

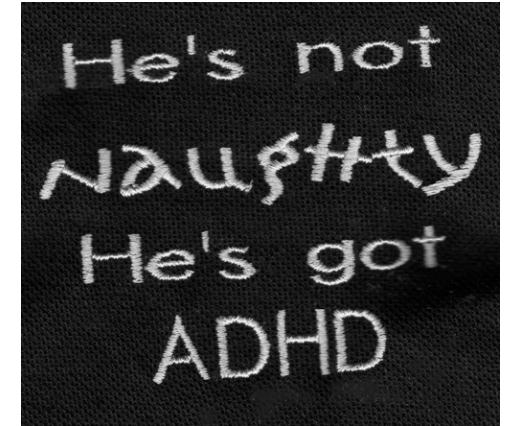


# Top Tips for Helping Your Child with ADHD

"Inattentive... disturbs others... driven by batteries... volatile... attention seeking.. easily bored... distracted easily... hyper... difficult... restless... always on the go..."  
Do any of these phrases sound familiar?  
Have they been used to describe your child by teachers and other parents? Chances are your child has ADHD.  
The problem is, often others only see the negative behaviours and not see the lovable, funny, caring, incredible individual underneath.



"No-one knows what it is like to have a child with ADHD until they have a child with ADHD."



The key features of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) diagnosis are **inattention**, **hyperactivity** and **impulsivity**.

