

14 Tips for Parenting ADHD Teens

by Mary Fowler

Parenting Behaviors to Avoid

University of Massachusetts researchers have identified four strategies that parents generally rely on that actually fuel ADHD behavior problems.

All talk, no action. Parents yell, scream, argue, and threaten, but do not follow through with consequences.

Letting teens set the tone. If the ADHD teen is calm and respectful, so is the parent. If the teen complains or acts up, the parent follows suit.

Adopting a "whatever" attitude. If a parent is tired of getting into snarls, she disengages. Born from letting teens set the tone, this is a poor way to deal with important issues.

Using inconsistent discipline. Parents use harsh or extreme disciplinary measures erratically, mainly when they've had enough.

Effective Parenting Strategies

These simple, effective principles will help you control your emotions when parenting your ADHD teen.

Test different discipline approaches. Walk the line between being too strict and too lenient. Use problem-solving and negotiation to give your attention deficit teen input and responsibility. Try a strategy, evaluate, and redesign as needed.

Don't talk too much. Let emotions calm down before speaking with your teen. Always listen more than you speak. Be brief and be gone.

Communicate with your partner. Both parents should be on the same discipline page, and each should support the other. This stops the teen from manipulation and from pitting parents against each other.

Plan ahead. Know which issues matter most and are non-negotiable. Discuss them and your expectations -- and have preset consequences.

"I'll think about it." These four little words move the discussion from the "have to have an answer right away" mode.

Ignore minor issues. Homes become combat zones when parents complain to the teen about everything.

Don't beat a dead horse. If your ADHD teen has already paid for his misdeed or screw-up (lost his new digital camera, say) or has been disciplined by a teacher or the police, ask yourself, "Is another consequence needed, or am I ticked off and out for vengeance?"

Don't take arguments personally. Ignore your teen's "you don't trust me" protests. Monitoring is a parent's job. Expect flak -- and don't take it to heart.

Network. To know what's going on in your teen's world, step into it. Go to school events and talk with other parents.

Show your love. When your teen walks through the door, do you bark or smile? Let your eyes fill with light, and make your words loving. Put problems on the back burner.