



Behavior Management Strategies for the ADD (ADHD) Child

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What the ADD (ADHD) Child needs is Structure and Predictability.

ESTABLISH RULES - Make the World Predictable.

Schedules, routines - preferably stated in writing - help children make sense of a world of time and expectations that are often arbitrary and inconsistent. Repetition of a procedure, adherence to a routine gives the child practice (with cues) at meeting expectations.

Once a routine or list of activities is developed, consistently enforce and reinforce adherence.

USE A TIMER - A timer teaches your child that a specified time is not debatable.

When specific intervals have been established, use a timer to "document" the length of the interval. If the schedule says dinner at 6:00 (and your child is reading, talking on the telephone, etc.) let him know that there are 5 minutes remaining and that the timer bell will signal dinner time. This is especially useful when preparing to leave the house. (Often preparation for appointments outside the house, or the lack of preparation, is the antecedent for some really ugly scenes.)

Rationale: A timer ensures the time increment is consistent (NOT "in a few minutes") and that everyone is aware of the start and end of the interval. It's objective. It decreases the interaction between parent and child signaling the end of the activity. It is the timer that ended play, not the parent. It is a way to disengage. Instead of a parent standing over them, nagging/reminding, the timer gives the signal and the child is now responsible for responding. It is not the parent's job to cajole the child into action, it is the child's responsibility to act or not to act. As a result, children are generally less reactive.

PRIORITIZE - Focus on one or two behaviors at a time.

Define the desired behavior(s), discuss it with your spouse, your child, teachers, babysitters. Be consistent. Stay with these few behaviors. Consistent feedback and a limited focus increase the likelihood the child will remember what your priorities are.

DEFINE THE RULES. All children need and want limits.

Determine what guidelines are most important and phrase rules in positive terms. ("feet on the floor" instead of "get your feet off the couch".) Ask your child's opinion as to what rules

are important (You'll probably find they respond with a list of "Don'ts".) Keep rules short and to the point - a few rules that apply in all situations. Adults have a habit of identifying the rules as soon as the child breaks them. Instead, call attention to the rules when the child is adhering to them.

REINFORCE - Reinforcing desired behaviors teaches your child an alternative.

You've tried punishment, without much success. Punishment interrupts a behavior, for the moment, but it doesn't teach an alternative. Define what you want the child to do (Prioritize) and determine what would make it worth his while to do it.

PRAISE APPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS - Emphasize what's going "right" instead of always focusing on what's going "wrong."

Focus on the many small, positive behaviors that your child exhibits. When you enter a room, ask yourself, "What is going right?" Make specific positive comments. For example, notice when she responds to a direction the first time you say it. Even if she's doing it because it's something she wants to do, it still merits special attention. This will help her notice the exact behavior(s) that you want her to demonstrate. If a task has been partially completed, comment positively on the completed part first.

When you notice things that a child does right, it breaks the cycle of negative redirection (nagging) and makes her feel better about herself and about you. Increase the amount of non-verbal praise. Give lots of warm smiles, pats and thumbs up. Your attention is something your child needs, use it at the right time. Provide extra praise for behaviors you want to increase.

Catch your child being good.
Remember, if you want to see a behavior happen again, pay attention to it.

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