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WHAT
PARENTS
CAN DO TO
HELP
CHILDREN
LIVING WITH
ADHD

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common conditions in children and we have come a long way in recent years to help end the stigma associated with the mental health condition. Most now understand that ADHD is not a byproduct of parenting style and children affected by ADHD do not lack intelligence or discipline—they are just challenged by sustaining the

focus needed to complete tasks appropriate for their age.

An estimated [8.8% of children](#) aged 4-17 have ADHD. Parents and caregivers face challenges with children who have ADHD and experience its symptoms, including inactivity, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Parents and caregivers should know they are not alone and there are resources and community support available.

Below are [NAMI-recommended](#) ways to support children living with ADHD:

- 1. Maintain a positive**

attitude. Focus on successes and victories and less on the challenges or obstacles of the condition.

Always have their strengths, goals and interests help drive the services and supports he receives to manage the symptoms of ADHD. For example, for children who are always moving, consider engaging them in physical activities like yoga, dance class, running, martial arts or similar activities in which the symptoms of ADHD may actually help them excel. It is helpful to create experiences that build on strengths and bolster self-esteem. Your positive attitude is the best tool in helping children overcome the challenges of ADHD.

2. **Create and maintain the structure.** Children living with ADHD are more likely to succeed when they have a regular schedule of tasks each day. They can experience serious problems if their daily structure changes, or they are forced to make a big change. Create and sustain a supportive structure so that your child knows what to expect every day.
3. **Communicate rules and expectations.** Children living with ADHD do well with clear and simple rules and expectations that they can easily understand and follow. Write down any rules and expectations and post them in a place where your child can easily read them. You

may also want to create a chores chart for them to look at every day. They may also respond well to an organized system of rewards and consequences—consistency is key.

Explain the consequences when rules are broken and to praise them when they are obeyed. Rewards should be immediate experiences and activities with a parent to encourage bonding and connection rather than tangible rewards or treats.

Consequences should not punish the child but the behavior (e.g., time out from any reinforcing activities).

4. **Encourage movement and sleep.** Children who live with ADHD have energy to burn. Organized sports and

other physical activities can help them increase their self-esteem and unleash their energy in healthy and productive ways with other children in their age group. Children living with ADHD who exercise often tend to sleep better, which can greatly reduce ADHD symptoms. Have a nighttime routine that encourages a healthy sleep cycle—this may include reading, avoiding electronics and encouraging self-soothing activities before bed. Martial arts can be a helpful strategy as they emphasize self-control and increase confidence.

5. Focus on social skills.

Children living with ADHD often have difficulty with peer

relationships and making friends. They may have a tough time with reading social cues, talking too much, interrupting frequently, or coming off as inappropriately aggressive. Their emotional immaturity may cause them to stand out among other kids in their age group, contributing to low self-esteem. Model social skills, consider hiring a life coach or work with your child's therapist to address this issue. Being connected to family and friends is an important part of living well with ADHD.

6. **Engage help from the school.** Students living with ADHD may experience unique challenges in the classroom. The common symptoms of ADHD—

inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity—can cause disruptions to a child's learning, peer relationships, functional performance and behavior within the school setting. ADHD may manifest itself differently in the classroom than what you see at home. Girls living with ADHD are at times overlooked as their presentation often involves less behavioral disruption than boys. Your child's school will likely offer programs and special educational services if you feel they may need them. The school can conduct an evaluation to see if they qualify. You should speak with your child's teacher and other counselors about these opportunities and consider the other

accommodations below.

The following is a list of typical accommodations that a student living with ADHD may receive from their school.

- Modified homework assignments, testing and deadlines
- Use of helpful tools (calculator, tape recorder, computer and electric spell-checker)
- A behavioral plan or social skills training
- Continual progress reports assessing behavior and assignments
- Peer, volunteer tutors or working one-on-one with the teacher
- Sitting the student near the teacher and away from doors and

windows

- Increased parent and teacher collaboration
- Providing the student with a note-taking partner
- Letting the student run occasional errands for the teacher to burn off some energy

The following is a list of more intensive services and supports that may be provided for students living with ADHD:

- Supplementary aids and services
- School-based counseling
- Family counseling and training
- Resource room services (small group work)

- Test modifications, such as small group testing in a separate location
- One-on-one service providers, such as crisis management services, transportation services and more
- Collaborative team teaching

[Find out more about ADHD](#)

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