

# There is One in Every Class

*Educator Tips for ADHD  
and Other Behaviors*

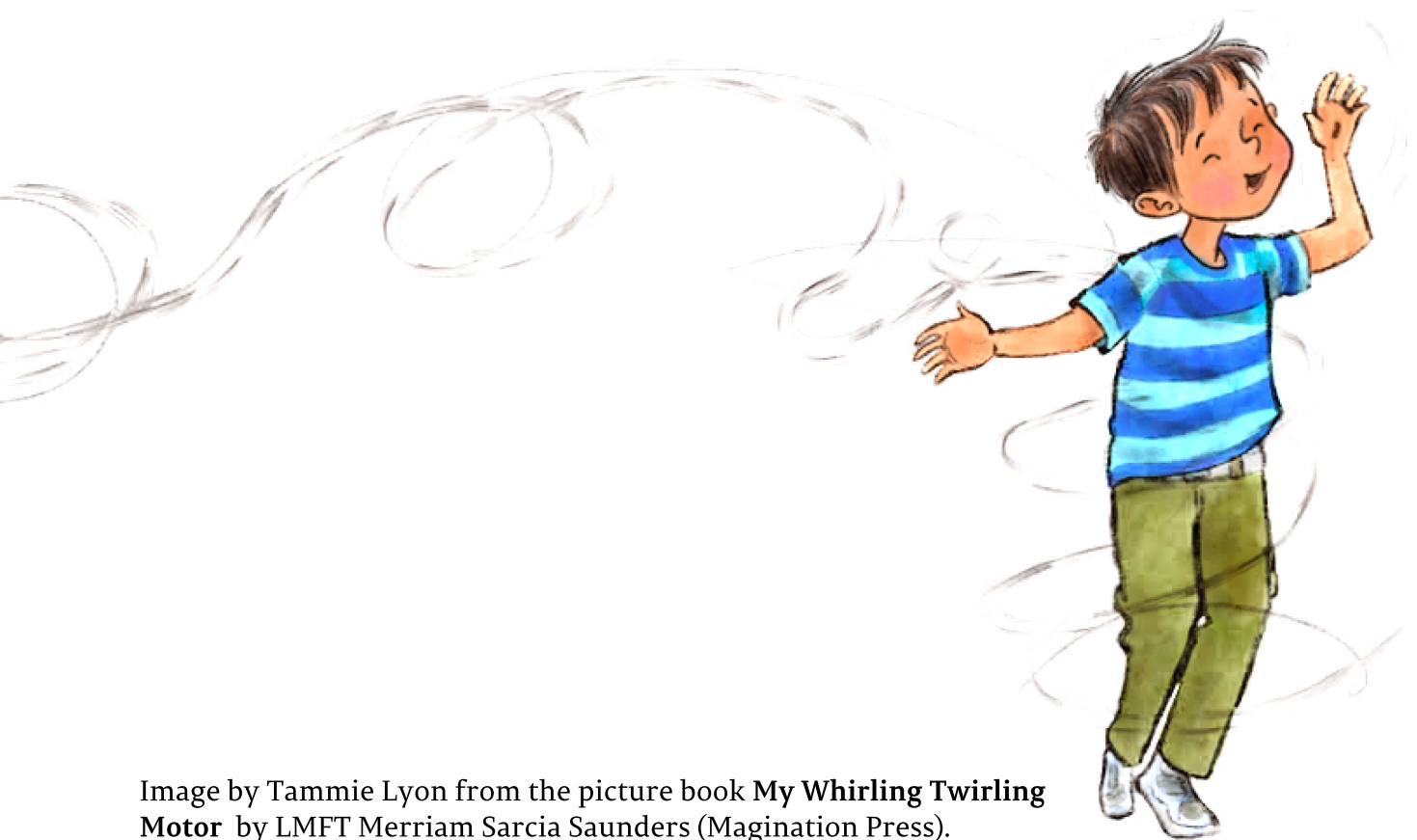


Image by Tammie Lyon from the picture book **My Whirling Twirling Motor** by LMFT Merriam Sarcia Saunders (Magination Press).

# There is One in Every Class: Educator Tips for ADHD and Other Behaviors

## INTRODUCTION

There will be one. Four to seven percent of children have ADHD, so in a class of twenty, there will be no escape. And as you know, these kids can often take ninety percent of your attention.

