

## **Advice For Supporting Children With ADHD**

### **Things to do:**

#### **Create structure**

Make a routine for your child and stick to it every day. Establish rituals around meals, homework, playtime, and bedtime. Simple daily tasks, such as having your child lay out his or her clothes for the next day, can provide essential structure.

#### **Break tasks into manageable pieces**

Try using a large wall calendar to help remind a child of their duties. Colour coding chores and homework can keep your child from becoming overwhelmed with everyday tasks and school assignments. Even morning routines should be broken down into small tasks.

#### **Simplify and organise your child's life**

Create a special, quiet space for your child to read, do homework, and take a break from the chaos of everyday life. Keep your home neat and organised so that your child knows where everything goes. This helps reduce unnecessary distractions.

#### **Limit distractions**

Children with ADHD welcome easily accessible distractions. Television, video games, and the computer encourage impulsive behaviour and should be regulated. By decreasing time with electronics and increasing time engaging in activities outside the home, your child will have an outlet for built-up energy.

#### **Encourage exercise**

Physical activity burns excess energy in healthy ways. It also helps a child focus their attention on specific movements. This may decrease impulsivity. Exercise may also help to improve concentration, decrease the risk for depression and anxiety, and stimulate the brain in healthy ways. Many professional athletes have ADHD. Experts believe that athletics can help a child with ADHD find a constructive way to focus their passion, attention, and energy.

#### **Regulate sleep patterns**

Bedtime may be particularly difficult for children suffering from ADHD. Lack of sleep exacerbates inattention, hyperactivity, and recklessness. Helping your child get better sleep is important. To help them get better rest, eliminate stimulants like sugar and caffeine, and decrease television time. Establish a healthy, calming bedtime ritual.

#### **Encourage out-loud thinking**

Children with ADHD can lack self-control. This causes them to speak and act before thinking. Ask your child to verbalise their thoughts and reasoning when the urge to act out arises. It's important to understand your child's thought process in order to help him or her curb impulsive behaviors.

#### **Promote wait time**

Another way to control the impulse to speak before thinking is to teach your child how to pause a moment before talking or replying. Encourage more thoughtful responses by helping your child with homework assignments and asking interactive questions about a favorite television show or book.

## **Believe in your child**

Your child likely doesn't realise the stress that their condition can cause. It's important to remain positive and encouraging. Praise your child's good behaviour so they know when something was done right. Your child may struggle with ADHD now, but it won't last forever. Have confidence in your child and be positive about their future.

## **Find individualised counselling**

You can't do it all. Your child needs your encouragement, but they also need professional help. Find a therapist to work with your child and provide another outlet for them. Don't be afraid to seek assistance if you need it. Many parents are so focused on their children that they neglect their own mental health needs. A therapist can help manage your stress and anxiety as well as your child's. Local support groups may also be a helpful outlet for parents.

## **Take breaks**

You can't be supportive 100 percent of the time. It's normal to become overwhelmed or frustrated with yourself or your child. Just as your child will need to take breaks while studying, you'll need your own breaks as well. Scheduling alone time is important for any parent. Consider hiring a babysitter. Good break options include:

- going for a walk,
- going to the gym,
- taking a relaxing bath.

## **Calm yourself**

You can't help an impulsive child if you yourself are aggravated. Children mimic the behaviours they see around them, so if you remain composed and controlled during an outburst, it will help your child to do the same. Take time to breathe, relax, and collect your thoughts before attempting to pacify your child. The calmer you are, the calmer your child will become.

## **Things Not To do:**

### **Don't sweat the small stuff**

Be willing to make some compromises with your child. If your child has accomplished two of the three chores you assigned, consider being flexible with the third, uncompleted task. It's a learning process and even small steps count.

### **Don't get overwhelmed and lash out**

Remember that your child's behaviour is caused by a disorder. ADHD may not be visible on the outside, but it's a disability and should be treated as such. When you begin to feel angry or frustrated, remember that your child can't "snap out of it" or "just be normal."

### **Don't be negative**

It sounds simplistic, but take things one day at a time and remember to keep it all in perspective. What is stressful or embarrassing today will fade away tomorrow.

## **Don't let your child or the disorder take control**

Remember that you are the parent and, ultimately, you establish the rules for acceptable behaviour in your home. Be patient and nurturing, but don't allow yourself to be bullied or intimidated by your child's behaviours.