

Child and Family Centre

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TEACHER INFORMATION PACKET ADHD/ADD

Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder (ADHD/ADD) is a complex of behavioral symptoms frequently occurring in children. It is not merely a child behavior or a classroom management problem. The most effective response requires full cooperation of teachers and parents working closely with other professionals such as physicians, psychologists, psychiatrists, speech/language and educational specialists, etc.

In a coordinated effort to ensure success in the lives of children with ADHD/ADD the vital importance of the teacher's role cannot be overestimated. Teachers should make use of every available resource within and outside of the building including the building counselor, learning specialist, behavior specialist, school psychologist, etc.

There is a variety of treatment forms available and potentially helpful to children with these symptoms. At times medications may be helpful, but should always be used with other forms of intervention, including educational and classroom management techniques.

Classroom teachers can help these children greatly and are an important adjunct to other forms of intervention being offered by other professionals. Improved classroom management can render a child more available for academic instruction and more manageable in the classroom setting. It also can improve relationships between teachers and students and between hyperactive children and their peers. A critical essence of interventions in ADHD/ADD children is to maintain the child's positive self-image.

Some suggestions to teachers for classroom behavior management with ADHD/ADD children follow. It is recognized that not all of these techniques will be workable or applicable in all cases and that a teacher may find it impossible to give a child with these difficulties the individual attention that s/he requires. It should be kept in mind, however, that when some of these techniques result in behavioural improvement, teachers can feel less interrupted and much more comfortable in managing these children.

Generally, ADHD/ADD children need more structure and teacher attention than others. They tend to do better with a highly predictable schedule that allows frequent opportunity for positive experiences. The effective teacher designs the situation for success and

reinforces appropriated behavior at every opportunity. Ideally, the situation should be structured so the desirable behavior receives as much or more teacher attention and interaction as undesirable behaviors(s).

Following are specific recommendations for use by classroom teachers.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Positive student-teacher interaction may not only improve academic and social functioning in the short term but may increase a child's chances for long-term success. In a study involving adults who had been hyperactive as children they reported that a teacher's caring attitude, extra attention and guidance were "turning points" in helping them overcome their problems.

Specific interventions:

1. Firm, fair and consistent limited setting, clear expectations for acceptable behavior, repeat behavioral expectations often, and reinforcing the child for compliance! Simply stating the rules is not enough. Rules should be external and visible to the child. Display rules or rule prompts (stop signs, big eyes, and ears for stop, look, listen). Relying on a child's recollection of rules as well as purely verbal reminders will likely have minimal impact. Have the child repeat rules while looking at external cues.
2. Keep your classroom setting structured. Remind the child where and when activities will take place. Keep the child close to you if there is a change in schedule so you can closely monitor.
3. Prompt and redirect the child to work and pay attention (look, give soft spoken command, use tokens or some other prearranged signal).
4. Keep verbal commands short, clear and concise. Be sure you have the child's attention before making a request or giving directions. Make eye contact. If lengthy directions are needed, break them into small units or make sure what is most important occurs last in the sequence. Ask the child to repeat directions to correct any misperceptions.
5. Break academic tasks into smaller units. Give assignments one page at a time, instructions one step at a time. If the child appears lost while instructions are being given or avoids the task, he/she may be overwhelmed by the task. ADHD children often lack the skills to break a task into smaller units. They often don't know where to begin and need concrete cues to guide them. (Highlight, star or underline where to start on a given task.)
6. Consider oral tests or have a peer read test questions.

