



Practical tips for helping at home

ADHD can have a huge impact on family and home life. Things may have been stressful for some time, with tensions running high. Every family has its stresses, but ADHD can add to this because a child with ADHD is likely to be disorganised, messy, noisy and have occasional emotional outbursts.

Every child is different, and every situation is different, so there's no 'one size fits all' solution or advice. But the following ideas and approaches should help bring some calm and harmony back to home life.

1. **The secret of success is routine**

Getting children and young people to go to bed at the right time and to get up on time can be a battleground for many parents. But establishing a routine can help, and if you involve your child, they will feel part of the solution, not the problem. So, work out (and write down) the routine with your child so they can have input (and buy in to it). Keep it simple to start with, because once you have the basics working, you can add more.

2. **Lists are great**

Children with ADHD are often very inattentive, so written and verbal instructions are helpful. Pictures, particularly for younger children, are worth a thousand words, so think about using pictures, photographs or drawings from magazines to show what you want done and what is expected – a 'visual calendar'.

You can stick them on a chart in the form of a checklist in the order that they need to be completed. Put the checklist where your child can see it easily and maybe even tick the activity as it's finished.

It's also a good idea to give children time to process changes: for example, give countdown reminders (say, from 10 minutes down to take-off) before your child needs to leave the house, go to bed, stop playing on the computer/iPad/phone, etc.

3. **Visual timetables of new routines**

We all like visible signs of our progress and improvements. So why not draw up a chart with your child showing what you expect in the new routine, how long you expect it to take and how your child has done over a week or a month? Maybe even set up a spreadsheet on the home computer or keep notes on your smartphone. Make sure that your child is involved and buys in to the new routine.

In the Resources section of this website you will find a sample visual calendar template to help you.

4. **Focus on good behaviour, not bad**

Praise your child's strengths and reward them to encourage further good behaviour and increase their sense of self-worth. You will need to criticise from time to time but try to distinguish the behaviour from the child. Rather than saying "I've told you a million times not to leave your shoes there - are you deaf or stupid?" focus on the behaviour and its consequences: "It was annoying to trip over your shoes again and I spilled my coffee and could have broken the mug. Now I have to clear it up and we are going to be late leaving for the cinema."

Always try to look for things to praise and offer appropriate rewards after sustained positive behaviours. Negative consequences or criticism should be used far less than positive consequences with children with ADHD – it just makes them feel bad about themselves and encourages further bad behaviour. Praise the good things and try to ignore the bad unless it is dangerous to do so – and if you're going to have a battle pick your moment!

In the Resources section of this website you will find a template to help you establish new routines.

Continues overleaf...

In summary...

- Decide with your child which tasks definitely have to be done and make sure your child agrees and can achieve them
- Think about having a written or a visual checklist of tasks written with your child
- Consider charting your child's progress and use agreed rewards to encourage their positive behaviour
- Look for positives to praise