



Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)

Having a child with Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be very challenging. This tip sheet aims to answer some questions you may have, and offer some encouragement for you and your child.

What does ADHD look like?

A child with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) may have trouble with thinking about the future, concentrating in school, and completing various day-to-day tasks. Children with ADHD may have trouble participating in activities they find boring, even if there is a reward offered when it is completed.

Is ADHD due to bad parenting?

No! Parents may have the tendency to blame themselves but ADHD is *not due to bad parenting*. ADHD is a brain or central nervous system disorder.

How many children have ADHD?

It is estimated that more than two million children have ADHD. As a result, one or even two children with ADHD will be in a classroom (Barkley, 1995). You and your child are not alone in this.

What can I do to help?

Contact your physician and discuss treatment options. Many treatment options have been shown to be effective in reducing symptoms of ADHD. There is hope!

Have fun with your child! It is an important part of treatment for both you and your child to recognize your child's strengths. Try not to let ADHD overshadow what your child is good at or what talents they possess. What strengths does your child have? What do you enjoy doing together? Try the Parent Trust "Enjoying Your Family" activity on our website. You can find it at: <http://www.parenttrust.org/for-families/parenting-advice/family-fun-ideas/know-your-family/>

Build a strengths based "portfolio" for your child. You know all the challenges your child faces with their thoughts and behaviors. It can be very helpful to sit down (on your own AND with your child) and come up with a list of what they do well! Focusing on what we are good at, and providing opportunities to use those strengths, can actually help us better deal with life challenges. Accepting your child for who they are can go a long way in strengthening your relationship with them.

Remember that ADHD is a diagnosis—not an identity. Your child is a special, unique person who doesn't need to be defined by what is "wrong" with them. ADHD is a reality, but your child can develop many healthy coping strategies.

Get support yourself. Parenting is a hard job; and you can't be there for your child as a support unless you are feeling supported.

Want more information?

The American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry has a lot of good information on ADHD including an inspirational video on ADHD.

<http://www.aacap.org/cs/ADHD.ResourceCenter>

References and Resources

Barkley, R.A. (1995). *Taking charge of ADHD: The complete authoritative guide for parents*. NY: Guilford Press.

Brown, R.T. et al. (2008). Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. In *Childhood mental health disorders*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.