

ADHD- EBOOKLET

Hi there,

Thank you for ordering this Native Remedies eBooklet! eBooklets are modified from consultations with real people and cover some of the most frequently dealt with problems that are submitted to the Native Remedies site. The information contained in this eBooklet has helped many clients and I am confident that it will help you too!

How to Manage your ADHD Child

Although there is some controversy regarding the diagnosis of ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) as a psychiatric disorder, most children who are 'diagnosed' with ADHD share similar features. What I am going to do in this eBooklet is to briefly discuss those features and their possible causes, and then explore various methods of helping your child (and yourself!) avoid pitfalls and maximize their potential.

General Characteristics of Children with ADHD

So first – what are the characteristics that many ADHD children share? Here I am going to speak more about my observations of ADHD, rather than refer to what the textbooks say. I'm sure every parent will be able to identify with this! Over the years, I have seen many children with ADHD-type problems in my practice and quite frankly, the parents and the children have often taught me more than the textbooks have! Obviously, not all children show exactly the same symptoms, and some may or may not apply to your child.

The textbooks distinguish between ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) and ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), so one of the most common features of children with ADHD is therefore hyperactivity. They don't stop! They may have difficulty sitting still in class (or anywhere!) and even struggle to lie still for long enough to fall asleep at night.

They also struggle to pay attention. This is usually due to a combination of two things: short attention span and a high level of distractibility. Most of us have the ability to focus on something we are doing and to effectively 'shut out' sounds and other stimuli that are not important to the task at hand. ADHD children will try to focus, but are unable to minimize other distractions like traffic outside, dogs barking, a bird cheeping, etc. They even become

distracted by their own thoughts! The only thing some children are able to focus on is TV or perhaps a computer game, due to the hypnotic nature of these activities.

Other symptoms can include difficulty in planning activities (always intending to do something but never managing to get round to it or to complete it), losing or misplacing possessions, forgetting things, impulsiveness, recklessness and invading the personal space of other children and even adults. Because they are often in trouble, ADHD children may also develop poor self-esteem and can also become angry and frustrated very easily. They often appear to be immature for their ages and may learn to lie and deceive to try and avoid trouble. Sometimes there are associated learning problems like poor handwriting, reading and calculation problems and difficulty distinguishing left from right. While most children will experience some of these symptoms at times, in the ADHD child they are frequent and severe.

Have your Child Diagnosed

The first thing to do if you suspect that your child has ADHD is to have him or her assessed. Many well-meaning doctors simply prescribe very strong drugs like Ritalin without having the child assessed by a psychologist to determine what the problem really is. Some causes of ADHD type symptoms are food intolerance, hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), allergies, poor muscle tone, perceptual difficulties, nutritional problems, candida, hyperthyroidism, Tourettes Disorder, brain dysfunction, family and emotional problems, poor discipline, depression or other conditions. Each of these problems requires different treatment, and some conditions may even be exacerbated by Ritalin. So assessment before prescription is the golden rule! If your child has already been assessed, diagnosed and is taking prescription medication, be aware that there ARE alternatives!

Now that we have covered some of the features and possible causes of ADHD-type symptoms, let's have a look at how to manage your child in ways that will be kind, firm and effective. If you are very consistent with some of these suggestions and interventions, you may even find that your child's 'symptoms' disappear or become much less severe (as I see in almost 90% of the children that I treat if parents are committed to the process!)

Examine your Child's Diet

The first thing to look at is your child's diet. While some professionals dismiss this as nonsense, I have seen some spectacular changes in children once certain foods have been removed from their diets. Not all children respond, but there are definitely some children who do – and quite dramatically! Things to avoid are soda pops (especially cola drinks), anything with caffeine (again cola drinks, coffee, Ceylon tea and chocolate), food with high sugar content as well as anything containing tartrazine (an artificial food coloring) or artificial preservatives. One must make allowances for the occasional treat, the freedom to enjoy a birthday party for example, but educate your child and be firm about what they may and may not eat, especially on school days.