As you use this guide for tips to manage the squirmy one this year, please remember: his brain is making him do it. He no more wants to misbehave than you want him to. He WISHES, despite his non-compliance, his inattentiveness, his touching that thing you told him not to touch again—he wishes he could be good for you.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist Merriam Sarcia Saunders** is an ADHD-CCSP, a Certified Clinical Services Provider with intensive and specialized training in AD/HD, Autism and Coaching for AD/HD. She is a Certified Mediator and has worked for Marin County Office of Education as a Special Education Mediator. As the mother to three teens—two with ADHD, one with Auditory Processing and Anxiety, she can very much relate to the challenges of parenting and educating children with differences.

<https://www.adhdparentclinic.com>

**Children's book author Merriam Sarcia Saunders** is the creator of the picture books **My Whirling Twirling Motor**, and **My Wandering Dreaming Mind**, both illustrated by Tammie Lyon and published by Magination Press, a children's book publishing division of the American Psychological Association. In the first book, Charlie's whirling twirling motor (Hyperactive ADHD) makes him appear distracted, impulsive, forgetful, and disruptive to his classmates. In the second book, Sadie's daydreaming and forgetfulness (Inattentive ADHD) cause her to miss important cues and disappoint her parents, teachers and friends. Both mothers develop affirming strategies to highlight their accomplishments rather than their challenges. School Library Journal gave MWTM a starred review and called the book, "A must-have for young readers with any type of behavior difficulty and their caregivers."

<https://merriamsbooks.com/>



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## There is One in Every Class: Educator Tips for ADHD and Other Behaviors

### WHAT IS ADHD?

If you have a student who's not paying attention and seems impulsive, it can be easy to assume it is ADHD. There are a whole host of other things that could be causing similar behaviors—from depression, anxiety, and trauma to poor nutrition, sleep apnea or allergies to an auditory processing or eyesight issue. While it is important for parents to treat the correct diagnosis, your classroom approach to a student with executive functioning issues can be the same, regardless of the cause.

For simplicity sake, I will refer to your student as 'he'.

For our purposes, we will assume ADHD. In a child with ADHD, the pre-frontal cortex of his brain, responsible for executive functioning, attention and impulse control, is under-stimulated. It's not receiving enough of the neurotransmitter dopamine to work properly, so the child is at a disadvantage. And, that area is less developed by three years. So, if he's six, you can expect the impulse control of a three year old. Sorry. But, if you adjust your expectations, perhaps it might be a bit easier. For you both.

A child has executive functioning issues when he:

- has difficulty with the concept of time
- may blurt out
- can't keep hands to self
- forgets homework, instructions
- makes lots of unusual noises
- squirms in seat or wants to stand
- cannot finish work in time given
- seems to forget something he learned minutes prior
- desk, backpack are a mess
- penmanship is a struggle
- may struggle with days of week/months of year
- talks a lot, and out of turn
- frequently lies or exaggerates
- daydreams
- has difficulty with directions, especially 2 and 3 steps
- always tapping fingers, toes, always touching
- can seem to hyperfocus on things of great interest
- becomes quickly emotionally dysregulated, especially with transitions or dashed expectations

There are three types of ADHD:

- Inattentive
- Hyperactive
- Combined

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NOTE: More girls seem to have Inattentive ADHD. As they are the daydreamers and tend not to have the maladaptive behaviors of Hyperactive ADHD, they can often go unnoticed as struggling. If you have a quiet, well-behaved girl who seems to daydream, not listen, is forgetful and struggles with academics and friendships, it could be ADHD.

### **Dual Diagnoses**

ADHD frequently comes with a friend. Your student with ADHD might also have:

*Autism Spectrum Disorder* – rigid thinking, poor social insight, difficulty with transitions, sensory sensitivities, singular focus

*Anxiety Disorder* – excess worry, fear, stress. Inability to take action. Many physical symptoms (stomach/head aches)

*Depression* – lack of motivation, sleepy, disinterested

*Oppositional Defiant Disorder* – frequent arguing, disobedience, anger, triggered by fight response in brain

A co-occurring mental health issue can exacerbate symptoms of executive functioning, even if the child is medicated for ADHD. Your compassion and patience will go far, since unfortunately logic and explanation cannot talk the student out of their symptoms.

