

Guidelines For Successfully Parenting AD/HD Children

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To effectively parent a child with ADHD you must be an effective manager. You are managing someone with poor self-regulation. Your interactions with your ADHD child must be consistent, predictable and most importantly, understanding of the chronic difficulties this child likely will experience. The following guidelines are essential:

1. **Education.** You must become an educated consumer. You must thoroughly understand this disorder, including developmental, scholastic, behavioral and emotional issues.
2. **Incompetence vs. Non-compliance.** You must develop an understanding of incompetence (non-purposeful problems that result from the child's inconsistent application of skills leading to performance and behavioral deficits) and non-compliance (purposeful problems which occur when children do not wish to do as they are asked or directed). ADHD is principally a disorder of incompetence. However, since at least 50% of children with ADHD also experience other disruptive, non-compliant problems. Parents must develop a system to differentiate between these two issues and have a set of interventions for both.
3. **Positive Directions.** (telling children what to do rather than what not to do or giving them a start rather than a stop direction). That provides the most effective type of commands for the ADHD population.
4. **Rewards.** Remember that children with ADHD need more frequent, predictable and consistent rewards. Both social rewards (praise) and tangible rewards (toys, treats, privileges) must be provided at a higher rate when the ADHD child is compliant or succeeds. Remember, it is likely that the ADHD child receives less positive reinforcement than siblings. Make an effort to keep the scales balanced.
5. **Timing.** Consequences (both rewards and punishment) must be provided quickly and consistently.
6. **Response Cost.** A modified response cost program (you can lose what you earn) must be utilized with this child at home. This system can provide the child with all the reinforcers starting the day and the child must work to keep them or can start the child with a blank slate, allowing the child to earn at least three to five times the amount of rewards for good behavior versus what is lost for negative behavior (earn five chips for doing something right, lose one chip for doing something wrong).
7. **Planning.** Understanding the forces that affect your ADHD child, as well as the child's limits should be used in a proactive way. Avoid placing the child in situations in which there is an increased likelihood the child's temperamental problems will result in difficulty.
8. **Take Care of Yourself.** Families with one or more children experiencing ADHD are likely to experience a greater stress, more marital disharmony, potentially more severe emotional problems in parents and often rise and fall based upon this child's behavior. It is important to understand the impact this child may have upon a family and deal with these problems in a positive, preventative way rather than a frustrated, angry and negative way after you have reached your tolerance.
9. **Take Care of Your Child.** Remember that your relationship with this child is likely to be strained. It is important to take extra time to balance the scales and maintain a positive relationship. Find an enjoyable activity and engage in this activity with your child as often as possible, at least a number of times per week.