

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD): Suggestions for families

Children with ADHD have difficulties with keeping their attention on the task at hand, not shifting from one thing to another, and thinking through the consequences following an action. These difficulties seem to delay the child in managing his or her own behaviour.

How you can help

Parents and carers can help by setting up clear expectations and routines. Children learn skills for self-management when they have a structure to guide their behaviour. Discipline strategies that work with other children also work with children who have ADHD, but they need to be put in place more strictly and over a longer time span until the child's self-management has developed. If you find yourself irritated by your child's behaviour, try to remember that he or she may be struggling more than other children to learn how to respond as expected.

Be consistent

Set up rules and daily routines to provide a structure for children with ADHD. Be consistent with your expectations. This helps children to remember what is expected of them so that they can learn to regulate their own behaviour.

Give clear instructions

Make instructions brief and to the point. If necessary ask your child to look at you and repeat them back to you to ensure that he or she has firstly focused and then is ready to hear and understand what you mean.

Give prompt feedback

Feedback and consequences work better when given straight away.





Avoid the negatives

Try to ignore minor misbehaviour. It is best to try to stay out of power struggles with your child. Try to also remain positive and avoid strong criticism.

Incentives before punishment

Use praise and reward to increase motivation and build cooperation. Program yourself to see the achievements rather than the mistakes. Look for reasons why the child has not done as expected and use consequences sparingly.

Less talking, more action

Showing children as well as telling them what is wanted ensures the message is understood. Follow through on what you have asked your child to do and help them to finish what they have started if required so that they can experience successes.

Teach skills

It can be very helpful for parents and carers to teach problem-solving skills, time management skills, and good work habits. Remember to spell out what is involved in easy steps. Provide lots of support and praise until your child becomes more independent with these skills over time.

Plan ahead

Help your child to make plans that organise what he or she has to do. Create lists and display them as reminders for your child.

Be a coach

Encourage rule following, monitor progress and increase motivation.

Look after yourself

Having a child with extra needs can be stressful. Be sure to take care of your own needs too.

This resource is part of a range of KidsMatter Primary information sheets for families and school staff. View them all online at www.kidsmatter.edu.au



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Department of Health and Ageing