## **SETTING UP YOUR CLASSROOM TO HELP ADHD CHILDREN**

### **Elementary and High School Seating**

- Move your ADHD student's desk to where there are fewer distractions, close to the teacher to monitor and encourage, or near a well-focused child.
- Or - if he looks around a lot to see where noises are coming from, he may benefit from being seated at the rear of the classroom.
- It is usually better to use rows, not table groups, for seating arrangements. Often the groups are too distracting for the ADHD child. Alternatively, horseshoe shapes allow for appropriate discussion while permitting independent work.
- In the ideal setting, provide tables for specific group projects, and traditional rows for independent work. Of course, we are rarely in an ideal setting!!
- Use desk dividers and/or study carrels carefully. Make sure they are used as a "study area option" rather than as a punishment. Privacy boards can work well, but should never embarrass a child.
- Develop learning stations and provide clear signals and procedures for how students transition from one center to another.

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### Scheduling

Your attention deficit student will do better when he is able to anticipate times requiring increased concentration. Clearly post the day's schedule where your student can see it. Schedule the most demanding attentional tasks in the morning.

### Minimizing Distractions

- Elementary classrooms frequently have every inch of wall space covered in learning tools and student work. This can be very visually distracting. Eventually, the mind may even tune it out, so its presence is no longer valuable.
- Consider a minimalist approach, for at least part of the classroom, by keeping it free from visual and auditory distractions.
- As best as you can, provide comfortable lighting and room temperature.
- Use individual headphones to play white noise or soft music to block out other auditory distractions. Be sure the music is not too interesting so that it becomes a distraction (classical is good).

## PRESENTING YOUR LESSON

### Aiding Executive Functioning

- Stand near the student when giving directions or presenting the lesson.
- Make eye contact.
- Give directions one step at a time. When a series of instructions are given, retention beyond the first step is difficult.
- Combine verbal directions with illustrations or demonstrations of the desired task. When presenting a large amount of information on the board, use colored markers to emphasize key words.
- Use the student's name in your lesson presentation. Write personal notes to the student about key elements of the lesson.

*Dear Harry, Wasn't Rosa Parks so brave to give up her seat on the bus? I can't wait to learn what happens next!*

- After giving your student directions, have him paraphrase it. This will increase his comprehension and provide an opportunity to check for understanding.
  - Provide an outline with key concepts or vocabulary prior to lesson presentation.
  - Encourage him to develop mental images of the concepts being presented. Ask him about his images to be sure he is visualizing appropriately.
- "When I think of addition, I picture ducks diving under water..."*
- Allow your elementary school students to make frequent responses throughout the lesson by using choral responding, frequently calling on many individuals, having the class respond with hand signals.
  - Make problem solving physical: use marbles, a number-line or abacus in math and index cards for individual paragraphs when writing a longer piece.
  - Computers can be great for immediate feedback. They provide 1-on-1 work and are highly stimulating.

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- Although he may seem to be verbally expressive (he may talk a lot), he may still be poor in putting down his ideas in written form. Sometimes it is a long journey from the brain, down the sleeve, to the hand, and finally to the pencil and paper. The mouth is a lot closer to the brain!! He may need help with his writing skills.
- In assignments that require research reports and creative writing, have him dictate the words (to an aid, other student, or phone) rather than writing it down. He can then copy the words using a computer. This will yield greater output on tasks by removing the written component.
- Be aware that assignments that require extensive fine motor skills may be difficult.
- He may not learn from his mistakes, and may just keep guessing until he gets the right answer. He will need help to develop problem solving strategies.
- Provide instruction on how to check his work and practice it with him. Emphasize that part of the work routine is to "check your work". He may tend to complete work and turn it in without checking it over.

### **Cooperative Learning**

- Use peer tutoring whenever possible: older children may help him, and it may reinforce his own learning if he tutors younger children.
- Pair students to check work.
- Assign each child in a group a specific role or piece of information that must be shared with the group.
- Use game-like activities, such as "dictionary scavenger hunts," to teach use of reference materials.
- Try role-playing activities to act out key concepts, historical events, etc.

### **Improving Attention**

ADHD kids are easily bored, even by you!! *Me? No way!!*

- Try to increase the pace of lesson presentation.
- Make lessons brief or break longer presentations into discrete segments.
- Keep the time required for sustained attention balanced with more active learning.
- Lessons that emphasize "hands-on" activities are highly engaging.
- Use multi-sensory presentations, but be careful with audio-visual aids to be sure that distractions are kept to a minimum. For example, be sure interesting pictures and or sounds relate directly to the material to be learned.
- Change your voice level and vary your word-pacing.
- Actively involve the student during the lesson presentation. Have him be the instructional-aid.
  - Ask him to write key words or ideas on the board (if writing is not an issue for him).
  - Use his worksheet as an example (if done correctly!).

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- He may want to be "the first one done" on assignments. Collect the entire group's work at once to reduce time pressures.
- Stress accuracy instead of quantity of work. This is really what you want as a teacher anyway. Right?

### Using Worksheets in Elementary School

The child with ADHD may be easily overwhelmed and discouraged by a long worksheet that other children can easily accomplish. Fine motor skills may be an issue, so holding a pencil for long periods can be painful, causing him to resist.

- Reduce the quantity of work on a page. Instead of 30 problems on a page, give him only 10 or 15. Then he won't be overwhelmed, and successes will build up his self-esteem.
- Give frequent short quizzes and avoid long tests.
- Write clear, simple directions.
- Use large type.
- Use **dark black print**.
- Avoid handwritten worksheets or tests.
- Keep page format simple. Include no extraneous pictures or visual distractors that are unrelated to the problems to be solved.
- Provide only one or two activities per page.
- Use off-white or buff-colored paper rather than white if the room's lighting creates a glare on white paper.
- Underline key direction words or vocabulary or have the students underline these words as you read directions with them.
- If possible, use different colors on worksheets or tests for emphasis, particularly on those involving rote, potentially boring work.
- Have the students use colored pens or pencils.
- Have white space on each page.
- Consider this whacky idea: Reduce/eliminate homework for elementary children. Research indicates that it has little benefit. If you must, keep it to 10 minutes total, times the child's grade.
- Don't send unfinished schoolwork home for a child with ADHD – that parent already has enough to deal with.
- Consider use of learning software programs to rehearse skills.

## TIPS FOR ORGANIZING ADHD STUDENTS

### Organizing Space

Your student should have a regularly scheduled time for cleaning up his desk at least once a week. However, he may need some help from teachers, volunteers, or his parents. An organizing time at the end of each day can be helpful to gather the necessary materials for assignments and develop a plan of action. This will greatly aid the development of executive processes.



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- Use dividers and folders so he can easily find things.
- Show that you value organization by allowing 5 minutes each day for the children to organize their desks, folders, etc.
- Reinforce organization by having a "desk fairy" that gives a daily award for the most improvement in organized desks.
- Develop a clear system for keeping track of completed and uncompleted work such as having individual hanging files in which each child can place completed work and a special folder for uncompleted work.
- Develop a color coding method for your room in which each subject is associated with a certain color.
- Arrange to have an extra set of textbooks at home to minimize the problem of forgetting it at school.
- THE BLACK HOLE OF HOMEWORK exists in your student's desk or backpack. He may struggle for hours with homework, only to lose it in his desk or backpack and then not turn it in.
- Or-he probably did the homework, but just was not paying attention when you asked him to turn it in.
- ANOTHER STRATEGY TO DEAL WITH THE BLACK HOLE OF HOMEWORK (also known as the backpack): Get 2 folders of different color. One is for homework heading home, the other is for completed homework coming back to school. Ask him to show you the folder before leaving class, with the assignment in the folder. Once the completed homework is inserted in the return folder, have mom/dad sign it.

### Organizing Studying

- Allow him to move a pencil or his finger across the page while reading. If he's writing, allow him to use one or two fingers for spacing between words.
- During math, graph paper may be very helpful to organize his numbers and columns.
- He will function better when able to anticipate times requiring increased concentration. A visual representation of the day's schedule will provide another opportunity to internalize classroom routine.
- Break longer assignments into a series of smaller "sprints" for him to complete one after another. He will feel less overwhelmed and may complete the project in less time.
- Consider having him do only every second or third problem, instead of all.
- Require him to show mastery of concepts, instead of quantity of work. *Ah-ha! I got it!!*
- Allow use of computer for students with fine motor/penmanship issues
- Provide study guides or outlines of the content , or let the child build his own study guide with worksheets that have been positively corrected.
- Children with ADHD often respond well to organizing by color. Use colored binders and different colored highlighters.

### DEALING WITH IMPULSIVE BEHAVIORS

#### Physical Impulsivity

Children with ADHD tend to act without thinking, because the area of their brain associated with impulse control is under-stimulated. Research also suggests that elementary school-age students can often verbalize the rules for behavior but have difficulty internalizing and translating them into thoughtful behavior.

- Allow frequent breaks to move inside and outside the classroom.
- Consider daily outside walks, assigning errands, and classroom stretching exercises.
- Consider marking an area with tape around his desk in which he is allowed to move freely – this can stop the student who constantly comes to your desk.
- Consider a fidget object. An appropriate fidget is one that doesn't distract. If it is wielded as a toy, it's not a fidget. It should be something that is almost mindlessly used alongside a task.
- If he blurts out without being called on, provide a special paper for writing or drawing his "blurt" instead.
  - reward for short time segments he goes without blurting, increasing the length of time over days that he is successful.
  - allow him to process his "blurt paper" with you privately to address what was on his mind.
- Use laminated workslates or whiteboards for entire class, 1ft x 1ft. Each child writes answer and all hold up in the air. Call on someone only after ALL boards are up.

#### Mental Impulsivity

Quite often, students with ADHD regularly have difficulty with certain types of interaction

- Ask the student to think "out loud" when he is problem-solving. You will gain insights into his reasoning style and the process will slow him down before he responds impulsively.
- Or ask him your question, but tell him not to answer for 15 or 20 seconds, long enough to think about it first and not just respond impulsively.
- Role-play the problems, and possible solutions, ahead of time. Use his friends to help in the role-playing. Have him practice these responses during the school day and have him give you feedback on his success.
- Modeling and requiring the children to use a systematic method of talking through classroom conflicts and problems can be particularly valuable for the child with ADHD.

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### HELPING TO INCREASE SELF-CONTROL

- Studies have shown that a regular mindfulness practice in the form of YOGA or MEDITATION can improve EF symptoms. Consider starting the day and/or using scheduled breaks to do brief yoga poses or short guided meditations. (InsightTimer has a free app with short guided meditations, searchable by “children.” Kids Yoga can be found for free on YouTube.)
- Use a TIME TIMER to indicate periods of intense independent work and reinforce the class for appropriate behavior during this period. Start with brief periods (5-10 minutes) and gradually increase the period as the class demonstrates success. Since the ADHD brain struggles with the concept of time passing, a time timer which visually shows times passing acts as a learning tool.
- Set hourly, daily, weekly, or monthly goals depending on the reinforcement needs of the student. Provide frequent feedback on the student's progress toward these goals.
- Use visual and auditory cues as behavioral reminders. For example, have two large jars at the front of the room, with one filled with marbles or some other object. When the class is behaving appropriately, move some marbles to the other jar and let the students know that when the empty jar is filled they can earn a reward.
- Frequently move about the room, this can help snap him out of daydreams.
- When you catch him working on-task, reward him with a simple wink or smile. *"I like the way that you are working hard"* goes a long way with a student that often gets more negative than positive comments.

### Develop Situational Intelligence

Using the STOP acronym, involve the whole class in developing attentional and observational skills. Ask students to notice:

- **S: Space:** *What's happening in the room? Is it Expected? Unexpected?* The notion of expected v. unexpected occurrences can help children eventually translate that to their own behavior and other's sense of social expectations.
- **T: Time:** *What is the time and time of day? What is happening at this very moment?* Ask the class to note big things (we are discussing time) and little things (teacher is talking) *What is coming up next?* Use *If \_\_\_ then \_\_\_* to help students understand how to prepare. Helps them to develop prediction & anticipation. *"If lunch is next, then we need to finish reading."* *"If I want to get a gold star, then I have two more problems to finish"*
- **O: Observe:** *What do we see in this room?* Reference objects, their parts, where they are located, what is their purpose?
- **P: People:** Read the people around you. What does their face, body, mood, say about how they might feel? Teacher – vocalize what *you* see, only highlight positives when referencing students. Slowly allow students to share their observations, taking care they learn not to point out negatives.

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### IMPROVING SOCIAL SKILLS

Students with attention deficit disorder can experience many difficulties in the social area, especially with peer relationships.

- They tend to have trouble:
  - picking up social cues,
  - acting impulsively,
  - with self-awareness of their effect on others,
  - displaying delayed role-taking ability,
  - over-personalizing other's actions as being criticism,
  - not recognizing positive feedback
  - zoning out while friends are talking and asking too many questions to fill in gaps
- They tend to play better with younger or older children when their roles are clearly defined.
- They tend to repeat self-defeating social behavior patterns and not learn from experience.
- Conversationally, they may ramble and say embarrassing things to peers.

#### **Buddies**

Areas and time-periods with less structure and less supervision, such as the playground and class parties, can be a problem. Students with good social awareness and who like to be helpful can be paired with the child to help. This pairing can take the form of being a "study buddy", doing activities/projects, or playing on the playground.

