



Supportive Skills Department: **ADHD Parent Support Booklet 1**

ADHD tips for parents:
collated from different specialist sources

Dear Parent/Carer

This booklet has been put together using information found on the internet. At the back of the booklet is a list of resources and websites you may also find useful.

Please do have a read and if there is anything missing that you feel works with your child then please let me know so I can add it at a later date.

Kind regards

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Parent Support: blue booklet 1

ADHD Parenting Tips

Helping Your Child or Teen with Attention Deficit Disorder



Life with a child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD or ADD) can be frustrating and overwhelming, but as a parent there is a lot you can do to help control and reduce the symptoms. You can help your child overcome daily challenges, channel his or her energy into positive arenas, and bring greater calm to your family. The earlier and more consistently you address your child's problems, the greater chance they have for success in life.

What you can do

1. Seek face-to-face support from family and friends—don't try to do it all alone
2. Get up and get moving with your child
3. Establish structure, rules, and consistent daily routines at home
4. Learn how your child's diet can affect ADHD symptoms
5. Ensure your child gets enough restful sleep
6. Talk to your child's teachers about managing symptoms at school
7. Learn how you can help your child make friends
8. Learn more by reading the related articles

How to help your child with ADHD

Children with ADHD generally have deficits in *executive function*: the ability to think and plan ahead, organize, control impulses, and complete tasks. That means you need to take over as the executive, providing extra guidance while your child gradually acquires executive skills of his or her own.

Although the symptoms of ADHD can be nothing short of exasperating, it's important to remember that the child with ADHD who is ignoring, annoying, or embarrassing you is not acting willfully. Kids with ADHD want to sit quietly; they want to make their rooms tidy and organized; they want to do everything their parent says to do—but they don't know how to make these things happen.

If you keep in mind that having ADHD is just as frustrating for your child, it will be a lot easier to respond in positive, supportive ways. With patience, compassion, and plenty of support, you can manage childhood ADHD while enjoying a stable, happy home.

ADHD and your family

Before you can successfully parent a child with ADHD, it's essential to understand the impact of your child's symptoms on the family as a whole. Children with ADHD exhibit a slew of behaviors that can disrupt family life:

- They often don't "hear" parental instructions, so they don't obey them.
- They're disorganized and easily distracted, keeping other family members waiting. Or they start projects and forget to finish them—let alone clean up after them.
- Children with impulsivity issues often interrupt conversations, demand attention at inappropriate times, and speak before they think, saying tactless or embarrassing things.
- It's often difficult to get them to bed and to sleep.
- Hyperactive children may tear around the house or even do things that put them in physical danger.

The impact of ADHD on siblings

Because of these behaviors, siblings of children with ADHD face a number of challenges:

- Their needs often get less attention than those of the child with ADHD.
- They may be rebuked more sharply when they err, and their successes may be less celebrated or taken for granted.
- They may be enlisted as assistant parents—and blamed if the sibling with ADHD misbehaves under their supervision.
- As a result, siblings may find their love for a brother or sister with ADHD mixed with jealousy and resentment.

The impact of ADHD on parents

The demands of monitoring a child with ADHD can be physically and mentally exhausting. Your child's inability to "listen" can lead to frustration and that frustration to anger—followed by guilt about being angry at your child. Your child's behavior can make you anxious and stressed and if there's a basic difference between your personality and that of your child with ADHD, his or her behavior can be especially difficult to accept.

In order to meet the challenges of raising a child with ADHD, you must be able to master a combination of *compassion* and *consistency*. Living in a home that provides both love and structure is the best thing for a child or teenager who is learning to manage ADHD.

ADHD parenting tip 1: Stay positive and healthy yourself

As a parent, you set the stage for your child's emotional and physical health. You have control over many of the factors that can positively influence the symptoms of your child's disorder.

The power of a positive attitude

Your best assets for helping your child meet the challenges of ADHD are your positive attitude and common sense. When you are calm and focused, you are more likely to be able to connect with your child, helping him or her to be calm and focused as well.

Keep things in perspective. Remember that your child's behavior is related to a disorder. Most of the time it is not intentional. Hold on to your sense of humor. What's embarrassing today may be a funny family story ten years from now.

Don't sweat the small stuff and be willing to make some compromises. One chore left undone isn't a big deal when your child has completed two others plus the day's homework. If you are a perfectionist, you will not only be constantly dissatisfied but also create impossible expectations for your child with ADHD.

Believe in your child. Think about or make a written list of everything that is positive, valuable, and unique about your child. Trust that your child can learn, change, mature, and succeed. Make thinking about this trust a daily task as you brush your teeth or make your coffee.

Take care of yourself so you're better able to care for your child

As your child's role model and most important source of strength, it is vital that you live a healthy life. If you are overtired or have simply run out of patience, you risk losing sight of the structure and support you have so carefully set up for your child with ADHD.

Take care of yourself. Eat right, exercise, and find ways to reduce stress, whether it means taking a nightly bath or practicing morning meditation. If you do get sick, acknowledge it and get help.

Seek support. One of the most important things to remember in rearing a child with ADHD is that you don't have to do it alone. Talk to your child's doctors, therapists, and teachers. Join an organized support group for parents of children with ADHD. These groups offer a forum for giving and receiving advice, and provide a safe place to vent feelings and share experiences.

Take breaks. Friends and family can be wonderful about offering to babysit, but you may feel guilty about leaving your child, or leaving the volunteer with a child with ADHD. Next time, accept their offer and discuss honestly how best to handle your child.

How pets can help kids with ADHD (and their parents)

If your home life feels chaotic, you may be reluctant to add a pet to the mix. But pets come with a host of benefits for you and your child. They can help teach your kid responsibility and get him or her outside. They can also inject some much-needed fun and help the whole family blow off steam. In fact, studies show that pets can protect you from depression, stress, and even medical problems.

Tip 2: Establish structure and stick to it

Children with ADHD are more likely to succeed in completing tasks when the tasks occur in predictable patterns and in predictable places. Your job is to create and sustain structure in your home, so that your child knows what to expect and what they are expected to do.

Tips for helping your child with ADHD stay focused and organized:

Follow a routine. It is important to set a time and a place for everything to help the child with ADHD understand and meet expectations. Establish simple and predictable rituals for meals, homework, play, and bed. Have your child lay out clothes for the next morning before going to bed, and make sure whatever he or she needs to take to school is in a special place, ready to grab.

Use clocks and timers. Consider placing clocks throughout the house, with a big one in your child's bedroom. Allow enough time for what your child needs to do, such as homework or getting ready in the morning. Use a timer for homework or transitional times, such between finishing up play and getting ready for bed.

Simplify your child's schedule. It is good to avoid idle time, but a child with ADHD may become more distracted and "wound up" if there are many after-school activities. You may need to make adjustments to the child's after-school commitments based on the individual child's abilities and the demands of particular activities.

Create a quiet place. Make sure your child has a quiet, private space of his or her own. A porch or a bedroom work well too, as long as it's **not** the same place as the child goes for a time-out.

Do your best to be neat and organized. Set up your home in an organized way. Make sure your child knows that everything has its place. Lead by example with neatness and organization as much as possible.

Avoid problems by keeping kids with ADHD busy!

For kids with ADHD, idle time may exacerbate their symptoms and create chaos in your home. It is important to keep a child with ADHD busy without piling on so many things that the child becomes overwhelmed.

Sign your child up for a sport, art class, or music. At home, organize simple activities that fill up your child's time. These can be tasks like helping you cook, playing a board game with a sibling, or drawing a picture. Try not to over-rely on the television or computer/video games as time-fillers. Unfortunately, TV and video games are increasingly violent in nature and may only increase your child's symptoms of ADHD.

Tip 3: Set clear expectations and rules

Children with ADHD need consistent rules that they can understand and follow. Make the rules of behavior for the family simple and clear. Write down the rules and hang them up in a place where your child can easily read them.

Children with ADHD respond particularly well to organized systems of rewards and consequences. It's important to explain what will happen when the rules are obeyed and when they are broken. Finally, stick to your system: follow through each and every time with a reward or a consequence.

Don't forget praise and positive reinforcement

As you establish these consistent structures, keep in mind that children with ADHD often receive criticism. Be on the lookout for good behavior—and praise it. Praise is especially important for children who have ADHD because they typically get so little of it. These children receive correction, remediation, and complaints about their behavior—but little positive reinforcement.

