Hidden Sparks is a non-profit whose purpose is to help children with learning differences reach their full potential in school and life. Hidden Sparks supports professional development for Jewish day schools to help increase understanding and support for diverse learners.

Hidden Sparks’ programs combine school-based professional development in learning and positive behavioral support, classroom observation and coaching. Our philosophy is that by helping teachers meet the needs of struggling students, ultimately all students will benefit.

Now in its 10th year, Hidden Sparks has trained 210 coaches in 69 Jewish day schools in New York, New Jersey, Baltimore, Boca Raton, and Chicago, and 4 Israeli cities (Jerusalem, Modiin, Ramle, Ra’anana).
Welcome to Hidden Sparks Without Walls. The webinar will be starting at 8:30 pm

Thank you for joining the webinar. There will be no sound until we begin at 8:30pm.

To alleviate background noise and ensure a quiet session, your phones have been automatically muted. Questions and comments can be submitted via the CHAT FEATURE. While we are waiting, activate the chat feature by clicking in the “Chat” tab that is located on the righthand of your screen.

When chatting, please remember:

• Select “All Participants” if you would like everyone to see your message. Select “All Panelists” if you would like only the presenter and facilitator to see your message.

If you would like to call in by phone for audio, the number is 1-650-429-3300  Access code:735 903 630
Cultivating and Supporting Self-Esteem in Children with Learning Challenges

Presented by Amanda Morin
May 1, 2018
Our Guest: Amanda Morin

Amanda Morin is a parent advocate and former teacher. She worked in classrooms and as an early intervention specialist for 10 years, providing education and training to parents of children with disabilities and leading multidisciplinary teams in developing and implementing Individual Family Service Plans. Since 2007, she has been working as an education writer and, more recently, as a parent advocate to empower parents and affirm the pivotal role they play in their child’s education. Morin received a bachelor’s degree in education from the University of Maine and special education advocacy training from the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates. She is the author of three books: The Everything Parent’s Guide to Special Education, The Everything Kids’ Learning Activities Book and On-the-Go Fun for Kids: More Than 250 Activities to Keep Little Ones Busy and Happy—Anytime, Anywhere!
Overview of the Session

• Positive self-esteem can make a big difference for children with learning disabilities and ADHD. When children value themselves, they’re more likely to self-advocate and ask for the help they believe they deserve.

• When kids are confident and secure about who they are, they’re better able to face and manage their learning challenges. Learn practical strategies that can be used with kids to help them develop and maintain positive self-esteem.
Session Goals

• Define what learning and attention issues are and what they are not.

• Explain why some kids with learning and attention issues struggle to maintain positive self-esteem.

• Have on hand practical tips to help their kids develop and maintain positive self-esteem.
A few notes about learning and attention issues:

1 in 5 children struggle with brain-based learning and attention issues that affect reading, writing, math, organization and focus.
Learning and attention issues include:

- ADHD
- Dyslexia
- Executive Functioning Issues
- Dyscalculia
- Dysgraphia
- Dyspraxia
- Nonverbal Learning Disabilities (NVLD)
- Auditory Processing Disorder
- Sensory Processing Issues
- Visual Processing Issues
Learning and attention issues *do not* include...

- Intellectual disabilities
- Developmental disorders, such as Down syndrome
- Autism spectrum disorders (ASD)
- Sensory impairments like blindness
- Physical and motor impairment, congenital or acquired
- Social/emotional disorders
- Emotional disturbance or effects of trauma

*Note: Individuals can have an issue listed above as well as learning and attention issues. For example, people with autism can also have ADHD.*
Self-Esteem and Learning and Attention Issues
Why do kids struggle with positive self-esteem?

Kids with learning and attention issues:

• Often receive negative feedback
• Often experience feelings of frustration, shame, anxiety
• Can be rejected by their peers
• Can be uncertain of their own abilities
• Can feel the cumulative effect of repeated failures (“Cascade effect”)
• Can struggle with tasks that seem easy for their peers
The myth of “try harder”

Many struggling learners get the message they just need to "try harder."

We know that's not true. As a result, kids may not believe they’re worthy of good treatment. They may not develop self-advocacy skills.
The toll of low self-esteem

Repeated failure can lead to feelings of frustration, anger, anxiety and sadness.

- Kids often lose interest in learning.
- Friendships can suffer as frustrated kids seek negative attention.
- Kids can become withdrawn or give in to peer pressure.
- Many children with low self-esteem develop self-defeating ways to deal with challenges, like quitting, avoidance, silliness and denial.
So what can we do?

Cultivate positive self-esteem
Ways to Cultivate and Support Self-Esteem
Help students find positive role models

Be a self-esteem role model

• Let kids hear you talk things through to show how you value your own strengths while acknowledging weaknesses.

Build self-esteem with well-known role models.

• Provide examples of people kids admire who have also been struggling learners. For example: Daniel Radcliffe, Richard Branson, Michael Phelps.
Encourage extracurricular interests

Collaborate with others to identify and nurture interests and strengths; facilitate opportunities for repeated success.
Encourage kids to express their feelings

Help kids reframe negative statements.
For example, if your child has dyslexia and says “I’m stupid because I can’t read,” you can respond, “Reading is hard for you, but you tell great stories and are getting better at reading.”
Support kids in developing accurate self-awareness

Recognize that mistakes are learning experiences and foster a growth mindset.
Praise effort-based work

Avoid empty praise.
Let kids know that effort is as valuable as the end result. Find ways to praise kids for working hard and making effort.

Be clear, not critical.
You can’t avoid addressing things that need to be changed. But you can address them in ways that doesn't make kids feel bad about themselves.
Effective Praise
Self-esteem comes from working hard toward a goal and feeling good about it. So while it’s important to praise kids, it’s even more meaningful if they learn to appreciate their own efforts and the results. What you say—and how you say it—can help kids develop this ability to self-praise.
# Praise that builds self-esteem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of situation</th>
<th>You’re tempted to say...</th>
<th>It’s better to say...</th>
<th>The self-praise connection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Your child shows you something he’s made. But he put in less than his best effort. | “I love what you painted. The colors you used are great!”  
“How do you like it?”  
“Do you think it’s your best effort?” | “That’s a great start.”  
“How do you like it?”  
“Do you think it’s your best effort?” | This approach:  
• Helps your child reflect on whether his work measures up to his expectations.  
• Asks your child to consider how hard he worked and whether he’s proud of the work he’s done. |
## Praise that builds self-esteem

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| Your child downplays his positive actions and his success. | “Good for you! It is a big deal.” | “You may not think it’s a big deal, but it was kind of you to stick up for your friend.” “It sounds like you’re proud. What about this makes you feel that way?” | This approach:  
  - Points out what you think is worthy of praise and what you value.  
  - Asks your child to identify what he’s proud of and think about what he values |
Final Takeaways
Key Things to Remember

1. Struggles associated with learning and attention issues can impact self-esteem
2. Help your child recognize their strengths
3. Use effective praise
4. It’s okay to ask for help
Contacting Hidden Sparks

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Upcoming Hidden Sparks Without Walls Sessions

Over the summer, check out our webinar archive of our 94 titles!

Does your school participate in Hidden Sparks? Find out about how your school can train internal faculty coaches to deepen its ability to reach diverse learners.

Please contact us:

212-767-7707 or sara@hiddensparks.org
Hidden Sparks would like to thank: