

ADHD Tip sheets

Small changes can greatly affect your ability to tackle the challenges associated with ADHD. The section below contains hints and tips designed to highlight specific aspects of ADHD and improve interactions between people with ADHD and those who live, work, and play with them.

Please note that this information is not intended to replace or be a substitute for a medical and psychological evaluation by qualified healthcare professionals, with experience in ADHD diagnosis and treatment.

Information for teachers

Because ADHD behaviour is considered unacceptable by mainstream society, many children with ADHD end up having extremely low self-esteem and limited social skills. Helping these children gain a sense of esteem and pride in their accomplishments requires a team approach to structure, at school and at home. The team needs to include the child, parents, teacher(s), the school nurse and the child's healthcare provider.

The information below is part of the Teacher Notes series created as a result of the Sid Richardson Fellow School - University Collaborative Project, Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and the Corpus Christi Independent School District. It was designed to help teachers when dealing with children with ADHD in the classroom.

Establish an environment for learning

- Seat students with ADHD near your desk, but part of regular class seating.
- Seat students at the front of a row.
- Surround them with good role models.
- Encourage peer tutoring and cooperative/collaborative learning.
- Avoid distracting stimuli such as windows, air conditioners, radiators or any other distraction.
- Change is difficult, so avoid transitions, physical relocation, changes in schedule, and disruptions.
- Create a stimuli-reduced study area for students.
- Encourage parents to create a similar study space at home, with set times and routines established for study, parental review of completed homework, and periodic notebook and/or book bag organization.

Give instructions with care

- Maintain eye contact during verbal instruction.
 - * Make directions clear, concise and consistent with daily instructions.
- Simplify complex directions.
- Make sure students truly understand instructions before starting an assignment.
- Repeat instructions calmly and positively, when needed.
- Encourage students with ADHD to ask for help.
 - * Gradually reduce assistance over time, but remember children with ADHD need more help for a longer period of time than others.
- Require a daily assignment notebook, and:
 - * Make sure the student correctly writes down all assignments each day (help if necessary).
 - * Sign the notebook daily to signify completion of homework assignments. (Parents should sign too).
 - * Use the notebook for daily communication with parents.

Giving assignments

- Give out only one task at a time.
- Monitor frequently and be supportive.
- Determine specific strengths and weaknesses of each student.
- Modify assignments as needed based on an individualized education program and consultation with special education personnel.
- Make sure you test knowledge, not attention span.
- Give extra time for certain tasks. Do not penalize students with ADHD who may work slowly and need more time
- Remember children with ADHD are easily frustrated. Stress, pressure, and fatigue can lead to poor behaviour

Enhancing self-esteem and modifying behaviour

- Provide supervision and discipline calmly.
- State an infraction without debate or argument.
- Pre-establish consequences for misbehavior.
- Administer consequences immediately.
- Monitor proper behaviour frequently.
- Enforce classroom rules consistently.
- Keep medication reminders private.
- Provide encouragement.
- Reward more than you criticize.
- Praise immediately all good behaviour and performance.
- Change ineffective or non-motivating behaviour.
- Find ways to encourage the child.

Helpful tips for parents

The way you talk to, and with, your child has a direct impact on the way your child talks to you and his or her behaviour. The more you can improve your relationship and communication, the more you help your child with ADHD grow into a healthy, responsible adult.

Typically, parents and children tend to interact naturally and without thinking much about it. This kind of communication has its positive and negative sides. On the one hand, when relationships are stable, close and respectful, feelings are considered and conversations flow easily. But when the relationship goes through a period of conflict, resistance, and disobedience, it is easy for the relationships between parent and child to break down. One of the best ways to break out of a cycle of negative interaction is to change the way you and your child talk to each other.

Control your emotions

When things are tense, negative emotions such as anger, fear and defensiveness, can often undermine communication for the whole family. The feelings may reveal themselves in your tone of voice, your body language, your actions, and the words you use.

If you experience such feelings or are aware you are becoming tense with your child, take a step back and:

- Look at your child.
- Notice your child's body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, rate of speech, and choice of words.
- Pay attention to your child's and your emotions.
- Observe and analyze what is really happening.

Now you are ready to communicate your true feelings. And you can do this in a calm, non-threatening, and positive

way.

Change the way you speak

No one likes to be yelled at. The sound of your voice has a direct impact on the response you can expect. For children with ADHD:

- Lower your tone and pitch.
- Speak slower.
- Be sure to look directly into their eyes.
- Use as few words as possible.
- Keep your message short and to the point.

Change the word 'no'

Many children with ADHD hear the word 'no' so often that it does not register, until it has been said over and over again. There are many alternatives; it just takes a bit of thought and practice. For example:

- Give your child another option ('Use crayons on paper only, please.')
- Provide information ('That will break if you do that.')
- Give encouragement ('You are getting closer to the answer.')
- Say 'Stop!'
- Anticipate what else to say before saying no or stop ('We cannot climb trees here.')

Adapt listening habits...

Listening is as crucial to good parent-child communication as talking and what you say to your child. Listening and paying attention to what a child says, gives both parties a feeling of respect, and demonstrates the value of courtesy. Here are a few good listening habits:

- Try to find the positive in what is being said.
- Try to truly understand the other person's point of view.
- Respond with positive, non-judging 'I' statements.
- Watch out for 'you' statements disguised as 'I' ones (e.g., 'I think you are missing the point').
- Say back in your words what you think the person is saying.

Work together

The key to mutual success is making sure that both parties win something. Put your child's momentum and energy to work for you, not against you. Solving problems are easier when:

- Each person's ideas and solutions are on the table.
- You ask questions that help your child get a better perspective and consider things they may not have thought about.
- You point out that even if you disagree, you've talked it out.
- You keep things open for discussion.
- You continue the process by doing agreed upon items.
- When discussions are over and some issues are unresolved, clarify why specific things are unacceptable.

Note: Asking teenagers questions that make them communicate with you, rather than giving orders, motivates them to reflect on the situation, or invites deeper discussion.

Have fun!

The more positive interactions you and your child can have, the better. Play together, share interests and hobbies, just hang out and talk when there is no agenda other than just enjoying each other's company.

Tips for teenagers with ADHD

Judie Gade, author and ADHD Coach and Counsellor, in her adhdezine.com article, *ADD/ADHD in Teenagers... It Is Okay To Be DiFfErEnT!* Says:

'Imagine how it would feel if no-one seemed to understand HOW you were thinking (i.e., your parents and teachers are saying 'you CAN do better', the kids at school pick on you for absolutely no reason other than that you are YOU!).' ' On top of this, you can't concentrate on your school work, it takes you 10 times to read the one page before it sinks in, you do stupid things that you regret immediately after, and you are going through the puberty blues to boot?' If this sounds like you, then you're not alone. Welcome to the mind of an ADD/ADHD teenager!

Because time is a different concept to you, it is important that you:

- Use constant reminders and coping tools like diaries and watches with alarms.
- Find support from a friend or classmate who can help keep you on track.
- Find understanding friends, teachers, and other adults who can help you.
- Limit your time when playing computer games and stick to your time limit.

When your work shows immense promise or brilliance, but your behaviour is about to change, then you:

- Need help from a friend or teacher to help you realize it.
- You often see solutions to problems in a totally unique manner, and you should be encouraged and praised regularly for that.

To focus your attention, and minimize distractions:

- Sit away from windows, radiators and other attention-getters.
- Sit near the chalkboard and in front of other students.

Make the most of working together with someone, by finding:

- Student partners who seem to be doing well in class.
- Help from parents and teachers.

Help your teachers to understand you and your ADHD better, by talking about how:

- Moving sometimes helps you pay attention more easily.
- You respond better to kind words and gentleness than yelling and anger.
- Yelling can cause you to space out and you cannot help it. Stress can cause you to space out even more.
- Making you laugh will make you a keen listener and a loyal student, even if a trying one!

When you feel like an outsider, turn potentially negative things into positive actions, when you:

- Get addicted to participating in sports, reading, hobbies, crafts, or other interests you can do well in.
- Avoid compensating for social challenges by being stubborn, playing up and acting in front of the class, being reckless, or using illegal drugs and alcohol.