

Parenting and Behavioral Issues: Parenting Strategies for ADHD

Parents have an important role to play working with the child to modify or change his behavior. Although ADHD is a biological disorder, behavior modification is always a crucial part of successful treatment. Careful and committed efforts to change the child's behavior can help improve his social skills, his ability to learn, and reduce frustration for the child, his family, and teachers.

A structured home environment

ADHD children manage best in a structured home environment. So establish a predictable routine of activities, and warn the child in advance of any changes. This will give him time to mentally prepare, so that changes in routine aren't too disruptive or stressful.



Rules governing activities and behavior should be clear and simple, and should apply both at home and away from home. This may mean writing up a list of rules and responsibilities, and posting it in a place where your child will see it frequently. It's also useful to make a progress and accomplishment chart, focusing on a few important behaviors that he should strive to improve. Write lists in consultation with your child, and refer to them regularly.

To help improve organizational skills, assign specific locations for possessions in the home. You may frequently need to remind your child to put items away after using them. And to help your child remember instructions, have him repeat them back to you before he starts to carry them out. Encourage parents to set up appropriate study space at home, with set times and routines established for study. Also, use this home area for parental review of completed homework, and periodic notebook and/or book bag organization.



Feedback, encouragement, and discipline

It's essential to provide frequent and immediate feedback in response to your child's behavior and activities. In order to be effective, feedback must be consistent between both parents, and between parents and teachers.

Focus more on encouraging positive behavior rather than punishing negative behavior. This will help build your child's self-esteem, while more effectively motivating him to be well-behaved.

Rewards for good behavior should include physical affection, encouragement of the child's efforts, and perhaps extra privileges or treats. Consequences for poor behavior may include the temporary loss of some privileges or treats. Always be sure to clearly explain to your child why he is being rewarded or disciplined.

If your child becomes very emotionally or physically wound up, you may wish to send him to a designated "time-out" location in the house. This should not be a place of punishment, but one where he can calm down and reflect.

Strategies for public places

Disruptive behavior by the child can sometimes occur in public places, creating an embarrassing and stressful situation. But many such situations can be controlled quickly - or prevented altogether - if you identify potential problems in advance. Prearrange a plan of action, and share it with your child just before entering the situation. Then, immediately begin giving frequent feedback on how he is doing. Again, it can be helpful to use a time-out location.

Though it can be difficult to find one when in public, useful sites away from distractions include telephone booths, dressing rooms, or the parked car. Provide swift rewards or reprimands. By planning ahead and responding quickly according to plans, you can defuse what could otherwise become an unpleasant situation.

Behavior modification

Strategies for modifying your child's behavior will work best if you maintain a positive approach. Resist expressions of anger, frustration or resentment, and be reasonable in your expectations of him. Try to bear in mind that your child can't always help his behavior, and be willing to forgive his mistakes. Because the burden on parents and other family members can sometimes seem overwhelming, remember that family counseling and support groups are other great ways to help everyone to cope together.

While behavior modification requires considerable effort on the part of both you and your child, it's most important to avoid the temptation to give up when feeling frustrated or exhausted. With compassion, patience and consistency you can greatly help your child cope with ADHD.