



MANAGING ADHD AT HOME

(PARENTS/CARERS)

General Advice

The first line of treatment for ADHD is the use of behaviour strategies. These need to be carried out both at home and at school in a consistent way. All adults who have responsibility for the child should work together in using the strategies in order to support the child and minimise behaviour difficulties

Helpful Hints

- Have **consistent routines** in all home settings.
- Communicate** with the child's **school** to ensure **consistent classroom routines**.
- Keep rules **clear** and **simple**.
- Make sure the child **understands** the **rules**.
- Remember that children with ADHD **do not mean to be difficult**.
- Remember that **behaviour** is a form of **communication**.
- Attention seeking** behaviour may be a **cry for help**.
- Recognise and understand **triggers** for behaviour.
- Triggers **do not always happen immediately** before the behaviour.
- Be **positive**.
- Reward** positive behaviours with approval/sticker charts/token systems.
- Ignore minor irritating behaviours** (choose your battles wisely).
- Have **reasonable** consequences.
- Carry out consequences **consistently**.
- Communicate **positively** (calm not shouting).
- Listen and **give full attention** to the child.
- Supervise** to ensure the child's **safety**.
- Promote a **healthy** lifestyle.



Good
job!

Super!

Well
done



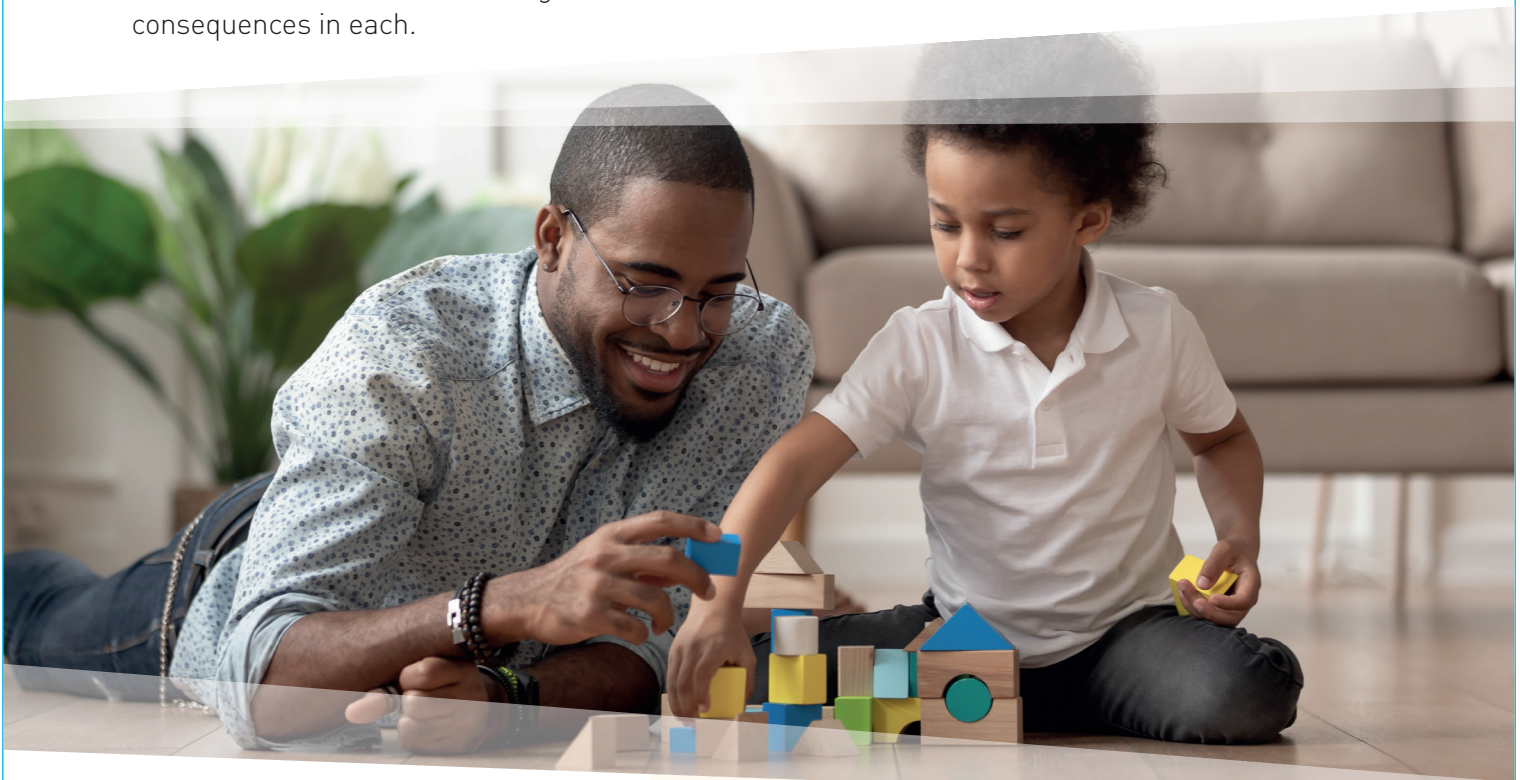
Further Advice:

Be reasonable

Set standards which are realistic and appropriate for child's level of ability.

