



Understanding and Managing ADHD For Parents

How do I recognise ADHD?

Here are some ways ADHD can present:

Poor organisation – “Why do we take so long to get out of the house in the morning?”

Trouble staying on task – “Why do you never finish anything? You just don't care. It would be much easier for you to just finish the task.”

Poor sense of time – “What have you been doing all lesson? You have spent 30 minutes and have only written the title and date.”

Time moves too slowly – “Sir, this game is taking too long to play. Let's do something else.”

Poor internalisation of rules – “Josh, how many times have I had to tell you that you that you can go out after your tea”

Poor sense of self-awareness – ‘What were you thinking? Did you not ask yourself what would happen if you didn't hand in your homework’?

Poor reading of social cues – “Can't you see that the other kids think what you are doing is inappropriate behaviour”?

Inconsistent work/behaviour – “Why did we have such a great day yesterday and today is awful?”

Hyper-focusing – “How come you can spend hours on computer games but when I ask you to do your homework on the computer you find this so difficult?”

Frequently overwhelmed – “Mum stop it! I can't stand this talking, just stop talking to me!”

Push away those who want to help – “Dad, go away! Stop checking my work! Leave me alone! Get away from me!”

Children with ADHD can become very critical of themselves. It is instinctive for children to want to learn and to please the adult. When they say “I don't know why I didn't do as I was told.” : often they genuinely did not know why? They know they create difficulties but they do not choose this behaviour but rather act/speak impulsively without thinking about the consequences. If behaviour management isn't approached correctly, the child with ADHD will internalise into their self concept that they are 'naughty' and will act out according to the identity they have been given by the adult.

Ten Point Observation List on ADHD Behaviour

1. **Eye contact:** Avoidance of eye contact is ADHD/ASD behaviour – they may look as if they are ignoring you but some children find making eye contact really difficult.

2. **Fidgeting:** Not standing or sitting still or fiddling with something whilst you are talking with them, i.e. pens, books, or something on your desk. This behaviour does not mean they are not taking in what you are saying to them; they will be. If unsure, ask them to repeat back what you have just said to ensure their understanding.

3. **Wandering:** Avoidance of work-ADHD behaviour, possibly they don't know what to do or what you want from them, so rather than fail, they just won't do it. "If I don't do it then I can't get it wrong". Sometimes children with ADHD prefer to be told off than to get work wrong and be perceived as 'stupid'. Getting started or completing a task may be due to the inability to direct their focus and not because they just can't be bothered or are lazy.

4. **Inappropriate behaviour:** ADHD children have difficulty with understanding inappropriate behaviour i.e. burping in class and other uncontrollable noises, they see these things as being funny and socially acceptable; we on the other hand see it as unacceptable. They also tend to make remarks that are inappropriate to the situation i.e. "Sir, why have you got a hole in your sock?" They say what they see; they have difficulty reading social cues.

5. **Consequences:** Children with ADHD make no connection between behaviour and consequences. If you point out a behaviour issue to a child they may acknowledge it and be very sorry for what he/she has done, but five minutes later they may do the very same thing again. Lack of executive functioning (analysing, problem solving and understanding sequence of actions and consequences) results in impulsive and unconsidered behaviours.

6. **Daydreaming:** is an ADHD characteristic, not paying attention or being distracted by other events that are going on outside/inside. It is not that the child is 'not' paying attention: it is more likely the child is paying too much attention to everything and not focusing on just one thing.

7. **Negative self-esteem:** Personal experience of not being able to understand instructions clearly, forget instructions or information, impulsive words and actions all have social consequences. Children with ADHD can easily become frustrated at their own inability to understand and communicate

with others. This results in feelings of isolation and exclusion from recognition, praise, reward and affection from adults and peers. This in turn creates anxiety which exacerbates ADHD characteristics. Inevitably this causes behavioural problems for children with ADHD who act out – unable to articulate what they feel. “I can’t do that” before they even try (fear of getting it wrong.)

