ADD/ADHD Parenting Tips

Helping Children and Teens with Attention Deficit Disorder

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/add-adhd/attention-deficit-disorder-adhd-parenting-tips.htm>



Life with a child with ADD/ADHD can be frustrating and overwhelming, but as a parent there is a lot you can do to help control and reduce the symptoms. You can help your child overcome daily challenges, channel his or her energy into positive arenas, and bring greater calm to your family. The earlier and more consistently you address your child’s problems, the greater chance they have for success in life.

Helping your child with ADD/ADHD: What you need to know

Children with ADD/ADHD generally have deficits in *executive function*: the ability to think and plan ahead, organize, control impulses, and complete tasks. That means you need to take over as the executive, providing extra guidance while your child gradually acquires executive skills of his or her own.

Although the symptoms of ADD/ADHD can be nothing short of exasperating, it’s important to remember that the child with ADD/ADHD who is ignoring, annoying, or embarrassing you is not acting willfully. Kids with ADD/ADHD want to sit quietly; they want to make their rooms tidy and organized; they want to do everything their parent says to do—but they don’t know how to make these things happen.

Having ADD/ADHD can be just as frustrating as dealing with someone who has it. If you keep this in mind, it will be a lot easier to respond to you child in positive, supportive ways. With patience, compassion, and plenty of support, you can manage childhood ADHD while enjoying a stable, happy home.

ADD/ADHD and the family

Before you can successfully parent a child with ADD/ADHD, it’s essential to understand the impact of your child’s symptoms on the family as a whole. Children with ADD/ADHD exhibit a slew of behaviors that can disrupt family life:

* They often don’t “hear” parental instructions, so they don’t obey them.
* They’re disorganized and easily distracted, keeping other family members waiting.
* They start projects and forget to finish them—let alone clean up after them.
* Children with impulsivity issues often interrupt conversations and demand attention at inappropriate times.
* They might speak before they think, saying tactless or embarrassing things.
* It’s often difficult to get them to bed and to sleep.
* Hyperactive children may tear around the house or even do things that put them in physical danger.

**The impact of ADD/ADHD on siblings**

Because of these behaviors, siblings of children with ADD/ADHD face a number of challenges:

* Their needs often get less attention than those of the child with ADD/ADHD.
* They may be rebuked more sharply when they err, and their successes may be less celebrated or taken for granted.
* They may be enlisted as assistant parents—and blamed if the sibling with ADD/ADHD misbehaves under their supervision.
* As a result, siblings may find their love for a brother or sister with ADD/ADHD mixed with jealousy and resentment.

**The impact of ADD/ADHD on parents**

And, of course, having a child with ADD/ADHD affects parents in many ways:

* The demands of a child with ADD/ADHD can be physically exhausting.
* The need to monitor the child’s activities and actions can be psychologically exhausting.
* The child’s inability to “listen” is frustrating.
* The child’s behaviors, and your knowledge of their consequences, can make you anxious and stressed.
* If there’s a basic difference between your personality and that of your child with ADD/ADHD, you may find your child’s behaviors especially difficult to accept.
* Frustration can lead to anger—and guilt about being angry at your child.

In order to meet the challenges of raising a child with ADD/ADHD, you must to be able to master a combination of *compassion* and *consistency*. Living in a home that provides both love and structure is the best thing for a child or teenager who is learning to manage ADD/ADHD.

ADD/ADHD parenting tip 1: Stay positive and healthy yourself

As a parent, you set the stage for your child’s emotional and physical health.  You have control over many of the factors that can positively influence the symptoms of your child’s disorder.

**The power of a positive attitude**

Your best assets for helping your child meet the challenges of ADD/ADHD are your positive attitude and common sense. When you are calm and focused, you are more likely to be able to connect with your child, helping him or her to be calm and focused as well.

* **Keep things in perspective.** Remember that your child’s behavior is related to a disorder. Most of the time it is not intentional. Hold on to your sense of humor. What’s embarrassing today may be a funny family story ten years from now.
* **Don’t sweat the small stuff and be willing to make some compromises.** One chore left undone isn’t a big deal when your child has completed two others plus the day’s homework. If you are a perfectionist, you will not only be constantly dissatisfied but also create impossible expectations for your ADD/ADHD child.
* **Believe in your child.** Think about or make a written list of everything that is positive, valuable, and unique about your child. Trust that your child can learn, change, mature, and succeed. Make thinking about this trust a daily task as you brush your teeth or make your coffee.

**When you take care of yourself, you’re better able to take care of your child**

As your child’s role model and most important source of strength, it is vital that you live a healthy life. If you are overtired or have simply run out of patience, you risk losing sight of the structure and support you have so carefully set up for your child with ADD/ADHD.

* **Take care of yourself.** Eat right, exercise, and find ways to reduce stress, whether it means taking a nightly bath or practicing morning meditation. If you do get sick, acknowledge it and get help.
* **Seek support.** One of the most important things to remember in rearing a child with ADD/ADHD is that you don’t have to do it alone. Talk to your child’s doctors, therapists, and teachers. Join an organized support group for parents of children with ADHD. These groups offer a forum for giving and receiving advice, and provide a safe place to vent feelings and share experiences.
* **Take breaks.** Friends and family can be wonderful about offering to babysit, but you may feel guilty about leaving your child, or leaving the volunteer with a child with ADD/ADHD. Next time, accept their offer and discuss honestly how best to handle your child.