Be consistent

Families function best when there are rules for behaviour. Think about the rules you want for your family, choosing ones which are important to you. Always stick to the rules no matter how inconvenient it may be. Children who have more than one home setting will benefit if there are similar rules and consequences in each.



Be clear

Children need to understand the words and ideas communicated to them. Encourage children to repeat back rules in their own words. This will help the child to learn what is expected of them. Avoid asking "do you understand?" because children may say that they do, even if they do not.

Be fair

Have wise rules and reasonable consequences for breaking them. Consequences are designed to teach rather than punish. Make sure the child understands what the consequences of breaking the rules are, because if a consequence makes sense it is more likely to be remembered. Being consistent helps the child to practice what is expected and learn through experience.



Be patient

Learning takes place over time. Parents will not always 'get it right' and nor will children. Children who have ADHD find it hard to follow rules, not because they are 'naughty', but because they are impulsive and find it hard to think before they act. Many of them will test the limits time and time again before they learn what is expected. This is why it is so important for parents/caregivers to follow through with consequences if necessary.

Be child-centred

The preservation of self-worth is very important when following through on limits for behaviour. Children with ADHD often get into trouble because their symptoms are behavioural. Rules are needed to guide, teach and keep the child safe rather than to cause unhappiness. Take time to reward with praise, gently encourage, and reflect back when things go wrong or are difficult. Do what you can to build a positive self-esteem.





Further tips

- 🚩 **Recognise** how ADHD affects behaviour. This is known as **definition** (see examples).
- 🚩 Avoid using **inappropriate descriptions** (labels) which **demean** and **pass judgement** (see examples).
- 🚩 **Communicate positively** to help the child understand they are **not 'bad'** (see examples).
- 🚩 Learn **what to do** (see examples).



EXAMPLES:

Inattention

Lucy (aged thirteen) has been asked to do her maths homework. After putting it off for a long time, she sits at the table but, after a few minutes, puts her pen down and gazes out of the window for five minutes with a dreamy expression on her face.

- 🚩 Lucy's behaviour is defined as: having trouble in **concentrating** and **paying attention** especially when **not interested** in the subject matter.
- 🚩 **Inappropriate** descriptions are: '**lazy**, '**forgetful**', '**irresponsible**'.
- 🚩 **Positive** communication would be: "I know it's hard for you to pay attention" or "I need to see your eyes when I'm talking to you".
- 🚩 What to do: **establish eye contact** (using gentle touch if necessary)", give **short instructions** to help refocus, **reduce distractions** (close curtains/blind), motivate by reward.



Hyperactivity

John (aged seven) is looking forward to Christmas. When he gets home on the last day of term, he becomes highly active and runs around at high speed pulling decorations off the tree, as if driven by a motor. When asked to stop his behaviour becomes worse not better.

- John's behaviour is defined as: **'over-active', 'on the go', 'wild', 'revved up'**.
- Inappropriate** descriptions are: **'naughty', 'bad'**.
- Positive** communication would be: "I think you are over-excited", or "John, you are beginning to lose control".
- What to do: spot the **warning signs** and **intervene** early, provide **quiet distraction** in another room, let him **run around outside** safely (under supervision).

Impulsivity

Richard (aged ten) is never hungry or tired at the same time of day. He has mood swings and loses his temper quickly over small things. He frequently butts into conversations and finds it hard to wait his turn.

- Richard's behaviour is defined as being: **'unpredictable', 'without a pattern', 'changeable'**.
- Inappropriate** descriptions are: **'uncooperative', 'moody', 'rude'**.
- Positive** communication would be: "I know you're not hungry now. I'll save your meal and you can eat it later", or "I understand that you don't feel sleepy now, but it is still time to be in your bedroom".
- What to do: **create routines** to suit the child and family, stick to the routines, keep life **simple**, encourage **deep breathing**, use a **ball** to develop **turn-taking** skills in conversation at home (the person who is speaking holds the ball and hands it over when it is the next person's turn).