8. **Being the class clown:** trying to make people laugh and cause disruption (possibility due to work avoidance) ‘I can’t do it so the class won’t be able to do it either’. OR – I will gain the esteem and friendship of my peers by making them laugh (as I will not be able to gain the esteem and friendship from my teacher so I will behave in a way that meets my instinctive need for relationship and a sense of belonging.

9. **Waiting turns:** Children with ADHD find waiting turns, either in lines or in group work difficult; they act and speak without thinking (‘in the head out the mouth’) this is the impulsivity of ADHD. They may be clumsy or accident prone; they may break things and accidentally hurt others.

10. **Rule breaking:** Children with ADHD will test out rules and structure: they need to know that they are there. They are not being defiant! They need boundaries and they need to know how far they can go. These children struggle in understanding boundaries as they have poor social observations.

How do we as professionals ‘experience’ children with ADHD?

Basic Medication Information

Some children diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) are prescribed medication to help them to focus and concentrate. The first line of approach by paediatricians is a stimulant medication. There are many different brands of stimulant medication; the generic term for these medications is methylphenidate hydrochloride.

There are 4 types of medication regularly supplied by the paediatricians they are:

- **Ritalin**
- **Concerta XL**
- **Equasym**
- **Medikinet**

Each medication works differently on each person it is prescribed for.

Ritalin

- It is the most recognised brand of medication for ADHD

- Ritalin comes in fast release only
- It takes between 10 – 30 minutes to take full effect
- It is usually prescribed first to monitor the dosage
- Their effect wears off approximately 4 hours after taken
- They come in 5, 10 and 20 mgs

Concerta XL

- Concerta XL is a slow release medication only
- It takes between 20 – 40 minutes to take full effect
- One capsule per day is taken usually with breakfast
- Slow release comes in capsule form 30% is initially released 70% is released throughout the remainder of the day
- The capsule lasts 12 hours
- Capsules come in 18,27 & 36 mgs

Equasym & Equasym XL

- Equasym comes in slow release and fast release
- Fast release is in tablet form
- Slow release comes in capsule form 30% is initially released 70% is released throughout the remainder of the day
- Equasym XL lasts 8 hours
- Both the tablets and capsules come in 5, 10, 20 & 30mgs

Medikinet and Medikinet XL

- Medikinet comes in slow release and fast release
- Fast release is tablet form
- Slow release comes in capsule form 50% is initially released 50% is released throughout the remainder of the day
- Medikinet XL lasts 8 hours
- Both the tablets and capsules come in 5, 10 20 & 30mgs – (bz[p-p,l mko 40 mgs capsule only)

Stimulant medication is not compatible for all diagnosed with ADHD, there is a non stimulant medication used regularly.

Stratera

- Generic term is atomoxetine hydrochloride
- Considered a second line medication
- Available in capsule form

- Is to be taken whole once or twice a day in the morning
- Comes in 20mgs & 40mgs

Children with ADHD have a difficult enough job coping with everyday situations without the added stress of negative attitudes and difficulties around medication.

Many schools still refuse to support children who are prescribed medication for ADHD and parents are still having to go into schools daily to administer their child's medication.

The impact of this and what is reported by the media has a major impact on children taking this medication. They are seen to be different by their peers, the schools are sometimes not comfortable in giving the very medication the child has to take in order to remain in school and access their education.

Some children have told us that they hate taking their medication because of the 'stigma' this holds. Children and young people are called names such as 'crack head' and 'sniffer' by other children, this then leads to reactive behaviours for which the medication is there to support.

Medication does not have to be an issue for children, with the right support ADHD and medication can live successfully side by side.