### Impulsivity

Experiences difficulty waiting for her turn

Has trouble waiting until a question is finished before answering

Often interrupts or intrudes on others

### Inattention

Is easily distracted

Has trouble following directions and finishing tasks

Displays organisational problems

Experiences difficulty listening while others are speaking

Forgets about daily activities

Often loses things

Has tendency to daydream

### Hyperactivity

Squirms or fidgets when sitting

Doesn't stay seated

Has trouble playing quietly

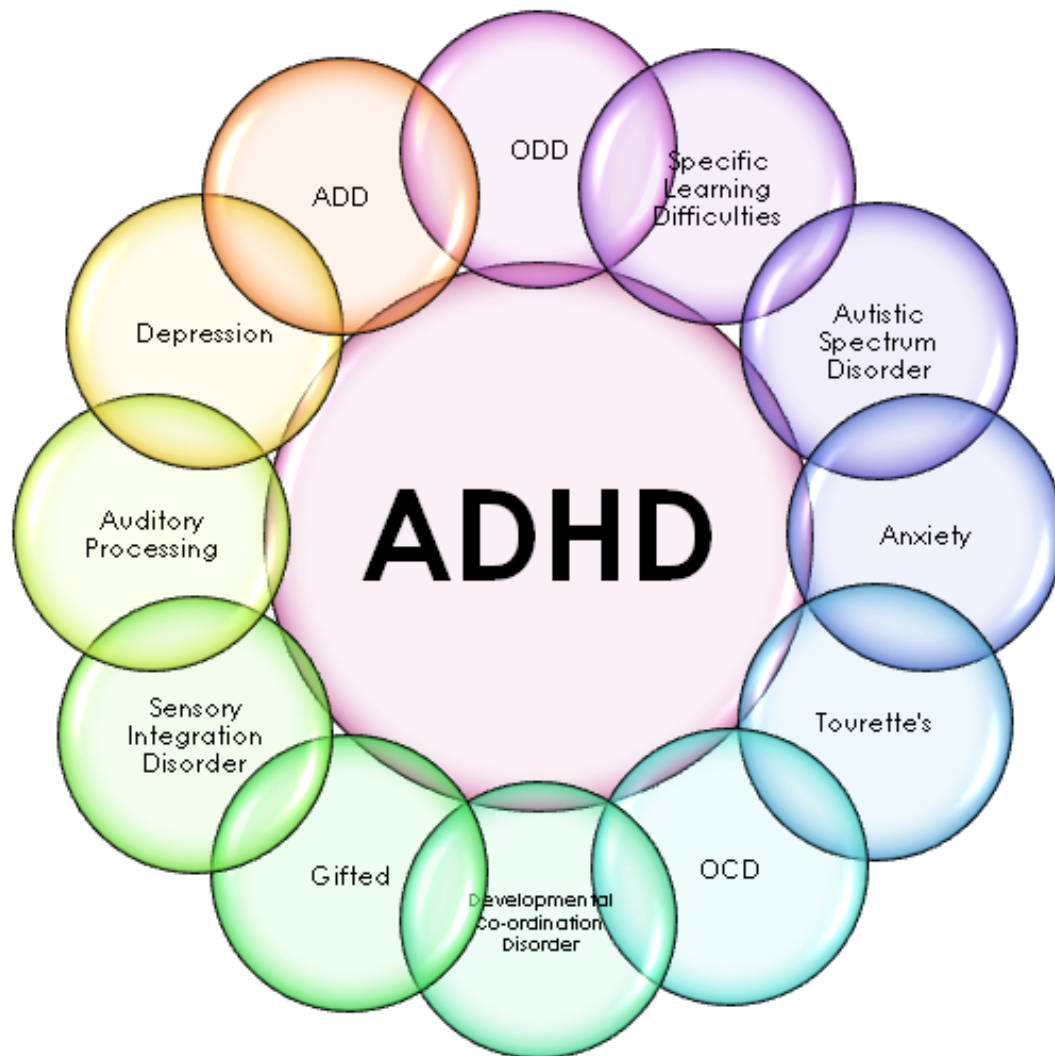
Is restless - always on the move

Talks excessively

Every one of us exhibits some or all of these characteristics at one time or another. If we are to diagnose, ADHD symptoms must be persistent, pervasive and noticed at an early age.

It is estimated that 5 per cent of the UK school-age population is estimated to be affected by ADHD. This means that approximately 1-2 children in every class have the condition.

For someone to be diagnosed with ADHD these symptoms need to be consistent and prolonged in specific conditions, taking several factors into consideration.



There is a huge overlap between ADHD and other learning difficulties and conditions (see diagram opposite). Sometimes these other conditions, difficulties or disorders can mask or be masked by ADHD.

It is essential to look at children with ADHD and not ADHD children. We need to see the child and not the condition. We should not focus on the symptoms but on the individual. Someone once compared a child with ADHD to 'a computer without a printer attached.' The children have all the information in their heads but cannot get it down on paper. "Without the ability for the printer to be attached, the thoughts and intelligence of the child will drift off into cyberspace. Meanwhile, books remain empty, marks are poor and frustrations build - leading to failure and loss of self-esteem." (Finton O'Reagan 2012)

# Top Tips for Parents



## 1. Structure, structure, structure

*This is the most important thing for children with ADHD. This can only be achieved through consistent application of systems. Your child may not want to have structure in their lives but they will benefit when they know what is expected of them.*

## 2. Boundaries are key

*You are the parent and need to act as such. It is difficult for people with ADHD to set boundaries and it is good for them to know there are lines that they should not cross. Children need to have boundaries to keep them safe and to learn how to act in social situations.*

## 3. Recognise your threshold with your child

Sometimes your relationship with your child may become strained. Take a deep breath and focus on the positives. If possible take a time out for yourself as well as your child. No-one will benefit if you 'lose-it'. You are the adult and need to stay in control.

## 4. Take care of your family

*Families with children with ADHD are more likely to experience stress - be careful to look after yourself and other members of your family. Spend quality time together and make sure everyone feels appreciated - including you.*

## 5. Maintain a positive relationship with your child

*Try to find a fun joint activity you can do with your child at least once a week. Laughter is the best way to bring people together.*

## **6. Encourage physical exercise**

*Exercise will use up some of that excess energy and being part of a team will be good for your child's social skills and will help them understand the importance of rules. Be careful though if your child cannot follow the rules, solo sports may be more beneficial as they may be ostracised by team-mates for not following instructions and 'ruining the game'.*

## **7. Involve your child in activities where they feel good about themselves**

*Children with ADHD often have low self-esteem so every opportunity should be taken to bolster their self-image.*