A smile, positive comment, or other reward from you can improve the attention, concentration and impulse control of your child with ADHD. Do your best to focus on giving positive praise for appropriate behavior and task completion, while giving as few negative responses as possible to inappropriate behavior or poor task performance. Reward your child for small achievements that you might take for granted in another child.

Kids with ADHD: Using Rewards and Consequences

Rewards

- Reward your child with privileges, praise, or activities, rather than with food or toys.
- Change rewards frequently. Kids with ADHD get bored if the reward is always the same.
- Make a chart with points or stars awarded for good behavior, so your child has a visual reminder of his or her successes.
- Immediate rewards work better than the promise of a future reward, but small rewards leading to a big one can also work.
- Always follow through with a reward.

Consequences

- Consequences should be spelled out in advance and occur immediately after your child has misbehaved.
- Try time-outs and the removal of privileges as consequences for misbehavior.
- Remove your child from situations and environments that trigger inappropriate behavior.
- When your child misbehaves, ask what he or she could have done instead. Then have your child demonstrate it.
- Always follow through with a consequence.

Tip 4: Encourage movement and sleep

Physical activity can help your child with ADHD

Children with ADHD often have energy to burn. Organized sports and other physical activities can help them get their energy out in healthy ways and focus their attention on specific movements and skills.

The benefits of physical activity are endless: it improves concentration, decreases depression and anxiety, and promotes brain growth. Most importantly for children with attention deficits, however, is the fact that exercise leads to better sleep, which in turn can also reduce the symptoms of ADHD.

Find a sport that your child will enjoy and that suits his or her strengths. For example, sports such as softball that involve a lot of “down time” are not the best fit for children with attention problems. Individual or team sports like basketball and hockey that require constant motion are better options.

Children with ADHD may also benefit from martial arts training, tae kwon do, or yoga, which enhance mental control as they work out the body.

Better sleep to help your child with ADHD

Insufficient sleep can make anyone less attentive, but it can be highly detrimental for children with ADHD. Kids with ADHD need at least as much sleep as their unaffected peers, but tend not to get what they need. Their attention problems can lead to overstimulation and trouble falling asleep. A consistent, early bedtime is the most helpful strategy to combat this problem, but it may not completely solve it.

Help your child get better rest by trying out one or more of the following strategies:

Decrease television time and increase your child's activities and exercise levels during the day.

Eliminate caffeine from your child's diet.

Create a buffer time to lower down the activity level for an hour or so before bedtime. Find quieter activities such as coloring, reading or playing quietly.

Spend ten minutes cuddling with your child. This will build a sense of love and security as well as provide a time to calm down.

Use lavender or other aromas in your child's room. The scent may help to calm your child.

Use relaxation tapes as background noise for your child when falling asleep. There are many varieties available including nature sounds and calming music. Children with ADHD often find "white noise" to be calming. You can create white noise by putting a radio on static or running an electric fan.

The benefits of “green time” in kids with attention deficit disorder

Research shows that children with ADHD benefit from spending time in nature. Kids experience a greater reduction of symptoms of ADHD when they play in a park full of grass and trees than on a concrete playground. Take note of this promising and simple approach to managing ADHD. Even in cities, most families have access to parks and other natural settings. Join your children in this “green time”—you’ll also get a much-deserved breath of fresh air for yourself.

Tip 5: Help your child eat right

Diet is not a direct cause of attention deficit disorder, but food can and does affect your child's mental state, which in turn seems to affect behavior. Monitoring and modifying what, when, and how much your child eats can help decrease the symptoms of ADHD.

All children benefit from fresh foods, regular meal times, and staying away from junk food. These tenets are especially true for children with ADHD, whose impulsiveness and distractedness can lead to missed meals, disordered eating, and overeating.

Eating regular meals may help your child’s ADHD



Children with ADHD are notorious for not eating regularly. Without parental guidance, these children might not eat for hours and then binge on whatever is around. The result of this pattern can be devastating to the child’s physical and emotional health.

Prevent unhealthy eating habits by scheduling regular nutritious meals or snacks for your child no more than three hours apart. Physically, a child with ADHD needs a regular intake of healthy food; mentally, meal times are a necessary break and a scheduled rhythm to the day.