Limit Distractions

Secondly, limit the hours spent watching television and playing computer games. Here the family will have to be disciplined as well. I advise no television on school nights and perhaps two hours in total during the weekend. No television before school. Television and computer games in excess affect the child's ability to concentrate at school and can also cause reading problems in sensitive children.

Maintain Routine and Consistency

Thirdly, maintain as much routine and consistency in your child's life as possible. ADHD children respond very well to routine and ritual as it helps them to use their limited concentration abilities on other things. This also helps them to feel safer. If your child is little, have a definite bedtime and stick to it. Have a routine at night (dinner, shower, story, lights out) and keep it the same every night. Try to avoid major or frequent changes if possible. Ensure that family relationships are stable. All children need this, but ADHD children find conflict and chaos in the family even more difficult to handle and often show this by becoming out of control and disobedient.

Be very consistent in your discipline. If you are a two-parent family, try and follow through on keeping all rules the same. Do not allow inconsistency. What applies today must apply tomorrow. Don't be tempted to allow your child to 'get away' with something because YOU are tired, for example!

While on the subject of discipline, try not to use physical punishment like hitting your child and try hard not to shout and yell. Rather work out a system of 'points' or rewards along with a system of 'consequences' and apply it very firmly. It is very easy to become frustrated with ADHD children and they are often punished and yelled at. Teachers and parents tend to say hurtful things like 'YOU NEVER listen!' or 'What's WRONG with you?!' and all of these things become part of the child's self concept, causing further behavioral and emotional problems.

Communicate with your Child

Younger children may have to be taught social skills more carefully than the average child. Most children learn about social cues and messages almost automatically. Children who are impulsive or have difficulty paying attention often misinterpret social cues. They may snatch toys, push in front of other children or interfere with their games. They may be labeled selfish or called bullies. Try to be patient when explaining to them the right thing to do, rather than yelling at them. Say, "Johnny was mad at you because he was busy with a puzzle and then you tried to do it for him. Try and find one to do by yourself," or, "People sometimes feel uncomfortable if we stand very close to them. We each have our own space that we like to keep. Pretend that you have a hula hoop around you and don't get closer than the hula hoop space!"

This may seem simple, but think about it carefully! GET YOUR CHILD'S ATTENTION BEFORE YOU GIVE AN INSTRUCTION! Do not communicate with your child from one room to another, for example. Some children may cope with this, but it is difficult for ADHD children to focus on what you are saying. Call your child. Stand in front of them. Look in their eyes and say their name – say "Jane, look at Mom. I want you to go and take a shower, OK?" Keep eye contact all the way through the instruction. Make sure your child replies to you and says "Yes, Mom" before she runs off. If she fails to carry out the instruction, call her back and get eye contact again. Kindly but firmly say "What did I just ask you to do?" Repeat your instruction if necessary.

Tell your child WHEN you want something done. Sometimes if you say "I want you to take a shower" or "Go and do your chores" your child will readily agree – and then not do anything! You must always try to give some warning to get your child used to the idea first. "In five minutes it will be time for your shower, OK?" (Remember to do this with eye contact) Then when the time comes, say "I want you to take your shower now."

Give ONE instruction at a time! Most parents are guilty of not doing this at the best of times! If your child struggles to pay attention and remember things it makes sense to say one thing at a time. So don't say "I want you go to your room, get undressed, put your clothes in the laundry, take a shower and then do your homework. Oh – and don't forget to feed the dog!" The chances are good that your child will follow the first instruction ("Go to your room") and then get lost in some other activity!

Help an older child learn to use check lists and other prompts to assist their memory. (e.g. "Before leaving school, I must have three things – school bag, lunch box and sweaters. When I get home, I must tick off my chores on the list I have pinned up in my room.") Devise a reward system based on the accomplishment of work for a whole week.

Speak often to your child's teachers. Tell them what works for you and hear what works for them. Communicate with teachers on a regular basis so that you know what is happening in your child's life outside the home and don't only find things out when they are too far advanced.

