

ADHD: Parent Handout

This handout focuses on both Prevention and Coping techniques. Most of the Resources listed (but especially Taylor, Galland, Feingold, Zimmerman, Mercola, Appleton, Conners, & Hersy) emphasize a need to explore all factors that may be having an impact on neurological capacity for attention such as family support, teacher support, diet, environment and emotional and physical fitness.

What support do I need?

Educate yourself about ADHD...

- Seek counseling for yourself and family. Coping with ADD often results in struggles with self-image, confidence and interpersonal relationship issues. These issues can be addressed with the aid of a psychologist to help your child learn new methods of coping and self talk that will enhance their self-image and success at home and school.
- Join support groups for parents of ADD children
- Take care of yourself as a parent! Be prepared to handle a lot of frustration by learning mediation or yoga or simply enjoying a quiet coffee and newspaper in the morning before the kids get up
- Share the load with household responsibilities (Homework, discipline...)
- Adjust your expectations of your child (Faye's *Calming the Chaos*)
- Find ways to have **fun** with your family.
- Ask for help when needed. Solicit support from teachers, counselors, physicians
- Give my child responsibilities. Assign your child (older than four years of age) SIMPLE & SPECIFIC daily chores to "help you out" i.e. dust the tables in family room with a dry dust cloth. This builds pride, confidence and a sense of responsibility in the child. (Fay, Gottman)



How can I improve the environment to accommodate my child?

Provide structure, predictability and team efforts with your child...

- Establish morning, mealtime, homework, bedtime routines.
- Create a visual check board of routine tasks (morning routine of: getting dressed, brush teeth, etc.) so your child can develop responsibility and accountability (& it helps limit nagging too! 😊)
- Make sure my child exercises **daily**.
- Understand that my child may take twice as long to fall asleep.
- Provide night lights, glow in dark stars, and lighted aquarium for anchor points.
- Provide “white noise” at bedtime to block out stimulation. (music, nature sounds, bedtime stories, tuck-in soft conversation)
- Organize my child’s workspace and room, keep **uncluttered** as possible (consider “blue’ solid walls, no mobiles, prevent reflective glare)
- Consider using “sound” as a way to remind my child to get back on track (recorded bell sounds)
- Experiment with playing a variety of soothing music at home to promote a calm environment.
- Eliminate contact with household chemicals & odors (chemical cleaning products, perfumes, insecticides, scented soaps & candles, air fresheners...)

How do I improve my child’s brain function?

Raising awareness...

- Provide 5 basic **Brain Nutrients**:
 1. Vitamins (A,B,C,E most helpful)
 2. Minerals (chelated, the more the better)
 3. Amino acids (from proteins like meat & eggs or through supplements)
 4. Good fats for ADHD (seeds, nuts, whole grains, oils, butter, olive oil, fish oil daily)
 5. Water (One half gallon daily *filtered* & free of lead,)
- Add daily Essential Fatty Acids –Omega 3& 6 (Nordic Naturals brand Fish Oil 1tsp./day is best)
- Add **PROTEIN** snacks throughout the day during school (avoid those with added sugar). Generally, keep proteins high (4+ eggs weekly).
- Avoid the traditional nutrition/ pyramid with an ADD child & explore www.adddiet.com



- Keep a food diary to isolate “trigger” foods.
- Explore possible undetected food allergies to foods or preservatives.
- Symptoms of food allergies can be as mild as dark circles under the eyes, irritability and hyperactivity, just to name a few. Food Allergies do not always present as the typical hives or rashes. (work by Feingold, Renowned Allergist)
Avoid Dyes (especially Red #40), Sulfites in foods & medicines, and all caffeine
- Avoid microwaving proteins and fats (Galland)
- Avoid fish containing mercury (Tuna)
- Limit dairy products
- Sugar intake *decreases* your child’s immune system for four hours by impacting their white blood cells (Mercola)
- Count carbohydrates, they could be the culprit (the low-fat kind is often worse)
Limit bread to “whole grain” type, NOTE: “whole wheat” is NOT “whole grain”.
- Avoid Salicylates (Feingold)
- Consider trying homeopathy instead of prescription medication. It is very effective and inexpensive (Reichenberg-Ullman)
- If you choose to use prescription medication, have your physician adjust dosage of medication as needed
- Explain to the child what the medication is and what is its purpose
- Always be consistent in administering any medication.

How should I handle behavior?

Establish a few basic rules...

- Praise behavior immediately & specifically *by noticing it without judging it*, avoiding phrases like “Good Job” which are too generalized and judgmental. Try saying things like, “Wow! I noticed you put your shoes away without me having to ask you, thanks.”
- Consistency is the key!
- Break down verbal instructions to 1-2 requests at a time
- Rephrase “NO” so child does not begin to tune you out. Also, offer explanations. Use phrases like, “I would rather you...” or, “You can go to play with --- after we finish up what we need to get done today”
- Build self-esteem (with the help of books by Seligman, Moorman, Gottman)
- Establish a list of positive rewards and change often.
- Consequences should be given **with empathy, not anger**.
- Anticipate a plan (with family members) to handle misbehavior; do not react out of momentary anger



- Focus on behavior. Do not criticize.
- Avoid power struggles (See handout)
- Focus on what is important; do not make everything an issue.
- Speak in a low voice.
- Talk about and acknowledge feelings, yours and your child's.
- Set limits to maintain authority as a parent without excessive control.
- Help my child manage his/her anger. (See handout)
- Avoid perfectionism; help my child's attitude toward mistakes (handout)

How do I help my child in school?

Begin by...

- Keeping an academic history.
- Determine whether your child is a visual or auditory learner and use those specific strategies when working on schoolwork
- Recognize my child's learning style and preferences. (Likes to lay on the floor to work, beanbags, clipboards...)
- Break homework into small timed sessions (10 min blocks with 5 min breaks)
- Seating for schoolwork at home or school should be a spot with the least visual distractions (Taylor)
- Promoting organization (The Organized Notebook)
- Consistent communication with my child's teacher (daily report) & attend conferences with teacher to identify problem areas
- The homework chain
- Investigate breathing, visualization, relaxation, guided imagery techniques to reduce stress.
- Have my child set goals, keep *visual* track of grades, and organize themselves for long term projects
- Be able to support, be ready to answer questions and help my child stay on task while working at home.
- Provide quiet, consistent time for homework, free of distractions.

Courtesy of The Mental Fitness C.R.E.W - Center for Resilience, Empowerment & Wellness; 855-763-2739; support@mentalfitnesscrew.org