## **8. Reward effort and not just achievement**

*Your child might be trying really hard but not completely succeeding in a task. Praise the effort they make to show them you know they are trying hard.  
"It's not winning the game - it's taking part that counts."*

## **9. Help your child focus on their strengths**

*Children with ADHD often only hear about their negative behaviours. By focusing on talents and positive attributes your child's self-esteem will improve as they see themselves as citizens with something to offer society.*

## **10. Be positive**

*Be careful to use positive language rather than negative language. Tell your child what she can do rather than what she cannot do.  
Choose your words carefully.*

## **11. Actions have consequences**

*Rewards and punishment must be applied quickly and consistently.  
Don't send mixed messages to your child.*



## **12. Be clear and concise**

*Too many instructions at one time can be confusing. Only give a few simple instructions in one go so that they can be carried out and then your child can move on to the next task. Perhaps make a written list so that they can tick-off the jobs as they complete them.*

## **13. Give your child a break**

*Make sure that you give your child some time out when they come home from school. Let them run around for a while and burn off some energy before expecting them to settle down to their homework.*

## **14. How do you eat an elephant?**

*One bite at a time!*

*When doing homework, break long assignments into bite-sized chunks and allow short breaks in between.*

## **15. Contact the school if homeworks are too onerous**

*If you feel the homeworks are taking far too long and your child is becoming very frustrated and upset, talk to the teacher and explain. Hopefully they will agree to let you stop the homework after a certain time.*

*Explain to your child that they will have to do their best because you and the teacher are now looking for quality and not quantity in their work.*

## **16. Use a timer**

*Having a physical timer there for your child to see will help them to focus on the task and give them a visual cue as to how long they are expected to work.*

*(It also means they won't keep pestering you by asking, 'How long do I have left?')*

## **17. Look for alternative methods to learn**

*Sitting writing is not going to be the best way for your child to learn. Try alternative methods like using mnemonics, singing facts, role plays, drawing pictures etc. to aid learning.*

*Active learning is the key.*

### **18. Look me in the eye**

*Ensure eye-contact is made when you are giving instructions. If your child is looking at you there is more chance that they are paying attention to what you are saying to them. If your child finds it extremely intimidating to look you in the eyes train them to look at your forehead, this will also help with other social interactions. People who do not look at you when they are talking appear to be 'shifty'.*

### **19. Ignore inappropriate comments and outbursts**

*Your child cannot help being spontaneous and to tell her off every time she does something wrong would damage her self-esteem further and reduce the effectiveness of the verbal discipline.*

*Choose your battles carefully.*

### **20. Use the 'Stop, Think, Act' approach for problem-solving**

*Train your child to stop and wait then think about the consequences of what they are going to do. When they have thought about possible outcomes then they can choose how to act. This will not come naturally to your child and will require a lot of work on both your parts.*

### **21. Use charts, schedules and timetables**

*Visual aids and pictorial cues are a good way of helping your child visualise their day and understand what is expected of them. These are a good resource to back up your point and help your child to refocus on a task.*

### **22. Glve me five**

*Giving a 5 minute warning before the end of an activity will ensure your child has time to adjust to the idea of stopping an activity and will reduce the chances of her having a temper tantrum .*

### **23. Be positive**

*Remember positive reinforcement works, negative reinforcement merely damages self-esteem*

### **24. Look for the best in your child. You are their champion - don't let them down!**

"If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music he hears, no matter how measured or far away."

*Henry Thoreau*

Very often children with Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) appear to march to the beat of a different drum. It is our job as parents and teachers to try to help these rhythms beat together, each complementing and augmenting the other rather than beating out of time and causing disharmony.

We need to supply structure to our child with ADHD's life, be flexible with our attitudes towards them and ensure we build a positive relationship with them always looking for ways to praise and not put them down. It can be very stressful dealing with a child with ADHD but asking for help and advice is the best thing we can do. Hopefully this booklet will give you some practical advice to help you and your child.



If you have any further questions feel free to contact us at the school.

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