Children with ADHD draw-and-tell about what makes their life really good.

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Abstract

PURPOSE:
The purpose of this study was to engage children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in a developmentally sensitive way to explore the children’s subjective well-being. Explicitly, their life satisfaction, or what makes their life "really good." To date, little is known about the subjective life experience of children with ADHD or how incorporating children's views separate from the purview of adults and pathology might enhance our understanding or change our approach to evaluation and/or intervention.

DESIGN AND METHODS:
A parallel convergent mixed-methods design was used to collect data from a convenience sample of children with ADHD (N = 20) ages 7 to 11 years old. This article focuses solely on the qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews using the art-based approach draw-and-tell conversation (DTC). The DTC data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis. In addition, each parent (N = 20) independently completed demographic and health-related forms to provide descriptive and contextual variables.

RESULTS:
Three themes were discerned in the DTC analysis-activity, nature, and connections. Most children (90%) described engaging in some form of activity, often outdoors, and with others; though the focus of activity was varied. Nature was evidenced directly and indirectly in many of the children's (85%) stories. Over half (65%) of the children described some variation in relational connection across a continuum that contributed to, or detracted from, their sense of well-being/life satisfaction.

PRACTICE IMPLICATIONS:
Children shared that doing things, outdoors, with others, [emphasis added] made their life "really good". Children's stories yielded insightful and actionable information that is relevant to each individual child/family, and to nursing assessment, intervention, and advocacy. These child-granted insights also extend our attention beyond pharmacological and behavioral focused interventions, to include the children's own innate health promoting interests that help to make their life really good.