Appendices

Strategies for supporting effective learning with ADHD

1. Orange Strategy Wheel



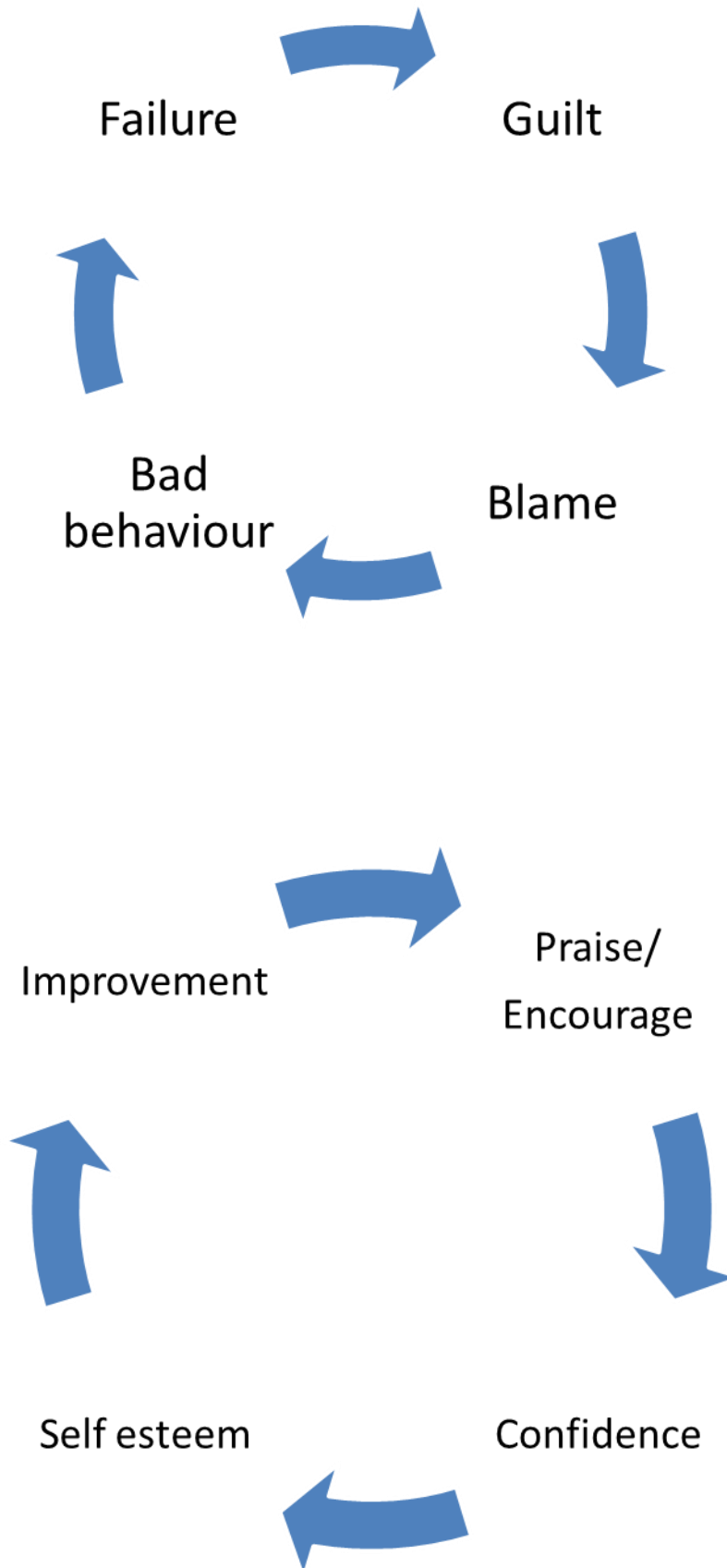
Talking
calmly in
challenging
situations

Ask open
ended
questions

Say what
you mean
and mean
what you
say

Talk
with
and not
at them

2. From failure to 'improvement'



3. Earn the Right

Earn the Right is a very powerful, simple strategy. It works according to what behaviours you want to promote and what behaviours you want to reduce.

To look at it you may think that it won't work and that you have tried reward strategies before. We offer you a tool box of strategies that have been proved to be very effective for young people with ADHD and in fact can be used with anybody.

It works by putting a list of behaviours that you want to encourage across the top of the page and list underneath this of behaviours you want to discourage. An example is given below.

Polite/helpful Kind Cooperative Making the right choices

Violence Swearing Aggression

- Explain to the young person what you are going to do and when the positives points outweigh the negative points, you will reward him/her at a time that is convenient to yourself. Don't tell them what you will be doing – as this may put more pressure on you.

