

Learning to live with ADHD

Some tips to help children succeed

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One of the biggest complaints I hear from parents is how to deal with their children's difficult behaviour. When their children have traits of, or are found to have, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, the complaints are greater, as are the feelings of frustration and exasperation.

It is true, children with ADHD traits or diagnoses are different. But differences aren't always negative. Their differences can include being more creative, intuitive and talented than many of the "regular" children. Think of the brilliance of Albert Einstein, the imagination of Bill Gates, the athletic skills of Michael Jordan, the talent of Beethoven and you will have a taste of what some ADHD people can accomplish.

These children do have different challenges and needs. Once the parent can apply more effective strategies and tools, they report a marked increase in co-operation with their child and much more harmony at home.

Some of these challenging behaviours include: being easily distracted; impulsive behaviour; lack of filter when expressing feelings; disorganization; forgetfulness; and difficulty focusing and following through.

Many "regular" children



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One way to help children who suffer from ADHD is to give them some control over their lives. They need to feel power.

and some adults have these traits as well, yet would not fall under the ADHD label, because it is the intensity and frequency of these behaviours that put some over the edge from "just being kids" to being kids with specific kinds of challenges.

The other issue you need to consider is the effects that having ADHD has on your child's self-esteem and confidence. Because they are often treated differently in school and don't fit in perfectly, these children tend to suffer more often from diagnoses of school anxiety, social anxiety, development of obsessive/compulsive behaviours and depression.

Figure out what works and what doesn't: if it doesn't

work, stop doing it.

What doesn't work

■ Punishing your child may make you feel better initially, it may calm you down and help you to feel more powerful, but it usually doesn't work in the long run for changing behaviour. It often results in your child reacting to you with anger and resentment and feeds power struggles.

■ Time out is also not very effective with these kids.

■ Nagging your child to finish his homework, take a shower or clean up his room will often cause him to feel criticized and harassed rather than inspired to co-operate.

■ Threats are equally ineffective. Your child is an expert on you. He knows when

you mean it and when you are making idle threats.

What does work

■ Encouragement and positive reinforcement take more time, but works much better:

■ Structure. Your child does not like change – change creates anxiety and anxiety leads to misbehaviour. He needs routine, he needs to know what to expect and what is expected of him.

■ Clear communication and consistency

■ Don't assume he knows what you want. You need to spell it out and be clear on consequences.

■ Reward positive behaviour. Catch your child doing something right and then encourage and praise his efforts and

results.

■ Use natural consequences rather than punishment. If he bullies a kid in school, have him write a letter of apology to that child.

■ Timing is everything. If you want to have a serious discussion with your child, plan it for a time when both of you are calm and relaxed, not rushed or exhausted.

■ Let him have some control. He needs to have some power. Give him choices.

Have fun with this, be playful and things will go much smoother:

We all want our children to succeed – that is a basic goal for parents. However, when you are pulling your hair out of your head and feeling like your child is purposefully tormenting you, it can drain and strain the most patient and loving of parents.

As difficult and challenging as it may be for you, just imagine what it feels like for your child to live in this world. A world that is intolerant of anyone who doesn't fit in the specific mould of clay society has for him. He needs to know that home is a place where he will always belong and feel welcome. This world can be a discouraging and painful place for some children. These experiences often play havoc with their feelings of acceptance and self-worth. If you can't take the time and effort to find the tools to work with them, what chance do they have?

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