

Parenting a Child With ADHD

How ADHD Affects Kids

ADHD causes kids to be more inattentive, hyperactive, and impulsive than is normal for their age. ADHD makes it harder for kids to develop the skills that control attention, behavior, emotions, and activity. As a result, they often act in ways that are hard for parents manage.

For example, because they are **inattentive**, kids with ADHD may:

- seem distracted
- seem not to listen
- have trouble paying attention
- not follow directions well
- need many reminders to do things
- show poor effort in schoolwork
- have trouble getting organized

Because they are **hyperactive**, kids with ADHD may:

- climb, jump, or roughhouse when it's time to play quietly
- fidget and seem unable to sit still
- rush instead of take their time
- make careless mistakes
- be on the go (constantly in motion)

Because they are **impulsive**, kids with ADHD may:

- interrupt a lot
- blurt out
- do things without thinking
- do things they shouldn't, even though they know better
- have trouble waiting, taking turns, or sharing
- have emotional outbursts, lose their temper, or lack self-control

At first, parents might not realize that these behaviors are part of ADHD. It may seem like a child is just misbehaving. ADHD can leave parents feeling stressed, frustrated, or disrespected.

Parents may feel embarrassed about what others think of their child's behavior. They may wonder if they did something to cause it. But for kids with ADHD, the skills that control attention, behavior, and activity don't come naturally.

When parents learn about ADHD and which parenting approaches work best, they can help kids improve and do well.

How Parents Can Help?

Parenting is as important as any other part of ADHD treatment. The way parents respond can make ADHD better — or worse.

If your child has been diagnosed with ADHD:

Be involved. Learn all you can about ADHD. Follow the treatment your child's health care provider recommends. Go to all recommended therapy visits. If your child takes ADHD medicines, give them at the recommended time. Don't change the dose without checking with your doctor. Keep your child's medicines in a safe place where others can't get to them.

Know how ADHD affects your child. Every child is different. Identify the problems your child has because of ADHD. Some kids need to get better at paying attention and listening. Others need to get better at slowing down. Ask your child's therapist for tips and ways you can help your child practice and improve.

Focus on teaching your child one thing at a time. Don't try to work on everything at once. Start small. Pick one thing to focus on. Praise your child's effort.

Work with your child's school. Talk with your child's teacher to find out if your child should have an IEP or 504 plan. Meet often with teachers to find out how your child is doing. Work with the teacher to help your child do well.

Connect with others for support and awareness. Join a support organization for ADHD like CHADD to get updates on treatment and info, etc.

Find out if you have ADHD. ADHD often runs in families. Parents (or other relatives) of kids with ADHD might not know they have it too. When parents with ADHD get diagnosed and treated, it helps them be at their best as parents.



Discipline with purpose and warmth. Learn what discipline approaches are best for a child with ADHD and which can make ADHD worse. Get coaching from your child's therapist on ways to respond to your child's behaviors. Kids with ADHD might be sensitive to criticism. Correcting their behavior is best done in a way that's encouraging and supportive rather than punishing.

Set clear expectations. Before you go somewhere, talk with your child to explain how you want them to behave. Focus more energy on teaching your child what to do, rather than reacting to what not to do.

Talk about it. Don't shy away from talking with your child about ADHD. Help kids understand that having ADHD is not their fault, and that they can learn ways to improve the problems it causes.

Spend special time together every day. Make time to talk and enjoy relaxing, fun activities with your child — even if it's just for a few minutes. Give your child your full attention. Compliment positive behaviors. Don't over-praise, but do comment when your child does something good. For example, when your child waits their turn, say, "You're taking turns so nicely."

Your relationship with your child matters most. Kids with ADHD often feel they're letting others down, doing things wrong, or not being "good." Protect your child's self-esteem by being patient, understanding, and accepting. Let your child know you believe in them and see all the good things about them. Build resilience by keeping your relationship with your child positive and loving.

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