- Get rid of the junk foods in your home.
- Put fatty and sugary foods off-limits when eating out.

- Turn off television shows riddled with junk-food ads.
- Give your child a daily vitamin-and-mineral supplement.

Tip 6: Teach your child how to make friends

Children with ADHD often have difficulty with simple social interactions. They may struggle with reading social cues, talk too much, interrupt frequently, or come off as aggressive or “too intense.” Their relative emotional immaturity can make them stand out among children their own age, and make them targets for unfriendly teasing.

Don’t forget, though, that many kids with ADHD are exceptionally intelligent and creative and will eventually figure out for themselves how to get along with others and spot people who aren’t appropriate as friends. Moreover, personality traits that might exasperate parents and teachers may come across to peers as funny and charming.

Helping a child with ADHD improve social skills

It's hard for children with ADHD to learn social skills and social rules. You can help your child with ADHD become a better listener, learn to read people’s faces and body language, and interact more smoothly in groups.

- Speak gently but honestly with your child about his or her challenges and how to make changes.
- Role-play various social scenarios with your child. Trade roles often and try to make it fun.
- Be careful to select playmates for your child with similar language and physical skills.
- Invite only one or two friends at a time at first. Watch them closely while they play and have a zero tolerance policy for hitting, pushing and yelling.
- Make time and space for your child to play, and reward good play behaviors often.

Related HelpGuide articles

- [ADD or ADHD in Children](#): Signs and Symptoms of Attention Deficit Disorder in Kids
- [ADHD or ADD Treatment for Children](#): Finding the Best Treatment for Your Child's Attention Deficit Disorder
- [ADHD or ADD Medications](#): Are ADHD Drugs Right for You or Your Child?



Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – ADHD/ADD may be difficult to parent. They may have trouble understanding important directions. Children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder – ADHD/ADD are usually in a constant state of activity.

This can be a challenge to adults. You may need to change your home life a bit to help your child. Here are some things you can do to help:

Organize your schedule at home. Set up specific times for waking up, eating, playing, doing homework, doing chores, watching TV or playing video games and going to bed. Write the schedule on a backboard or a piece of paper and hang it where your child will always see it. If your child can't read yet, use drawings or symbols to show the activities of each day. Explain any changes in routine in advance. Make sure your child understands the changes.

Set up house rules. Make the rules of behavior for the family simple, clear and short. Rules should be explained clearly. It's important to explain what will happen when the rules are obeyed and when they are broken. Write down the rules and results of not following them. Hang this list next to the schedule. The punishment for breaking rules should be fair, quick and consistent.

Be positive. Tell your child what you want rather than what you don't want. Reward your child regularly for any good behavior—even little things such as getting dressed and closing doors quietly. Children with ADHD often spend most of their day being told what they are doing wrong. They need to be praised for good behavior.

Make sure your directions are understood. First, get your child's attention. Look directly into his or her eyes. Then tell your child in a clear, calm voice specifically just what you want. Ask your child to repeat the directions back to you. It's usually better to keep directions simple and short. For difficult tasks, give only one or two directions at a time. Then congratulate your child when he or she completes each step.

Be consistent. Only promise what you will deliver. Do what you say you are going to do. Repeating directions and requests many times doesn't work well. When your child breaks the rules, warn only once in a quiet voice. If the warning does not work, follow through with the punishment that you promised. (Avoid physical punishment. This often makes matters worse).

Make sure someone watches your child all the time. Because they are impulsive, children with ADHD need more adult supervision than other children their age. Make sure your child is supervised by adults all day.

Watch your child around his friends. It's hard for children with ADHD to learn social skills and social rules. Be careful to select playmates for your child with similar language and physical skills. Invite only one or two friends at a time at first. Watch them closely while they play. Reward good play behaviors often. Most of all, don't allow hitting, pushing and yelling in your house or yard. [Total Focus provides multi-media materials for helping ADHD kids develop social skills].

Help with school activities. School mornings may be difficult for children with ADHD. Get ready the night before—lay out school clothes and get the book bag ready. Allow enough time for your child to get dressed and eat a good breakfast. If your child is really slow in the mornings, it's important to make enough time to dress and eat.