- Every time the young person shows positive behaviour, praise them, describing exactly what you like about what they have done, e.g. "It was very kind of you to take your books back to the shelf." This may be simplistic but it is ADHD friendly - most of us take good behaviour for granted. The young person might have difficulty accepting this praise as he/she is so used to negative comments. Don't give up, this method has worked for many teachers and parents in the past.

- You can have this list in view and use it all the time, eventually it will become second nature but this may take some time.

- When the young person carries out an act from the bottom (negative) line, mark the sheet, with no comments made.

- When the young person does something positive then the mark on the negative line can be crossed out. This way the positive behaviour is never overlooked or goes unnoticed.

- It may take some time to get used to and for the young person to become engaged with it, after all, it is another change.

4. Plan and structure

Anticipate, plan and review – what went well and how could we have done this better?

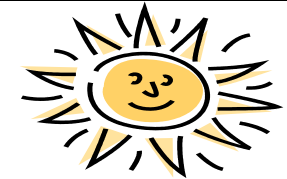


- Time plans - Young people with ADHD are often visual learners, lots of writing puts them off. Have fun and make your own gadgets together to help remember what to do. Timetables and charts are very ADHD friendly...

Order	Tasks to do	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
1						
2						
3						
4						
5						
6						
7						
8						
9						
10						

Weekly Target Sheet

Name: _____



	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Week 1 Target					
Week 2 Target					
Week 3 Target					
Week 4 Target					
Week 5 Target					
Week 6 Target					

Please note that the target cards are a part of the ADHD foundation 6 week course surrounding management and self awareness. We would be most grateful if you could actively monitor the efforts and achievements of the targets the child and the Foundation have collectively set in order for us to evaluate the levels of progress.

Adults perspectives of ADHD – knowing how it is for the parent.

Confused

- Where does this ADHD come from?
- He's so different from other kids.
- I'm relieved he's got a diagnosis but where do we go from here?

Unpopular

- I can't take him anywhere – he'll kick off.
- He never gets invited to parties/social get-togethers/groups of friends.
- He gets on everyone's nerves and can't understand why they get angry.

Stressed

- I had one hour's sleep last night and the school rang me to say they can't cope.
- The family don't understand. I'm on my own with this problem
- I can't make him understand what he needs to do to get ready

Angry

- Who's fault is it he's like this?
- Why does no-one want to understand or help?
- If they're not blaming him they're blaming me.

Guilty

- I know he can't help it.
- I know I shouldn't be shouting all the time.
- I shouldn't be giving him medication.
- I should be giving him medication.
- Nothing I do seems to work.

Anxious

- What will happen when he gets older/leaves school?
- It's not safe to let him out.
- I'll read everything on the Internet for all the best experts to fix this.

Stupid

- Why can't I control/influence his behaviour?
- I feel everyone is looking at me when we are out together.
- People only tell me what's wrong with him.

Frustrated

- Why doesn't he listen?
- I have to tell him 20 times to do a task.
- I wish someone would try to understand.

Triggers

You might not think it - but no young person misbehaves 24 hours a day! There are trigger points that influence what will happen. When you get to know and anticipate them it makes it easier to avoid them.

Possible triggers

- Time of day- getting ready for school, coming home from school, mealtimes, expected time to come home at night.
- Place – restaurant, doctor's surgery, when you are on the phone.
- People – siblings, Granny, neighbour, teacher?

Positive and negative attention

Imagine the young person playing quietly from start to finish. Then imagine him moaning or shouting. When should you react?

Normally we react when things go wrong and leave things be when all is quiet. Now, we are recommending that you reverse this. Give attention for everything positive and don't react to.

Negative attention seeking.

You will learn that there is a difference between *reacting* and *responding*.

A reaction is a knee jerk and not thought through – based on your feelings at that moment.

A response is when you consider what you will do, given your knowledge of ADHD and the outcome you want. When you start thinking like this you will notice it has positive spin-offs for other relationships – a cranky partner, a miserable colleague!

Slowly, gradually you are beginning to take control.

