

5. **Learn to manage impulsive behavior.**

- Have coaching conversations with yourself.
- Change the subject. Think about something else.
- Change the situation. Leave the room and do something else.
- Distract yourself with background noise like television or radio.

6. **Learn to manage strong feelings.**

- Have supportive coaching conversations with yourself.
- Express your feelings to a supportive person.
- Get some exercise.
- Change the situation. Leave the room and do something else.

7. **Learn to manage disappointment.**

- Change the situation. Leave the room and do something else. You can revisit the problem later.
- Have supportive coaching conversations with yourself.
- Express your feelings to a supportive person.
- Arrange for someone else to handle the problem.

8. **Learn to keep your work life interesting with action and variety.**

- Have many projects going and work on them each day.
- Interact with lots of different people.
- Look for work that provides a sense of accomplishment.
- Choose a work situation where you feel appreciated.
- Look for ways to express your creativity.
- Be in control of yourself and your time.
- Choose work where you can exert yourself.
- Look for a situation where there is some structure.
- Work in a structure of deadlines and quotas.

The National Attention Deficit Disorder Association (add.org)

Hartmann, T. *Attention Deficit Disorder: A Different Perception*. Grass Valley, CA: Underwood, 1997.

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Hallowell, E., and Ratey, J. *Driven To Distraction*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1994.

Kelly, K., and Ramundo, P. *You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid, or Crazy?* Cincinnati, OH: Scribner, 1995.

**SEE THESE HANDOUTS ON RELATED TOPICS**

Attention-Seeking with Disruptive Behavior  
Helping Your Child Succeed in School  
How to Build Your Child's Self-Esteem  
How to Cope When Parenting Seems Overwhelming  
Positive Reinforcement (for Parents)  
When Kids Underachieve



 **WHERE CAN I GO FOR MORE INFORMATION?**

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (chadd.org)

# Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

 **WHAT IS ADHD?**

ADHD stands for Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. This disorder prevents many bright students from doing well in school because it is so difficult for them to focus and pay attention. They are distracted, impulsive, and have a hard time sitting still. If their disorder has not been diagnosed, they may be seen as troublemakers and underachievers. When ADHD is properly diagnosed and treated, most of these children can learn to focus and become good students.

As many as 5 percent of school-age children have ADHD. It begins before children are seven years old and may last into adulthood. The disorder runs in families; it is estimated that up to 25 percent of ADHD children's parent(s) have it.

Some children are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD), which is similar but lacks the hyperactivity component.

 **WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ADHD?**

ADHD symptoms include the following:

- Inattentive behavior
- Difficulty staying focused
- Disorganization
- Trouble concentrating on repetitive tasks



- Procrastinating
- Impulsive behavior
- Fidgeting; difficulty sitting still
- Experiencing strong emotions
- Emotional outbursts
- Difficulty concentrating while driving

## WHAT IS THE MEDICAL TREATMENT FOR ADHD?

Many people with ADHD find that their symptoms decrease or are eliminated when they take appropriate medication. The following types of medication are typically used for children:

*These medications enable the ADHD patient to stay focused on tasks, minimizing distraction and impulsive behavior.*

- **Stimulants.** This type of medication includes Ritalin, Adderall, Cylert, Dexedrine, and Desoxyn. These medications cause increased levels of dopamine and norepinephrine in the brain, and are generally effective in calming the restless patient. They enable the ADHD patient to stay focused on tasks, minimizing distraction and impulsive behavior. Many patients respond dramatically to stimulants in the beginning, but the effect of the medicine sometimes lessens over time, requiring an adjustment of the dose. Two disadvantages of stimulants are that most of them must be taken more than once a day to be effective, and the patient must obtain a prescription for refills in person, making them less convenient.
- **Antidepressants.** These medications are helpful for some patients with ADHD, but they are used less commonly than stimulants. Antidepressants are more convenient for the patient than stimulants because the doctor can call in the prescription and authorize refills by telephone. They are also mostly taken just once daily. On the negative side, some antidepressants take a few weeks to become effective.



## WHAT IS THE NONMEDICAL TREATMENT?

### Counseling and Coaching

Working with a licensed counselor or therapist can be very helpful for a child or adolescent with ADHD. It is important to find a therapist who understands ADD and has experience in successfully helping other ADHD clients.

*An effective counseling method for children and adolescents with ADHD is a problem-solving or coaching type of approach.*

An effective counseling method for children and adolescents with ADHD is a problem-solving or coaching type of approach. The therapist can coach the client to solve problems by improving organizational skills and focusing on life areas where ADHD issues often arise. The most common areas to focus on appear in the following list (skills that will help a child or adolescent with ADHD are listed within each area; some of the skills are more applicable to the needs of older children and adolescents):

1. **Learn skills for building and maintaining relationships.**
  - Make eye contact when you speak to another person.
  - Ask questions to demonstrate that you are listening.
  - Nod and smile to show that you are interested.
  - Share and explore your feelings with others.
  - Learn conflict management skills.
  - When you are upset, take a time-out. Take a deep breath and leave the situation for a moment if you need to.
2. **Learn to manage monotonous tasks.**
  - Set deadlines and monitor your progress regularly.
  - Assign the tasks to someone else.
  - Break the task into smaller subtasks.

## KEY SKILL AREAS

- Learn skills for building and maintaining relationships.
  - Learn to manage monotonous tasks.
  - Learn to manage information.
  - Learn organizational skills.
  - Learn to manage impulsive behavior.
  - Learn to manage strong feelings.
  - Learn to manage disappointment.
  - Learn to keep your work life interesting with action and variety.
3. **Learn to manage information.**
    - Find a partner to work with.
    - Create some variety by doing more than one task at a time.
    - Have a notebook for each key life area and write everything down.
    - Observe another person performing a task you want to learn.
    - Remember that you can learn in ways other than by reading written directions.
    - Ask questions until you understand.
    - Connect new information to something you already know.
    - Find a quiet place where you can study and stay focused.
    - Break the information into manageable chunks.
  4. **Learn organizational skills.**
    - Write notes to yourself. Keep lists, a calendar, a daily planner, and so forth.
    - Structure each day by setting goals and having a to-do list.
    - Set priorities. Know which items you want to accomplish first and which are less important.
    - Focus on one thing at a time.
    - Delegate tasks to others.
    - Have deadlines for things and check them off as you finish them.