Set up homework routine. Pick a regular place for doing homework. This place should be away from distractions such as other people, television and video games. Break homework time into small parts and have breaks. For example, give your child a snack after school and then let him play for a few minutes. Then start homework time. Stop frequently for short "fun breaks" that allow your child to do something enjoyable. Give your child lots of encouragement, but let your child do the school work.

Focus on effort, not grades. Reward your child when he tries to finish school work, not just for good grades. You can give extra rewards for earning better grades.

Additional pointers for parents of children with ADD and/or learning disabilities:

- Take the time to listen to your children as much as you can (really try to get their "Message").
- Love them by touching them, hugging them, tickling them, wrestling with them (they need lots of physical contact).
- Look for and encourage their strengths, interests, and abilities. Help them to use these as compensations for any limitations or disabilities.
- Reward them with praise, good words, smiles, and pat on the back as often as you can.
- Accept them for what they are and for their human potential for growth and development. Be realistic in your expectations and demands.
- Involve them in establishing rules and regulations, schedules, and family activities.
- Tell them when they misbehave and explain how you feel about their behavior; then have them propose other more acceptable ways of behaving.
- Help them to correct their errors and mistakes by showing or demonstrating what they should do. Don't nag!

- Give them reasonable chores and a regular family work responsibility whenever possible.
- Give them an allowance as early as possible and then help them plan to spend within it.
- Provide toys, games, motor activities and opportunities that will stimulate them in their development.
- Read enjoyable stories to them and with them. Encourage them to ask questions, discuss stories, tell the story, and to reread stories.
- Further their ability to concentrate by reducing distracting aspects of their environment as much as possible (provide them with a place to work, study and play).
- Don't get hung up on traditional school grades! It is important that they progress at their own rates and be rewarded for doing so.
- Take them to libraries and encourage them to select and check out books of interest. Have them share their books with you. Provide stimulating books and reading material around the house.
- Help them to develop self-esteem and to compete with self rather than with others.
- Insist that they cooperate socially by playing, helping, and serving others in the family and the community.
- Serve as a model to them by reading and discussing material of personal interest. Share with them some of the things you are reading and doing.
- Don't hesitate to consult with teachers or other specialists whenever you feel it to be necessary in order to better understand what might be done to help your child learn.



Parenting skills training ...gives parents tools and techniques for managing their child's behavior. One such technique is the use of token or point systems for immediately rewarding good behavior or work. Another is the use of "time-out" or isolation to a chair or bedroom when the child becomes too unruly or out of control. During time-outs, the child is removed from the agitating situation and sits alone quietly for a short time to calm down. Parents may also be taught to give the child "quality time" each day, in which they share a pleasurable or relaxing activity. During this time together, the parent looks for opportunities to notice and point out what the child does well, and praise his or her strengths and abilities.

This system of rewards and penalties can be an effective way to modify a child's behavior. The parents (or teacher) identify a few desirable behaviors that they want to encourage in the child—such as asking for a toy instead of grabbing it, or completing a simple task. The child is told exactly what is expected in order to earn the reward. The child receives the reward when he performs the desired behavior and a mild penalty when he doesn't. A reward can be small, perhaps a token that can be exchanged for special privileges, but it should be something the child wants and is eager to earn. The penalty might be removal of a token or a brief time-out. Make an effort to find your child being good. The goal, over time, is to help children learn to control their own behavior and to choose the more desired behavior. The

technique works well with all children, although children with ADHD may need more frequent rewards.

In addition, parents may learn to structure situations in ways that will allow their child to succeed. This may include allowing only one or two playmates at a time, so that their child doesn't get overstimulated. Or if their child has trouble completing tasks, they may learn to help the child divide a large task into small steps, then praise the child as each step is completed. Regardless of the specific technique parents may use to modify their child's behavior, some general principles appear to be useful for most children with ADHD. These include providing more frequent and immediate feedback (including rewards and punishment), setting up more structure in advance of potential problem situations, and providing greater supervision and encouragement to children with ADHD in relatively unrewarding or tedious situations.

Children with ADHD need consistent rules that they can understand and follow. If rules are followed, give small rewards. Children with ADHD often receive, and expect, criticism. Look for good behavior and praise it.