While on the subject of school, ADHD children tend to function better in smaller classes (less distraction) with teachers who are kind, consistent, patient, but very firm and who communicate clearly! It is usually better for them to sit in front of the class and in a place which has the least distractions.

Play Games that Promote Concentration, Listening Skills and Memory

A good one is the alphabet game. It can be played by two or more people. The first person thinks of an animal name that begins with 'A'. (e.g. Antelope). The next person repeats this and adds one with 'B', (e.g. bear). So she says 'Antelope, Bear'. The next person then thinks of an animal beginning with the letter 'C' (e.g. Cow) and says 'Antelope, Bear, Cow'. Continue until the whole alphabet is used up. It can be quite fun and is excellent for promoting listening skills, memory and concentration.

You can also play the Shopping List game. Again using the alphabet, each person thinks of an item of shopping beginning with the relevant letter and says "I went to the store and bought some....." Turn by turn the list is repeated and a new item added on each time. The last round would look something like this "I went to the store and bought some apples, butter, cabbage, donuts, eggs, fish, grapes, ham, ice pops, jelly, kleenex, lettuce, mayo, nectarines, onions, plums, quinces, rice, sausage, tomatoes, umbrellas, vitamins, water, xerox paper, yams and zucchini!

For visual memory and concentration, ask your children to cut out pictures of five or more items and paste them on a page. Each child gets a turn to show her picture to the group for 10 seconds and then turn it face down. Every child then writes down the items that they can remember. See who can remember all the items! The older the children, the more items should be used.

Games like 'Simon Says' and 'Statues' are familiar to all of us from our childhood and also help to promote listening skills.

There are many inexpensive card games that one can buy which help to develop memory and concentration skills. Pay a visit to your local toy shop and see what you can find.

Consider alternatives to strong prescription drugs and inform yourself about the side effects in the long and the short term (see the reading list below). Some children respond very well to homeopathic remedies for ADHD. I have formulated a homeopathic remedy called 'BrightSpark' which I have used for years in my practice and which has helped many children, especially if the above guidelines are also followed. For more information on 'BrightSpark' and other remedies, visit www.nativeremedies.com/focus_for_adhd.shtml.

Keep a Positive Attitude!

Above all, make a special effort to highlight positives in your child. It is something we all need! Make time to have fun and spend time with your child and keep the communication channels open. Tell them that you love and admire them and show them often by giving plenty of hugs!

Recommended Reading:

No More Ritalin: Treating ADHD Without Drugs by Dr Mary Ann Block. A Mother's Journey. A Physician's Approach.

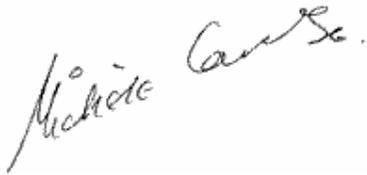
The A.D.D. Book: New Understandings, New Approaches to Parenting Your Child by William Sears & Lynda Thompson.

Learning to Slow Down and Pay Attention: A Book for Kids About ADD by Kathleen G Nadeau, Ellen B. Dixon, John Rose.

For a full review and more details on these and other recommended books, either click on the titles above or go to: www.feelgoodcounseling.com/parentreading.htm

For help with this issue or any other problem, visit a Licensed Counselor. Also, have a look at the many other useful eBooklets available on the Native Remedies website, as well as the helpful reading lists in the Online Library at www.feelgoodcounseling.com/reference_library.htm.

Good luck and be well!



Michele Carelse

Michele Carelse is a Registered Clinical Psychologist and Licensed Counselor with more than 12 years experience. She runs her own private practice, as well as an online counseling and information service.

Michele has also developed Native Remedies - a range of natural herbal and homeopathic remedies for adults and children, specifically aimed at promoting emotional, psychological and cognitive health.

For more information on Native Remedies health products, go to www.nativeremedies.com.
