/ADHD may struggle with self-esteem issues, particularly when entering adolescence, and this lesson provides strategies for students to recognize their strengths.

#### Week 7: Being Safe: Dealing with Bullying, Cyberbullying & Internet Safety

Purpose: Bullying is a prevalent problem in our schools and youth with LD/ADHD are especially vulnerable. This lesson will be valuable in providing the students with strategies to be physically and emotionally safe and responsibly cope with bullying, cyberbullying, and internet safety, whether it be individually or by consulting with an adult.

#### Week 8: Celebration Week & Review

Purpose: This week provides positive reinforcement for good behaviors and focuses on working toward personal goals in a less structured and safe environment. In addition, students will review their knowledge through a trivia game. They will also be able to practice their social skills as they are placed in a social situation to celebrate their successes in the program.