Descriptive praise

1. Notice a behaviour that you want to see more of
2. Make eye contact
3. Smile
4. Move near to young person – be on same level
5. **Tell** young person you are pleased and what he has *done* to please you
6. Praise young person **immediately** after the behaviour
7. Do this 20 times per day
8. Tell someone else about it – in the young person's earshot
9. Jot down positive behaviours you have noticed in the week to remind you
- 10 Use **encouragement** as well as praise
This will help the young person understand what is expected of him and do repeat performances. Remember it is the effort the young person puts in (not necessarily the outcome) that requires encouragement and praise.

Always be on the look out for things to praise

- Remember the tiny **But**. "Ah! Well done for getting out of bed when I asked you **but** you haven't cleaned your teeth." A real dampener!
- Praise effort not just accomplishment
- Be specific. Your idea of "good" or "tidy" or "clean" will not be the same as his!
- Praise them for just sitting on the couch if they normally spend time kicking their sister!
- Praise every sociable behaviour –sharing, helping, good manners, overcoming negative ADHD behaviours – waiting in turn, holding back when provoked.
- Praise what they are **not** doing. "You haven't sworn all day. I'm proud that you're learning good manners"
- If they normally flick food, run off, answer back, get in and out of bed, praise them each time they **don't** do it

- If the intention is good but the outcome is not, praise what they are trying to achieve. “That was very observant of you to point out that man dropping litter however not everyone is like you. When he swore at us it shows he’s the one with the problem. Next time it might be an idea to come and discuss with me your feelings and ideas rather than shouting them out.
- Greet your young person with a grin not a grimace
- Pass the time of day with them and remind them of their good qualities

Examples of praise

1. Sharing
2. Talking nicely
3. Complying with requests
4. Good eating behaviour at dinner
5. Going to bed after the first request
6. Playing quietly
7. Solving a problem
8. Turning down the television
9. Doing chores
10. Coming home from school on time
11. Getting up promptly in the morning
12. Making it through the night without wetting the bed
13. Making the bed
14. Picking up clothes
15. Putting toys away
16. Walking slowly
17. Doing homework
18. Getting dressed
19. Helping a friend
20. Answering the phone politely
21. Introducing yourself politely
22. Being a good team member
23. Sharing a feeling
24. Listening carefully

You are not overdoing it. Young people with ADHD get blame and criticism. You are just shifting the balance

Rewards

Also known as positive re-enforcers of good behaviour.

- Don't fall in to the trap of confusing **things** for rewards. The use of things is best restricted to reward special, difficult or sustained effort by the young person.
- What you consider to be a reward may not be the same as his idea. It is best to vary the rewards so that they don't get stale.
- He/she needs to *feel* rewarded. Your time is the best reward of all.
- Aim to get the young person to *enjoy* earning praise from you, rather than winding you up!
- Make ordinary, normal things into rewards – a take-away dinner, watching a favourite TV programme, helping around the house – “I'll let you wash the dishes if you bring the plates out” may work for a little while but be aware the rewards will also need to be age related.

Types of reward

- **Activities** – playing board games/cards with them, swimming, involvement with family activities
- **Privileges** – staying up later, choice of meals, outings
- **Interactive** – hugs, encouragement, praise, smiles
- **Things** – computer games, cd's dvd's items relating to their hobbies (these do not have to be expensive)

Special time - What is it?

A boss free zone. 10-15 minutes per day when you and your young person enjoy uninterrupted interaction. If the rest of the day has been stressful, at least one piece of time will be positive. It could be anything from a board game, Karaoke, dancing, cooking, painting, reading, talking etc.

Why?

- To enjoy yourselves
- To build affection and trust
- To get closer and learn to value each other more

How?

- Young person takes the lead
- “Show me a game we can do together”
- Join in, smile, do a running commentary – “I’m enjoying this, that looks good, you’re doing that so well
- Don’t nag, interrupt, give advice or be negative. Don’t make it your game, don’t instruct
- Explain it is for X minutes. Give a 5 minute warning towards the end and carry on normal play afterwards if you really want to.
- You may think that your child is too old for this but young people with ADHD function *emotionally* at a younger level. You may be surprised to find that your child genuinely enjoys you spending time together, but they may be resistant at first.