Parents may also learn to use stress management methods, such as meditation, relaxation techniques, and exercise, to increase their own tolerance for frustration so that they can respond more calmly to their child's behavior.

[Above information excerpted from Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder a publication of National Institute for Mental Health (2006) NIH Publication No. 3572]

Parenting Kids with ADHD: Tips to Tackle Common Challenges

By [Margarita Tartakovsky, M.S.](#)

1. Stay calm.

Both Kapalka and Palladino emphasize the importance of staying calm. As Kapalka says, "Once the parent is out of control, the child's anger becomes even more escalated, assuring that the interaction will result in a non-productive outcome." So pay attention to yourself if you have a tendency toward ADHD behaviors like reactivity.

Arguing with your child won't get you anywhere. Take homework time, for instance—an activity that can feel like a tug-of-war. Arguing simply creates "a diversion that delays homework even longer," Palladino points out. Instead, "Diffuse, don't engage."

Palladino suggests the following: "Say, 'I understand this is no fun for you,' followed by silence, positive expectancy and a loving touch on the shoulder. The wrong move here would be saying, 'Stop complaining. You're dawdling over nothing.'"

2. Set limits on your own behavior.

“If you’re inclined to be a worried, rescuing parent, remind yourself that the more you do for your child, the less he does for himself,” Palladino says. The key is to “Support, but don’t get into the driver’s seat.”

For example, during a homework session, it’s fine to ask “Do you need more of those papers with the lines and boxes on them to finish these long division problems?” she says. But taking your child’s pencil and saying you’ll both work on that long division can be problematic.

If you’d still like to keep an eye on your child, “sit close by, but bring your own work to the table—pay your bills, balance your checkbook.”

3. Set structure—but make it pressure-free.

According to Palladino, structure involves “star charts for young children, calendars and planners for older ones, and clear rules and sensible routines, especially at bedtime.” Structure helps reduce disorganization and distractibility, Kapalka notes. As such, “set a consistent time to do homework, with certain privileges only available to the child after” they’ve successfully completed their assignments, he says. (Another tip — work with your child’s teachers to create a consistent homework routine, he says.)

As Palladino explained earlier, it’s best to avoid imposing pressure. So what does pressure-free structure look like? It includes “not using threats or unreasonable deadlines and punishments that contribute to hostility, fear or drama,” she says.

4. Give your kids the chance to make wise choices.

To help teach kids self-control, Kapalka says that “Parents must provide ample opportunities for children to be faced with choices of how to respond.”

Palladino suggests using a technique called “structured choice,” which gives your child two choices that steer him or her in the right direction. For example, parents might ask, according to Palladino: “Do you want to do your math or your science assignment next?” or “Before we can go, your room needs to be picked up. Do you want to start with the clothes on the bed or clear the top of your desk?”

5. Use reasonable consequences for rule-breaking.

As a start, Palladino suggests parents ask their child what the consequences should be if he or she breaks a rule. This helps kids create commitments that they can actually own, she says.

In addition, create and consistently enforce positive consequences for positive behaviors and negative consequences for negative behaviors, Kapalka says. This helps your child “recognize that positive behaviors result in positive consequences, and negative behaviors result in negative ones.”

6. Expect rule-breaking, and don't take it personally.

As Palladino says, it's in your child's "job description" to occasionally break the rules. When your child breaks the rules, "...correct him the way a police officer gives you a ticket. He doesn't take it personally or groan or yell, 'I can't believe you did that again! Why do you do this to me?'" Like the officer, be respectful, consistent, and matter-of-fact."

7. Advocate for your child when appropriate.

Certain accommodations might be necessary for your child because of his or her ADHD. However, you still want to encourage kids to cultivate their abilities.

Palladino gives an example of finding this tricky balance: "... stand up for his right for an accommodation like talking books, but encourage and expect him to learn to read fluently, giving him time, attention, a tutor, and most especially, your belief that he can."

8. Avoid muting a headstrong child.

As Kapalka says, one of the mistakes parents can make is "Trying to turn a spirited, willful child into one that never questions authority and accepts all that is said 'just because I said so' as a parent."