7. Help the child get organized. ADHD children typically have much difficulty organizing materials. Use separate color-coded folders or dividers for each subject. A separate folder for homework assignments, which parents check each night, is also helpful. Praise the child for staying organized.
8. Schedule seat work in short segments. Sitting still can be very difficult for ADHD children. Allow the child to work in 10 or 15 minutes segments with five minute breaks. Let the child check his work during the break with an answer key.
9. Channel the child's excessive energy into acceptable activities whenever possible. Assign duties such as handing out supplies, gathering papers, erasing the board, being the classroom messenger, etc. Praise the child for good performance.
10. Seat the child close to you or in a place with minimum distractions. Have a cardboard cubicle or "private office" in the classroom in which the child can work to aid in concentration. Make sure this is not also used as a time-out area.
11. Reinforce the child's good performance publicly as often as possible. ADHD children tend to internalize criticism and need praise and reinforcement frequently and consistently. Call attention to good points as much as possible.
12. Be calm, cool and low key when forced to discipline. Verbal reprimands should be brief, immediate, unemotional and backed up with time-out or loss of a privilege for repeated noncompliance. Reprimands will likely be more effective when you are in close proximity to the child and make eye contact. Be consistent! Avoid negative comments. Loud voices or sudden changes in mood will likely aggravate the child's symptoms.
13. Positive teacher attention is very important. Don't spend too much time attending to negative behavior. Try to ignore non disruptive minor problems. Alter your interaction with the child to focus on positives. The timing of attention is very important to successful behavior management.
14. An individualized behavior modification program targeted at increasing positive behavior can be very effective. For example, a child earns tokens throughout the day for appropriate behavior (being on task, completing work, staying in seat, playing cooperatively, and following directions) and exchanges the tokens for special activities or privileges such as computer time, extra recess, helping the teacher, stickers, small toys, treat or selecting from a reward menu. Pair the giving of reinforcers with lots of social praise and always be consistent. Some rewards should be distributed on a daily basis, more valuable rewards could be contingent upon appropriate behavior for a week. Try to include parents in some kind of structured daily report in which the child earns stars, stickers, etc. and parents provide reinforcers or negative consequences. Daily reports often work well with ADHD children. They benefit from the extra feedback about their behavior and parents stay informed. Also the type and variety of reinforcers available at home is much more extensive and appealing to the child. In the

beginning, try to use positive behaviors the child is currently reliably displaying, so that some success can be achieved. In cases where parents are known to be very negative or abusive, reward-only programs should be used.

15. Positive or negative consequences must be delivered swiftly, immediately, consistently and more frequently with ADHD children. Consequences used with ADHD children often must be of higher magnitude than those used with normal children. Consequences chosen for a behavior management program must have sufficient reinforcement value to motivate these children to perform desired behaviors. Occasionally praise or reprimands are not enough to effectively manage ADHD children's behavior. Always emphasize positives in any program.

A program which includes negative consequences only will likely have little success.

16. It is often necessary to change reinforcers/rewards often. ADHD children are prone to rapid habituation and satiation, particularly with tangible rewards. Reward menus must be changed often. Find out from parents what kids like and make changes on a regular basis. A particular reward may be effective for the moment in motivating a child's compliance, but will likely lose its value much faster than normal.
17. Guidelines for use of Time-out. Have specific rules for behavior while in time-out. The child repeats these rules if possible before entering. Have the child earn "time-out" for good behavior which in isolation. If the child refuses to go, leaves privileges, remove to serve in another area or after school. Always be consistent! Time-out may not be effective in cases where inappropriate behavior is due to a desire to avoid work. Remember that is removal from reinforcement and should be implemented with minimal attention from teachers and peers. If problem behavior continually escalates during time-out requiring teacher intervention to prevent harm to self, others or property, alternatives to time-out need to be pursued.
18. ADHD children often have low self-esteem and tend to internalize criticism. Be positive in comments and attitude.
19. Increase self monitoring, have the child prestate goals for work periods. Teach children to record their own work productivity and behavior – the turtle technique, the motivaider: (vibrating box) use tape recorded tones for self reward, have access to reward several times a day.
20. Increase immediacy of consequences – act don't yak, avoid lengthy reasoning over misbehavior.
21. Set time limits for completion, use timers if possible for external time references, use tape recorded time prompts with decreasing time counts.

22. Develop hierarchy of classroom punishments: head down on desk, response cost (find and token system), time-out in the corner, time-out in school office, suspension to office in school.
23. Coordinate home school consequences daily school, report cards, class rating forms, daily home school journal, gradually move to weekly monitoring as the child approves.
24. *Manage your own stress/frustration levels: stay calm when the ADHD child is emotional, keep your wits about you when reacting to misconduct, think ahead, have a management plan in mind to deal with severe misbehavior, keep a disability perspective.

REMEMBER

**Be patient with parents who blame you and want you to fix or cure the problem (most are extremely frustrated). Listen to parent concerns and emphasize your willingness to cooperate. Let parents know that it will also take some effort on their part to best help the child overcome his or her problems. Keep lines of communication with parents open.