When?

- Have a regular slot, maybe after tea

What if young person is not interested or disruptive?

- If young person does not want to join in, be friendly and start up the activity on your own – he’s likely to want to join in!
- If he disrupts, say “*When there is less disruption, then we can continue.*”
- Play stops if behaviour is dangerous.

Rules, consequences, active ignoring and dealing with oppositional behaviour.

1. How should rules be expressed?

Rules should be stated in a positive way. This helps your young person learn what to do and not just what not to do.

2. How can you help your young person remember the rules?

- Write them down in a public area in your home / nursery etc.
- Point to the rules if they misbehave.
- Tie rules to rewards.
- State clearly the rule and get young person to repeat it back.
- Discuss specific, short term consequences for complying and breaking the rules.

- **Obey the rules yourself!**
3. Do you need rules for? ...
 - Getting up in the morning
 - Bedtime
 - TV
 - Fights and arguments
 - Swearing
 - Tidiness
 - When people visit
 - School work
 - Answering the phone

You cannot enforce a lot of rules all at once. To start with, choose two or three that are **easy to do or important for your family**. Encourage your young person to problem solve or **negotiate policies**.

4. For rule breaking, get young person's attention, say "You've broken the rule about X" and ask them how they could have done it differently.
5. Remind them of consequences. If they co-operate praise them

Consequences

Your aim should be for your young person to learn self control. This can only be achieved if he learns that actions have consequences. Here is an exercise to try:

Negative reaction

- Look at the problem. E.g. young person comes in late from school.
- Reaction – shout at young person.
- Then what? – Young person runs out.
- Who gets pulled in? Parents, neighbours, possibly the Police.
- What is the result? More shouting, grounding, anger on all sides.
- Final conclusion – no-one is in control, young person is resentful and parent is furious. Result, lose - lose

Positive response

- Look at problem – young person is late from school
- Response – use "I" statement to say "I am worried" and remind him of the rule that states, he/she must tell you where he is going.
- Then what? He/she cannot go out that night, but ensure he/she is occupied and not bored, also ensure he does not feel trapped. Encourage him to reflect on his/her actions (when calm) on the consequences his behaviour has.

- Who is involved? Parent and young person
- What is the result? Young person faces immediate consequence for his/her action
- Final conclusion – he/she has to rehearse what he/she will do differently the following day. If he/she complies he/she can go out.

(Adapted from A Roberts - 2001)

Poster or 'Vision Board'

Use this identity / self concept tool either as a poster or a vision board to help develop the self concept and promote pro social behaviours



Childs Name

D.O.B

Eye colour

Hair colour

What special talents do they have?

What I love about my Self?

What I am good at in school/college?

What makes me proud?

My 5 Goals

Active ignoring

Use this for annoying, irritating behaviours – giving cheek, moaning, arguing, pestering, silly noises etc. It cannot be used where health and safety are at stake. Your ADHD young person loves an argument and will have more energy than you to see it through to a conclusion. Imagine the argument as a fire. You can either fan the flames or extinguish the fire. In his book “123 magic” Tom Phelan writes about the **talk, persuade, argue, yell and hit** reactions that make a bad situation worse. It is worth reading his book to look at a useful alternative response to undesired behaviours.

Here's how to use active ignoring:

- Explain once in a short sentence that you will listen when he/she speaks nicely.
- Don't make eye contact or pull a face and certainly don't laugh or smirk.
- Say nothing. Don't argue and don't get involved in drawn out discussions.
- Keep a distance between you and young person
- Busy yourself with something else to help you ignore.
- Stop ignoring when the bad behaviour stops. Don't make a fuss. Be neutral.
- Do not refer to bad behaviour again
- Don't prolong this and don't start it unless you can see it through. If you react half way, young person will learn that if he does it long enough eventually you will cave in and this will reinforce his bad behaviour.
- Eventually the young person will learn that good behaviour wins praise and attention and bad behaviour gets him nowhere at all.

