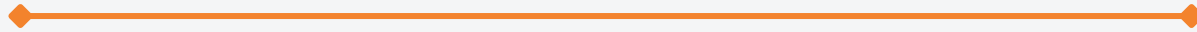


**OCTOBER IS: \* ADHD AWARENESS MONTH \***  
**\* MENTAL ILLNESS AWARENESS WEEK \***  
**\* WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, OCT 10TH \***



**SEEING THE PERSON BEHIND THE BEHAVIOR**

To the grandparents stepping back into the role of parent: we see you. Whether your grandchild is five or fifteen, you show up every day. This October, three observances come together: ADHD Awareness Month ("A Community of Support"), Mental Illness Awareness Week, and World Mental Health Day on Saturday, October 10 ("Lived Experiences Heard: Real Voices, Real Change").

You've been the anchor in your grandchild's storm. This month, we want to give you tools to understand the "why" behind the behavior, at any age, so you can keep being the steady presence they need.

**BEYOND THE BEHAVIOR: TRAUMA, ACES, AND SURVIVAL MODE**

Many children in kinship care carry ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) such as separation, instability, and loss. When a child has lived through these, their brain can stay in "survival mode," always scanning for danger, even in a safe home.

So if your grandchild has outbursts, struggles to trust, or seems "stuck" in a mood, remember that it is rarely about you, and it is rarely "bad behavior." It is a survival response. In younger children, it may look like tantrums or clinginess. In teens, it often looks like irritability, withdrawal, defiance, or shutting down. Different ages, same message: they are doing their best to feel safe.

And here is the most powerful part: the strongest medicine for a child with ACEs is what you're already giving them, a consistent, loving, and predictable relationship. Your presence is the bridge from their past to a healthier future.

**PEACE IN THE HOME**

Small rituals create big safety, at every age. For younger children, it might be a bedtime story or a special handshake. For teens, it might be a weekly dinner together, a car ride where they pick the music, or a quick text to check in. A teen may roll their eyes, but the predictability still says: *"I am safe. I am loved. I am home."* You don't have to be perfect. You have to be predictable, and you already are.

## TEENS AND MENTAL HEALTH: DON'T WAIT

Teens often hide how they are really doing. Take notice if your grandchild seems unusually withdrawn, stops doing things they love, sleeps much more or much less, or if their grades suddenly drop. Start with a calm, open question, and listen more than you talk. If a teen ever talks about wanting to die or hurting themselves, take it seriously and call or text 988 right away.

*"When your grandchild feels understood, they feel safe."*

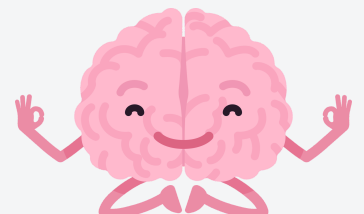
## ADHD: MORE THAN "HIGH ENERGY"

Many children and teens with ACEs also show ADHD signs: trouble focusing, impulsivity, and restlessness. In teens, the restlessness may fade, but disorganization, forgotten homework, and missed deadlines often remain, and they are easily mistaken for laziness or attitude.

Here is what makes it tricky: trauma can look a lot like ADHD. A child who is hypervigilant, constantly checking their surroundings, can seem like a child who "can't pay attention" in class. Sometimes it's ADHD, sometimes it's trauma, and sometimes it's both. That's why a good evaluation looks at the whole person and their history.

Either way, the need is the same: patience and structure.

- Focus on effort, not the distraction. Praise the small wins, at any age.
- Make time visible. Visual timers for younger kids; planners, phone alarms, and reminders for teens.
- Create a calm space. A "quiet corner" for little ones; for teens, a quiet spot, headphones, or a walk to reset.
- Let teens help choose the strategy. They are more likely to use what they helped pick.
- Talk to the pediatrician and school about an evaluation, and ask about an IEP or 504 plan. Share your grandchild's history of separation or loss with providers. As your teen nears high school graduation, ask the school about planning for what comes next.



## COMMUNITY CORNER

## YOU ARE NOT ALONE

- **Connect:** South Bay/So. CA CHADD holds Zoom peer and caregiver meetings on Saturdays, 1–2:30 PM, and a Family Support Group on Thursday evenings, @ 7–8:30 PM. Email: [ckellychadd10g@gmail.com](mailto:ckellychadd10g@gmail.com) for the Zoom link.
- **Learn:** CHADD webinar "Getting Started with ADHD," Oct 19th, @ 4 PM PDT. [\(Click\)](#).
- **Meet in person:** LA County DMH "Beyond the Walls" brings mental health updates and community resources to you. Oct 13, 6–7:30 PM. [\(Click\)](#).
- **Share:** *What helps your grandchild settle? Tell another grandparent this month.*

LA County Resources  
NEED HELP NOW

*988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline:* Call or text 988, 24/7.

*LA County DMH Access Line:* (800) 854-7771, 24/7 · [dmh.lacounty.gov](http://dmh.lacounty.gov)

*FURS (Family Urgent Response System):* 24/7 trauma-informed support for caregivers and youth. (833) 939-3877

## ADHD &amp; MENTAL HEALTH

*BrightLife Kids:* Free virtual mental health support for children and their caregivers. [\(Click\)](#)

*Soluna:* Free mental health support for teens and young adults. [\(Click\)](#)

*CHADD:* Parent and adult support groups, webinars. [\(Click\)](#).

*ADHD Awareness Month Toolkit:* [\(Click\)](#).

*NAMI Basics OnDemand:* Free, self-paced online course for caregivers. [\(Click\)](#).

## KINSHIP SUPPORT

*LA County DCFS Caregiver Warmline:* Support and resources for relative caregivers. (877) 323-7165 · [\(Click\)](#).

*Alliance for Children's Rights.* Free legal help. [\(Click\)](#).

211 LA. Dial 211 · [211la.org](http://211la.org)

*You don't have to do this alone. Whether it's a Zoom call with a local CHADD group or a phone call for support, reaching out is a sign of strength. Your love is changing the trajectory of your grandchild's life. Keep going.*



[#ADHDAwarenessMonth](#) [#WorldMentalHealthDay](#) [#GrandfamiliesStrong](#)

## Up Coming Trainings

October 10th @ 7:00 AM PDT: Mental Health for All (World Mental Health Day):

[Event Details](#)

October 14th @ 12:00 PM PDT: Parenting & Mental Health:

[Event Details](#)

October 22nd @ 12:00 PM PDT: Neurodivergent Kids: Celebrating Differences, Building Strengths:

[Event Details](#)

October 28th @ 12:00 PM PDT: Parenting Through Trauma:

[Event Details](#)

## A Message from the GAP Program Director

October brings several important opportunities to focus on mental health and well-being, including ADHD Awareness Month, Mental Illness Awareness Week, and World Mental Health Day. These reminders are especially meaningful for our kinship families, who often carry challenges that others may not see.

We know how much both caregivers and children can be navigating, and we want you to know that you are not alone. We are grateful to have you as part of our GAP family and are here to listen, support, connect you with resources, and walk alongside you whenever you need us.

Jennifer Odum, Program Director