

PEDS REFLECTION SESSION 6/29/21

Hinesh Patel, Victor Vu, Nadya Zolotova, Anne Rasmussen

Dear Team Health and Wellness,, you had an important insight that a lot of Pediatrics is counseling parents and patients. Therefore your choice of project was really on-target. I also appreciated your awareness that information transmission and patient education are means to an end, the end being healthy lives for your patients and their families. This family-centered approach is more effective in terms of effecting lifestyle change than focusing only on the patient.

The sections of your poster were thoughtfully selected (Healthy Snacks, Picky Eaters, Exercise, What Parents Can Do to Support Kids in a Healthy Lifestyle, and crucially, Building a Healthy Mind). The colorful visuals and the generally concise language was carefully designed to trigger both interest and recall. Your recommendations were practical, considered the circumstances of a range of families, and emphasized simple behavioral techniques such as role-modeling, consistency, and positive reinforcement that have been shown to achieve change.

I was especially impressed that you included a mental health section that focused on wellness strategies such as mindfulness. Your observe-pause-move-give thanks model is a really good one, and implementing it early trains habits of mindfulness that will be useful coping throughout life. We do not yet know the full extent of the psychological fall-out from the pandemic, but we know that the rise in depression and anxiety among teens and younger kids has been especially severe. Helping parents recognize and intervene to promote mental wellbeing in their kids reflects a critical realization that healthy minds are as important as healthy bodies.

Altogether a very well-conceived and well-executed project. Thank you! Dr. Shapiro

Arina Alexeeva, Joseph Breuer

Dear Arina and Joe, you created a very useful pamphlet to alleviate some of the anxiety of new parents, who often ask precisely the questions you addressed: what's normal and what's not, how often should they eat and pee, is something wrong with their poop, when should baby see a doctor (by the way, liked your quote about perfection only possible in babies and pastries – babies are little miracles [so are pastries!]). You also stressed baby-proofing and child safety, always essential topics for parents to keep in mind. I liked the diversity of the pictures you used – this variety helps parents from different backgrounds feel the information included is meant for them.

Joe, your comment about the baby being the calmest person in the exam room was funny and also triggered a valuable discussion about recognizing, acknowledging, being curious about but not identifying too strongly with difficult emotions. Anxiety in both parents and med student/doctor can adversely affect communication, making it more difficult for doctors to convey information effectively and for parents to receive it. Importantly, it is not only parental anxiety that can be detrimental, but also physician/student anxiety. Awareness of the emotional tenor in the room and simple steps such as labeling both parent anxiety and your own helps reduce its influence. When you are alert to your own anxiety, breath and cognitive strategies (“I know more than I think”; “I can get help from my attending”) are useful in calming the situation. Arina, I liked what you said about the PE being “a

shield for anxiety.” It’s a great idea to use this usually routine time to collect your thoughts and calm your mind!

Your project evinced a lot of empathy for the anxiety parents feel about whether their precious infant is healthy and thriving. As you surmised, education and reassurance go a long way to reduce parental distress. Occasionally, if such distress is disproportionate and persistent, more in-depth counseling may be required. But almost always your emphasis on listening respectfully to parental concerns and providing the information outlined in your pamphlet will go a long way toward helping parents become confident and competent in their new role.

Thanks for such an interesting and valuable project. Dr. Shapiro

Natasa Kostic, Mehron Dhillon, Sanjita Gowda, Raji Nagalla

Dear Team Mental Health, thanks for tackling this important topic. Especially now, in what we hope is the aftermath of the worst phase of the pandemic, it is crucial to assess the mental health effects, especially on young and vulnerable minds. The QR code was a clever idea and led to a valuable array of resources. I appreciated that you considered pragmatic factors as well, such as printability. The family orientation of the pamphlet was also a good decision – practices that the whole family can engage in together are more likely to be implemented than ones that single out an “identified patient.” The whole emphasis of your project was on transparency and proactive involvement – helping parents and kids understand what mental health is, why it’s important and how it can be strengthened. This was especially evident in the way the pamphlet explained the substance and purpose of the HEADSS exam which, as you noted, can sometimes feel intrusive to kids, although it is one of the most valuable aspects of the encounter.

This project both educates parents and kids and gives them tools to be proactive about mental health issues. It demystifies and invites them to be participants in promoting their own and their children’s wellbeing. Thank you for such a thoughtful effort. Dr. Shapiro

Sawa Keymeulen and Camille Andre

Sawa and Camille, the concept of food replacement is a very useful one in parent/child counseling about nutrition, as you realized. There are many obstacles to developing healthier eating habits, which you noted. Thus, a simple “substitution” can have a lot of appeal. This idea demonstrated your sensitivity to the psychology of behavioral change – by avoiding a deprivation model, you encouraged equivalency thinking: “I’m exchanging one tasty food for another equally tasty and healthier food.” The way you matched color and shape (fries to carrots and hummus, for example) was very thoughtful, and promoted this line of thinking.

Overall, the visuals of your project suggested an almost alchemic process that of course is not quite as simple in reality as in your diagram, but which plants an interesting seed: “In one day, I could just make this switch.” This possibility refutes the expectation that change is always long and laborious.

I also appreciated both of your obvious enthusiasm for healthy cooking and eating – modeling delight in preparing and eating a healthy food can inspire parents and kids to see if they too can’t discover this enjoyment in a nutritional snack or meal. Finally, the concluding section on “sneaky tricks” was an

ingenious addition— this acknowledged that getting fruits and especially vegetables into kids can be a real challenge, and parents need to think outside the box (kale in a fruit smoothie).

Thanks for a very creative project! Dr. Shapiro

Christopher Boldt

Chris, as Dr. Murata commented, in 12 or so years of doing this session, we have never had anyone address the topic of adaptive sports – thank you! This was really an eye-opening presentation, not only because of all the meticulously researched resources you listed (including location, activities offered, and cost), but on a broader level reminding us all of how important athletic activities can be for kids with developmental disabilities. I really appreciated your contrarian point that participating in a soccer game could be just as beneficial as a therapy session. Sports offer camaraderie, physical exertion and coordination, and social development. As you insightfully pointed out, they are an excellent way of combatting loneliness, anxiety and obesity. I also appreciated your sensitivity to the fact that parenting in general can be overwhelming, and even more so when parenting a kid with special needs. Your awareness that this means parents won't always be receptive to being offered more resources (which means more phone calls, more scheduling, more driving, and sometimes more expense) was really wonderful. You opened the door to an important question of *how* to offer help. When it becomes just another responsibility or burden for the parents, they are less likely to follow-through. When they understand the benefits and feel they have some control over how and when to implement these suggestions, they are more likely to pursue them.

All in all, your project was both extremely informative and showed great empathy and understanding for parents raising a kid with special needs. Your first-hand knowledge about programs such as Special Olympics for kids with developmental disabilities is a great example of how a personal passion can benefit many others, including your classmates. Thank you for such a unique and important project. Dr. Shapiro