

1. Understand the condition

ADHD is a biological disorder. It is a spectrum disorder so children can be mildly, moderately or severely affected. Not all ADHD sufferers have the same symptoms. More than half of children with this disorder will still have some symptoms as an adult. Children with ADHD have difficulties with concentration, hyperactivity and/or impulsivity. Medication can reduce difficulties to some extent, but it is unlikely that their struggles will be overcome with medication alone.

Concentration difficulties

- Can't listen for 'extended' periods (over 3 minutes)
- Make mistakes as important details in the instructions may have been missed
- Loses interest in tasks or activities quickly
- Tasks which need a lot of concentration or focus can be particularly distressing/challenging
- Attention is frequently captured by other stimuli- notices, sounds, smells, their own thoughts etc
- Planning, sequencing and organising tasks is difficult

Hyperactivity

- Restlessness, being fidgety, running about and being constantly on the go is part of the ADHD condition.
- Talking excessively is part of ADHD

Impulsivity

- The inability to self-regulate and keep self-control will show itself as shouting out, interrupting and blurting out their thoughts. This can appear rude or antisocial which also impacts on social relationships.
- Waiting, in lines or for their turn, is difficult.

2. Knowing how to help

Recognise that ADHD prevents children from doing the things that most children manage easily: sitting still, listening quietly, and concentrating on their task in a vibrant classroom. Children with ADHD need some modifications and accommodations, structure and clear expectations to succeed. Children with ADHD respond best to specific goals, positive reinforcements and meaningful rewards. Capturing what works for the particular child in a

positive behaviour plan is recommended, especially if it includes graduated rewards for minor accomplishments and larger victories.

Strategies to address inattention

- Chunking information into component steps
- Check-in with child, praise effort and redirect frequently
- Be extremely brief when giving directions: telegraphic speech!
- Provide proximal memory aids – preferably on a white board with bold coloured marker or similar. Make sure it is accessible and easily read at a glance.
- Seat child away from doors and windows
- Alternate seating can allow movement around school
- Incorporate physical movement into lessons
- Incorporate frequent short breaks into lessons. Focus on time in lessons by emphasising how long breaks are for and plan for reintegration.
- Clear desk policy so minimal distractions are in their visual field.

Strategies to address hyperactivity

- Limit sitting time in favour of movement.
- Ask children with ADHD to complete tasks for you to facilitate movement about the room (sharpen pencils, go for xxxx, hand out pencils etc)
- Encourage daily exercise before and after school, and active play during break times. Have a plan for inclement weather. Make sure they do not miss breaks!
- Deep pressure exercises can help calm children with ADHD e.g. stretches or press-ups against a wall. Stress balls to squeeze discretely during quiet listening times is an option to explore, chewing on appropriate hygienic item (eg chewellery).
- Set limits using a spot for carpet position; choice of seat: 'here or here' for example

Strategies to address impulsivity

- Use visual timetable/ day's schedule on the board so the child knows what to expect and when.
- Reducing interruptions without eroding the child's self-esteem, especially in front of the class is an important art of the teacher. Agree a code with the child (gesture or word) to discretely let the child know they are interrupting. Praise the child for not interrupting even for short durations.
- Using **first xxx, then xxx** strategies and **if xxxx (undesirable behaviour) then xxx (consequence)** behaviour plans in visual format if possible.

- Be consistent with consequences; if exceptions are valid make it explicit to the child at the time.
- Recognise good behaviour out loud. This can be directed to the child, or to a peer/ other adult about the child -praise can be even more effective if it is overheard!.
- Make learning fun and interactive. Songs/ actions may help them to remember details, use images and practical apparatus wherever possible. Act out stories, make predictions or 'bets' about what might happen next and read to children using pronounced expression.