Cross-age tutoring with older or younger students can also have social benefits. Most successful pairing is done with adequate preparation of the paired student, planning meetings with the pair to set expectations, and with parental permission.

Small "play groups" of two to four students can help him develop more effective social skills. These groups are most effective if socially competent peers are willingly included in the group. The group should be focused on activities that stress interaction and cooperation.

#### **Social Practice**

He will benefit most when the target social skills are identified and practiced prior to the activity and then processed after the activity. Role-play ahead of time.

- Many students with ADHD lack friends. It can be beneficial to strategize with him and his parent on developing a "friendship plan" for the home setting. Sometimes the goal of establishing one special friendship is sufficient. This could include:
  - identifying friend possibilities that might be available/accepting,
  - practice making arrangements using the phone,
  - planning an activity or sleep-over that is structured/predictable,

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- tips on how to maintain friendships over time.
- A subtle way for him to learn social skills is through the use of guided observation of his peers on the playground. Accompany him on to the playground and point out the way other students initiate activities, cooperate in a game, respond to rejection, deal with being alone, etc.
- Thirty minutes on the playground may be beyond his capability to maintain peer relationships successfully. If necessary, break-up the recess into ten minutes of activity, a ten minute check-in with the playground supervisor, counselor or teacher, then another ten minute activity period.
- Meet with your student prior to his lunchroom/playground period to review his plan for recess and with whom he will sit during lunch.
- Help him to ask peers in advance of the recess block to do a certain activity with him.
- Process the activity after recess and make suggestions for the following day.

## **WAYS TO INCREASE COMPLIANT BEHAVIORS IN YOUR CLASSROOM**

Start with compassion and model the behavior you wish to see. Provide a safe environment for the child. Make sure the child knows you are his friend and you are there to help him. Treat him with respect. Listen to the child. He wants to be heard too.

Be alert to how much movement he may need. Allow for some extra trips to the restroom, or to run some errands. You may want to allow him to run around in a designated spot in the play yard.

### **Rewarding Good Behavior**

By age 10, it is estimated that the child with ADHD has heard 20,000 negative comments about himself in school.

- PRAISE is the best medicine!!
- A simple nod, wink, smile, or touch on the shoulder can be very powerful reward. Praise and rewards increase DOPAMINE in the brain, which is the neurotransmitter he lacks. By praising and noticing, his brain will function better and allow him to continue with wanted behavior that is a struggle without that dopamine. Praise specific behaviors. For example, "I like how you wrote down all your assignments correctly," rather than, "Good boy!"
- Try to give three positives for every non-positive comment.
- Remember that behavior that is rewarded tends to re-occur. Purposefully reward on-task and compliant behaviors ASAP to increase the likelihood that they will happen again.
- Consider pairing verbal praise with a reward. This will facilitate "weaning" from a concrete reward structure to an internalized system where you can drop the physical reward.
- Ask him what he would like to earn. Your student is the best source of identifying the reward.

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- Provide a changing array of backup rewards or privileges so that he does not "burn out" on a particular system. For example, students can earn tickets that are good for extra time, a break, for a raffle, or some privilege.
- To improve out-of-the-classroom behavior, allow the class to earn a reward based on the compliments they receive on their behavior from other teachers, lunchroom staff, playground aides and principals.
- Different children are good at different things.
  - Help the child find his areas of strength so that he can build his self-esteem.
  - One-size fits all reward system may be hard to implement, and cause resentment. Taylor to individuals or groups of kids.
- An individualized plan that emphasizes stimulating reinforcers on a consistent basis has a good chance of success. Consequences and reinforcement should be as immediate as possible.
- If your student believes that you are on his side, and that you really want him to be successful, then your behavioral plans will probably succeed. If he believes you are "out to get him", then he will view your behavioral plans as punitive and manipulative. Same plan, different interpretation and results. You must be on the child's side. You must convince the child with attention deficit disorder that you want him to succeed.

### Dealing with Bad Behavior

Shame or consequence-based interventions, such as points or privileges being taken away DO NOT AND WILL NEVER WORK. It does not increase dopamine, so does not help the brain. It only serves to create self-esteem issues, anxiety and shame. Never belittle him in front of his peers. Both he and the other children know that he stands out, and if the teacher belittles the child, then the rest of the children will see that as permission from the teacher to belittle the child as well.