Instead, he suggests that parents "accept that some children will protest and talk back, and parents must set a limit that on the one hand realizes that children need at least some way to express their frustration, while still enforcing reasonable standards and rules."

Parenting Tips for ADHD

Part 1 of 4: Overview

Raising a child with ADHD isn't like traditional childrearing. Normal rule-making and household routines can become almost impossible, so you'll need to adopt different approaches. It can be frustrating and disheartening to cope with constant impulsive behaviour from your child, but there are ways to make life easier.

Parents must accept the fact that children with ADHD have functionally different brains from those of other children. While children with ADHD can still learn what is acceptable and what isn't, their internal regulation makes them more prone to impulsive behaviour.

Fostering the development of a child with ADHD means that you will have to modify your behaviour and learn to manage the behaviour of your child. Medication may be the first step in your child's treatment. Behavioural techniques for managing a child's ADHD symptoms must always be in place. By following these guidelines, you can limit destructive behaviour and help your child overcome self-doubt.

Part 2 of 4: Behaviour Management

Principles of Behaviour Management Therapy

There are two basic principles of behaviour management therapy. The first is encouraging and rewarding good behaviour (positive reinforcement). The second is negatively reinforcing bad behaviour by following it with appropriate consequences, leading to the extinguishing of bad behaviour (negative reinforcement). You teach your child to understand that actions have consequences by establishing rules and clear outcomes for following or disobeying these rules. These principles must be followed in every area of a child's life. That means at home, in the classroom, and in the social arena.

Decide Ahead of Time Which Behaviours Are Acceptable and Which Are Not

The goal of behavioural modification is to help your child consider the consequences of an action and control the impulse to act on it. This requires empathy, patience, affection, energy, and strength on the part of the parent. Parents must first decide which behaviours they will and won't tolerate. It's crucial to stick to these guidelines. Punishing a behaviour one day and allowing it the next is harmful to a child's improvement. Some behaviours should always be unacceptable, like physical outbursts, refusal to get up in the morning, or unwillingness to turn off the television when told to do so.

Your child may have a hard time internalizing and enacting your guidelines. Rules should be simple and clear, and children should be rewarded for following them. This can be accomplished using a points system. For example, allow the child to accrue points for good behaviour that can be redeemed for spending money, time in front of the TV, or a new video game. If you have a list of house rules, write them down and put them where they're easy to see. Repetition and positive reinforcement can help your child better understand your rules.

Define the Rules, But Allow Some Flexibility

It's important to consistently reward good behaviours and discourage destructive ones, but you can't be too strict with your child. Remember that children with ADHD don't adapt to change as well as others. You must learn to allow your child to make mistakes as they learn. Odd behaviours that aren't detrimental to your child or anyone else should be accepted as part of your child's individual personality. It's ultimately harmful to discourage a child's quirky behaviours just because you think they are unusual.

Manage Aggression

Aggressive outbursts from children with ADHD are a common problem. "Time-out" is an effective way to calm both you and your overactive child. If your child acts out in public, they should be immediately removed in a calm and decisive manner. "Time-out" should be explained to the child as a period to cool off and think about the negative behaviour they have exhibited. Try to ignore mildly disruptive behaviours as a way for your child to release his or her pent up energy. However, destructive, abusive, or intentionally disruptive behaviour should always be punished.

Part 3 of 4: What to Do

Other "Do's" for Coping with ADHD

Create Structure

Make a routine for your child and stick to it every day. Establish rituals around meals, homework, playtime, and bedtime. Simple daily tasks, such as having your child lay out his or her clothes for the next day, can provide essential structure.

Break Tasks Into Manageable Pieces

Try using a large wall calendar to help remind a child of their duties. Color coding chores and homework can keep your child from becoming overwhelmed with everyday tasks and school assignments. Even morning routines should be broken down into discreet tasks.

Simplify and Organize Your Child's Life

Create a special, quiet space for your child to read, do homework, and have time-outs from the chaos of everyday life. Keep your home neat and organized so that your child knows where everything goes. This helps reduce unnecessary distractions.

Limit Distractions

Children with ADHD welcome easily accessible distractions. Television, video games, and the computer encourage impulsive behaviour and should be regulated. By decreasing time with electronics and increasing time doing engaging activities outside the home, your child will have an outlet for built-up energy.