Dealing with oppositional behaviour.

If you have been following all the previous suggestions, your young person's oppositional behaviour will be decreasing. There will be times however when things get out of hand. Young people with ADHD live in a maelstrom of emotion. Anger is a normal emotion and it is not wrong to feel angry. It is what they do about it that matters.

When your young person is hot with anger they are in no state to listen. ADHD often invites over-control by adults. The young person becomes more rebellious and tries to reclaim control from the adult, resulting in friction.

Here's what to do:

- Avoid head on confrontations by using “cool” responses

- Avoid arguing. Allow them a few minutes to let off steam
- Never back the young person into a corner.
- Give them option of going into a pre appointed room to cool off. Call it “the cooler” or “time out” room. It is not a punishment room but a place where young person has the opportunity to regain control.
- Slow down impulsivity by creating space to suggest alternatives
- Aim to achieve a “win-win” result.
- Be part of the same team. “Look. We’ve got a problem with this. Let’s see how we can deal with it differently.”
- Young person may feel frightened and panicky afterwards. You could suggest that you give him/her a hug, this will help him/her feel safe.
- Teach your young person to breathe slowly, quietly and steadily. When angry, his breathing will be shallow and disjointed. Teach him relaxation.
- Discuss feelings and scenarios – e.g. by watching multi media /TV together. Talk about how characters manage their feelings and the consequences for themselves and others when they respond in different ways.
- When your young person with ADHD learns how to be “emotionally literate” he will have a head start on his peers in learning to interact with others throughout their lives
- You are a role model for your young person. If you show calm and safe ways of problem solving, your young person will learn from your success. If you as a parent cannot control outbursts, your young person will also pick this up.
- Teach your young person that for every problem there is a solution

Advice for Parents and Carers

Do:

- Tackle one thing at a time – forget the state of his/her room, his/her smelliness, his/her language
- Say what you mean and carry it out, Otherwise don't say it
- Use descriptive praise at every opportunity – Thank you for that, I am really proud of you, you have proved me wrong, good job son, I have always said you are a helpful/kind/polite/sharing boy. Well done! You were fantastic! Look at you! I am over the moon! It feels great because everything is changing for the better etc, etc.
- Reward his efforts – if he tells you where he is, even if he is not supposed to be out, say, "Thanks for telling me where you are. Remember, you will get your reward / treat when you get in on time."
- Even if he swears tell him/her you are made up he/she has come home!
- Get near him/her and smile, lightly touch him/her on the shoulder
- Keep sentences short – VERY SHORT
- Let him/her know you are in control even if you don't feel it
- Tell him/her "OK we have got a problem but we can solve it"
- Keep your voice even
- Remember the times when you get it RIGHT

DON'T:

- Tell him/her you can't cope
- Tell them they are useless
- Swear at him/her
- Shout
- Hit
- Change the rules
- Use empty threats
- Plead and beg
- Use emotional language when there is a drama going on
- Set them up to fail "Promise you will never do that again"

Points to consider for parents and carers

- **Remember** this is not about you and your feelings. However desperate you feel. **He/she needs to feel that you are in**

control – whatever he/she says. Boundaries are about love, not punishment.

- When he/she is angry, tell him calmly “When you are ready, I am here to listen to you”
- When his/her defences are down and he is crying out for help, give him your full and undivided attention. “OK let's talk.”
- Find a quiet place with no interruptions – say “OK son, I am here to listen” You could even write down the points he is making.
- Don't interrupt or ask him “**why?**” – because he/she will likely say “**because**” And justify it back to themselves
- Reflect back “You seem very sad / angry / let down about that” or “That must have been very frightening / hurtful / upsetting”
- After something has gone wrong and things have settled, say “OK, how can we have done things differently?”
- At this stage you are helping him clarify things. Keep your voice reassuring and controlled. Accept that what he feels is the truth for them.
- Don't say ‘yes but...’ you are just a tool to help him solve his problems, it's not how you feel about them
- Jot down three issues and look for solutions, however small
- Watch the soaps on TV and talk about the characters' feelings / reactions.

For any further information, Please contact:

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