- Avoid giving the whole class negative consequences based on one child's behavior. This child, as well as the whole class, can benefit from implementation of social skills curriculum for the entire class.
- Instead of confronting your student continually on activities/behaviors that are inappropriate, point out the alternative choices that are available to the whole class. This will make the expectations clearer to him and avoid the negativity inherent in what he would perceive as criticism.
- Some students in elementary school respond to a prearranged cuing system with the teacher. In this system, the school teacher gives a visual signal (touching the ear) or verbal phrase ("*Remember, I'm looking for good listeners*") when a targeted inappropriate behavior occurs. The cue can remind your student to correct behavior without direct confrontation or loss of self-esteem.
- Encourage him to monitor his own behavior and compare and discuss results together, privately or in a parent meeting. This can prompt movement toward your student's internal frame of reference in evaluating his behavior.
- Behavior that is ignored tends to go away, unless it is hurtful to others. This must be immediately addressed.

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- Give him a break once in a while. Know the difference between big things and little things, and don't confront him on each little thing. It is hard for him to control himself all of the time.
- If you must discipline: make it swift, mild, private and brief. Consider restorative justice, which provides a learning opportunity: moral essay, a repair, clean up or apology letter.
- With a volatile student who may refuse negative consequences (such as going to a time-out/chill-out), set a kitchen timer for a brief period (1-2 mins) after refusal has occurred. Explain to him that he can use the 2 minutes to decide if he will comply or if more serious consequences are necessary.
- If the student decompensates, time it. Tell him you understand it was hard for him, and that he needed x minutes to settle. Tell him you bet next time, he'll need less time. Reward him if he takes less time for a tantrum the next time.

### **Managing Moods**

- It is exhausting drumming up the extra energy he needs to pay attention and control his impulses all day. He may need a place to unwind and reduce stress during the school day. Often times this can be simply providing a place for sitting alone, using the computer, taking a short walk, drawing, or modeling with clay. After ten to fifteen minutes, he will likely be able to access the energy needed to attend to the classroom.
- He will often have trouble with change, as you may see when asking him to move from one activity to another. Establish routines and notify the child well ahead of time if there are to be changes in the daily routine. This will help him manage transitions without anxiety. If a spontaneous change occurs and he reacts emotionally, just reflect that you understand it is difficult, that he is disappointed, and let him feel heard. It will help him move on.
- Report any significant changes in behavior or school performance to parents, school administrators, or the school psychologist. There may be medication issues, or other issues, that the parents or physicians need to be aware of.

### **Always Late**

You may need to look the other way for the child who is constantly late. Try to understand that getting that child out of the house every morning is an immense parenting struggle, and his parent might be equally challenged with time. Giving a late slip will not change the ability to arrive on time and will only shame the child for something he may not be able to control.

### **Avoiding Work, Talking Back, Lying, Stealing**

- These behaviors are typically an expression of an unmet need. It is possible that the task at hand is too great, causing avoidance and defiance. Adjust the workload if possible.
- For minor talking back, ignore and speak with the child privately.
- Lying and stealing may be part of difficulty with impulse inhibition. Give the child a chance to re-do or repair without shame. Lying can often be part of magical thinking – a chance to un-do something he did impulsively. Allow the child to earn or borrow what he took without permission.

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### Other Students

- If other students complain about special privileges the child with ADHD seems to get, it may be helpful to remind them that everyone works differently. While some might be great artists, others are good at math. Because we all have different strengths, we also all have different struggles. A teacher's role is to help each child with their individual struggles, and his needs may be a little different.
- Ask that child if there is help she needs, too. Maybe it is her way of asking for a similar intervention.

### Dealing with Parents

Things to know about the ADHD Parent:

- She's exhausted
- She feels like a failure
- She's embarrassed
- She's envious of her friends with neurotypical children
- She sometimes dislikes her own child
- She feels really guilty about that
- She may compensate for her child's lack of executive functioning by DOING HIS HOMEWORK
- Even if she doesn't do his homework, she probably sat next to him the entire time and guided the process.
- That process was PAINFUL.
- It probably caused tremendous strain on the mother/child relationship and resulted in some sort of meltdown.
- Every day.
- She really wants you as an ally.
- She is afraid you will judge her child or treat him unfairly.
- She's so hopeful this year will be different.
- She might be in denial.
- Her heart breaks for her child.
- She may act like a mamma bear protecting her cub.
- She wishes you could help him make friends.
- She wishes you could stop other students from being mean to him.
- She's trying very, very hard to get him out the door on time.
- She may be very authoritarian and think her child isn't working hard.
- There may be marital conflict over the diagnosis-an authoritarian parent v. a permissive one.
- She's trying hard to get nutritious food in him. She's mortified all he will eat is the nonsense she packed in his lunch. If he even eats that.
- You may find that this parent is defensive or on a war-path at the beginning of each year because (see list above!). Assure her that you want to work with her. Set up a meeting as soon as the year starts to get as much info about the child as possible and to work out a plan of attack so that homework expectations are consistent.

