

EXTRA HELP FOR ADD AND ADHD

It is especially important for people with attention deficits (ADD) and hyperactivity (ADHD) to have help from family and friends. Often, people with these disorders are the last to realize they are “out of sync” with others and need feedback. Until they build internal controls by learning routines and habits, they will need external structure from those who care about them. Mark any strategies below that you would like others to use, or that would help you help your loved one.

- ___ Find sources of support. Having an ADHD person in the family can be exhausting. Join groups that understand this condition and offer useful tips.
- ___ Read everything you can to help you understand ADD. The more you understand, the less responsible you will feel for causing or controlling problems, and the better you will be able to manage them.
- ___ Know your limits. Make a “Do Not Disturb” sign for moments when you must regain your strength. If you catch exhaustion soon enough, you will revive faster.
- ___ Make agreements ahead of time on behaviors that go overboard. Make sure that ADHD people understand their impact on others. Plan brief time-outs when energy gets overcharged. If necessary, put time-out contracts in writing.
- ___ Ask people with ADD what best helps them stay on task or calm down. Personal insight is often overlooked.
- ___ Expect to give reminders about chores and errands. This can be done in a patient and loving way once the problem is understood. Make lists and keep calendars of the family schedule and give advanced warnings about any changes.
- ___ Don’t make excuses or do things for people with ADD because it is easier. With proper incentives, reminders, monitoring, and breakdown of tasks, responsible habits can be learned.
- ___ During conversations or when giving directions, ask for feedback—“Did that make sense? What did I just say?” Use a timer. Do not let one person speak for too long. Let ADD people know when you are losing their point.
- ___ Ask questions that encourage self-awareness—“Do you know what you just did?”
- ___ Encourage understanding of ADD of everyone who has contact with people with the disorder: family, friends, and, most important, the people themselves. Make it clear that some of the greatest geniuses of our time have had ADD. The intelligent part of the mind can be very strong, but the part of the brain that blocks unneeded movement and distractions may be underenergized.

FRIENDLY CAUTIONS

Find people who appreciate and understand you and make an effort to stay in touch with them. Don’t stay too long where you’re not wanted. Avoid people who give advice that makes you feel uncomfortable or who refuse to believe in ADD. Find a coach who will help you get organized, stay on task, offer encouragement, signal you if you’re talking too much, or interrupt if you are in hyperfocus. Choose someone who is objective and positive for home, school, or work.

Keep others informed in subtle ways—“I get distracted easily so let me know if I’m getting off the topic,” “I can move around a lot, so tell me if it bothers you.” Learn to joke about yourself without putting yourself down—“I’m one of those clueless geniuses.” If others demean you, handle it lightly—“They’ll never let you in the ADD support group if you talk like that.” “I’m trying out for the Albert Einstein award this year.”