Encourage Exercise

Physical activity burns excess energy in healthy ways. It also helps a child focus their attention on specific movements. This may decrease impulsivity. Exercise also improves concentration, decreases depression and anxiety, and stimulates the brain. Many professional athletes have ADHD. Experts believe that athletics can help a child with ADHD find a constructive way to focus their passion, attention, and energy.

Regulate Sleep Patterns

Bedtime is especially difficult for children suffering from ADHD. Lack of sleep exacerbates inattention, hyperactivity, and recklessness. Helping your child get better sleep is important. To help them get better rest, eliminate stimulants like sugar and caffeine, and decrease television time. Establish a healthy, calming bedtime ritual.

Encourage Out-Loud Thinking

Children with ADHD can lack self-control. This causes them to speak and act before thinking. Ask your child to verbalize their thoughts and reasoning when the urge to act out arises. It's important to understand your child's thought process in order to help him or her curb impulsive behaviours.

Promote Wait Time

Another way to control the impulse to speak before thinking is to teach your child how to pause a moment before talking or replying. Encourage more thoughtful responses by helping your child with homework assignments and asking interactive questions about a favorite television show or book.

Believe in Your Child

Your child likely doesn't realize the stress they can cause. It's important to remain positive and encouraging. Praise your child's good behaviour so they know when something was done right. Your child may struggle with ADHD now, but it won't last forever. Have confidence in your child and be positive about their future.

Find Individualized Counseling

You can't do it all. Your child needs your encouragement, but they also need professional help. Find a therapist to coach your child and provide another outlet for them. Don't be afraid to seek assistance if you need it. Many parents are so focused on their children that they neglect their own mental needs. A therapist can help manage your stress and anxiety as well as your child's.

Take Breaks

You can't be supportive 100 percent of the time. It's normal to become overwhelmed or frustrated with yourself or your child. Just as your child will need to take breaks while studying, you'll need your own breaks as well. Scheduling alone time is important for any parent. Consider hiring a babysitter. Good break options include:

- going for a walk
- going to the gym
- taking a relaxing bath
- Calm Yourself

You can't help an impulsive child if you yourself are aggravated. Children mimic the behaviours they see around them, so if you remain composed and controlled during an outburst, it will help your child to do the same. Take time to breathe, relax, and collect your thoughts before attempting to pacify your child. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will become.

Part 4 of 4: What Not to Do

“Don'ts” for Dealing with an ADHD Child

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff

Be willing to make some compromises with your child. If your child has accomplished two of the three chores you assigned, don't worry about the third, uncompleted task. It's a learning process and even small steps count.

Don't Get Overwhelmed and Lash Out

Remember that your child's behaviour is caused by a disorder. ADHD may not be visible on the outside, but it's a disability and should be treated as such. When you begin to feel angry or frustrated, remember that your child can't “snap out of it” or “just be normal.”

Don't Be Negative

It sounds simplistic, but take things one day at a time and remember to keep it all in perspective. What is stressful or embarrassing today will fade away tomorrow.

Don't Let Your Child or the Disorder Take Control

Remember that you are the parent and, ultimately, you establish the rules for acceptable behaviour in your home. Be patient and nurturing, but don't allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by your child.

Article Resources

Smith, M., & Segal, J. (2012, May). ADD/ADHD parenting tips: Helping children with attention deficit disorder. (n.d.). Helpguide.org. Retrieved from http://www.helpguide.org/mental/adhd_add_parenting_strategies.htm

Resources and references

ADHD parenting advice

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder – Covers most aspects of ADHD. See pages 10-14 for behavioral modification strategies that involve parents. (Center for Parent Information and Resources)

Parenting a Child with ADHD (PDF) – Succinct but comprehensive article followed by a long list of tips and resources. (National Resource Center on ADHD)

Behavioral strategies for dealing with ADHD in children

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – Overview of ADHD including valuable tips under Behavioral Management section for managing a child with ADHD at home and school. (University of Maryland Medical Center)

More strategies for dealing with childhood ADHD

Helping Your Teen with ADHD Prepare for Independence – Age-specific tips for helping your teenager handle money, chores, driving, and schoolwork; manage their time; and take responsibility for their health. (ADDvance.com)