Let her know it's okay to email you if the child is overwhelmed, melting down, exhausted and can't get the night's work done. And that you will not mark him down.



## There is One in Every Class: Educator Tips for ADHD and Other Behaviors

If the child needs a behavior plan, communicate his school successes and any home rewards you'd like to see via email. Don't list his mis-steps in school – there is nothing the parent can do about it, and it will make her feel worse, or result in an unhelpful conversation that may make the child feel worse.

### High School

By high school, there is a good chance your student's ADHD has been identified and he may have an IEP or 504 plan in place. This does not mean the student understands his accommodations or knows how to access them. It can be extremely helpful to have a conversation about your mutual understanding of how accommodations are accessed. For example:

- If he has extra time for assignments, do you expect he requests it well in advance, the night before it's due via email, or is it okay to request on the day it is supposed to be turned in? Understand that the student is likely to realize he can't finish while he is trying to finish. The stress from the impending deadline will often cause a giant emotional meltdown that prevents finishing! And—even if you're sure he should be able to finish your easy assignment, the meltdown might have been over an assignment in a different class. Once a meltdown occurs, the student will be exhausted and incapable of any work. Your student will not likely abuse your flexible extended time policy, but instead, it can remove the stress component and provide greater chance he might finish on time.
- Accommodations often include extended time for tests in a quiet place. But your student may have waited until the night before to begin studying and feel unprepared. He may need to defer the test to a different day.
- One of the most challenging things for the high school learner is keeping track of assignments.
- Assignments should be given verbally, on the board, on your website
- Students will benefit from reduced reading – he may not be capable of reading the same number of pages as other students, which means he may not be able to track in-class discussion of the material. This will automatically make him fall behind. Collaborate with the student on ways to move through the material. Encourage the use of books-on-tape, graphic novels and (*gulp*) Spark Notes (*hey, reading is reading*).
- By the time your student is in high school, his self-esteem from years of struggling academically will likely be hard-hit. Celebrate the small wins – notice (privately of course) when he turns things in on-time or is ready for a test, and praise him for it. The praise will feel great (he doesn't get much of it) and fuel his motivation to do it again.
- Your student may have discovered numerous dysfunctional coping skills by high school – the greatest being class clown. He may have turned his blurting and hyperactivity into a comedy routine to survive, and be a frequent distraction to others. Align with him by giving him jobs in class and provide other ways to get positive attention. Get creative—maybe his job is to start the class off with a joke!
- Frequent breaks –This student may be the one constantly asking to go to the bathroom. Ask him to pass things out in class, erase the board, turn on/off the lights – give him frequent opportunities to get out of his seat.

## **There is One in Every Class: Educator Tips for ADHD and Other Behaviors**

- Consider introducing a quiet, meditative moment before class and encourage rhythmic breathing to clear and center all your students.
- If you are teaching a long block period, provide stretch or small yoga breaks to get blood flowing.
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- Note-taking buddy -You may be the best teacher in the world, but you will not be able to combat Inattentive ADHD. Your student's mind will wander and he will miss parts of your very interesting lecture. Assign a note-taking buddy, someone compassionate, who will not resent the job, to share his/her notes with your student.
- Tape your class-Consider recording your class and posting it on your website.

### **Collaborating with the High School Parent**

By high school, we expect students to begin advocating for themselves and to deal less with parents. This will be grey for the student with ADHD, who may need parental scaffolding for longer. However, some of that scaffolding is habit, and the parent may need to be weaned off advocating for the student, while the student learns to advocate for himself. The family may need you to encourage this behavior.

It may be more common to deal with freshman and sophomore parents. Set the expectation the student should be part of every meeting, cc'd on every email. If the parent emails, encourage the parent to have the student follow up with you in person the next day to communicate the same thing. Understand that the parent might be emailing because the student is having an emotional breakdown in that moment. Remember: your student with ADHD is three years behind in executive functioning ability. So, your sophomore has the skills of an eighth-grader.