**How pets can help kids with ADHD (and their parents)**

If your home life feels chaotic, you may be reluctant to add a pet to the mix. But pets come with a host of benefits for you and your child. They can help teach your kid responsibility and get him or her outside. They can also inject some much-needed fun and help the whole family blow off steam. In fact, studies show that pets can protect you from depression, stress, and even medical problems.

Read: [**The Health Benefits of Pets**](http://www.helpguide.org/articles/emotional-health/the-health-benefits-of-pets.htm)

ADD/ADHD parenting tip 2: Establish structure and stick to it

Children with ADHD are more likely to succeed in completing tasks when the tasks occur in predictable patterns and in predictable places. Your job is to create and sustain structure in your home, so that your child knows what to expect and what they are expected to do.

Tips for helping your child with ADD/ADHD stay focused and organized

* **Follow a routine.** It is important to set a time and a place for everything to help the child with ADD/ADHD understand and meet expectations. Establish simple and predictable rituals for meals, homework, play, and bed. Have your child lay out clothes for the next morning before going to bed, and make sure whatever he or she needs to take to school is in a special place, ready to grab.
* **Use clocks and timers.** Consider placing clocks throughout the house, with a big one in your child’s bedroom. Allow enough time for what your child needs to do, such as homework or getting ready in the morning. Use a timer for homework or transitional times, such between finishing up play and getting ready for bed.
* **Simplify your child’s schedule.** It is good to avoid idle time, but a child with ADHD may become more distracted and “wound up” if there are many after-school activities. You may need to make adjustments to the child’s after-school commitments based on the individual child’s abilities and the demands of particular activities.
* **Create a quiet place.** Make sure your child has a quiet, private space of his or her own. A porch or a bedroom work well too, as long as it’s **not** the same place as the child goes for a time-out.
* **Do your best to be neat and organized.** Set up your home in an organized way. Make sure your child knows that everything has its place. Lead by example with neatness and organization as much as possible.

**Avoid problems by keeping kids with attention deficit disorder busy!**

For kids with ADD/ADHD, idle time may exacerbate their symptoms and create chaos in your home. It is important to keep a child with ADD/ADHD busy without piling on so many things that the child becomes overwhelmed.

Sign your child up for a sport, art class, or music. At home, organize simple activities that fill up your child’s time. These can be tasks like helping you cook, playing a board game with a sibling, or drawing a picture. Try not to over-rely on the television or computer/video games as time-fillers. Unfortunately, TV and video games are increasingly violent in nature and may only increase your child’s symptoms of ADD/ADHD.

ADD/ADHD parenting tip 3: Set clear expectations and rules

Children with ADHD need consistent rules that they can understand and follow. Make the rules of behavior for the family simple and clear. Write down the rules and hang them up in a place where your child can easily read them.

Children with ADD/ADHD respond particularly well to organized systems of rewards and consequences. It's important to explain what will happen when the rules are obeyed and when they are broken. Finally, stick to your system: follow through each and every time with a reward or a consequence.

**Don’t forget praise and positive reinforcement**

As you establish these consistent structures, keep in mind that children with ADHD often receive criticism. Be on the lookout for good behavior—and praise it. Praise is especially important for children who have ADD/ADHD because they typically get so little of it. These children receive correction, remediation, and complaints about their behavior—but little positive reinforcement.

A smile, positive comment, or other reward from you can improve the attention, concentration and impulse control of your child with ADD/ADHD. Do your best to focus on giving positive praise for appropriate behavior and task completion, while giving as few negative responses as possible to inappropriate behavior or poor task performance. Reward your child for small achievements that you might take for granted in another child.

| **Kids with ADD/ADHD: Using Rewards and Consequences** |
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| **Rewards** | **Consequences** |
| Reward your child with privileges, praise, or activities, rather than with food or toys. | Consequences should be spelled out in advance and occur immediately after your child has misbehaved. |
| Change rewards frequently. Kids with ADD/ADHD get bored if the reward is always the same. | Try time-outs and the removal of privileges as consequences for misbehavior. |
| Make a chart with points or stars awarded for good behavior, so your child has a visual reminder of his or her successes. | Remove your child from situations and environments that trigger inappropriate behavior. |
| Immediate rewards work better than the promise of a future reward, but small rewards leading to a big one can also work. | When your child misbehaves, ask what he or she could have done instead. Then have your child demonstrate it. |
| Always follow through with a reward. | Always follow through with a consequence. |

ADD/ADHD parenting tip 4: Encourage movement and sleep

**Physical activity can help your child with ADD/ADHD**



Children with ADD/ADHD often have energy to burn. Organized sports and other physical activities can help them get their energy out in healthy ways and focus their attention on specific movements and skills.

The benefits of physical activity are endless: it improves concentration, decreases depression and anxiety, and promotes brain growth. Most importantly for children with attention deficits, however, is the fact that exercise leads to better sleep, which in turn can also reduce the symptoms of ADD/ADHD.

Find a sport that your child will enjoy and that suits his or her strengths. For example, sports such as softball that involve a lot of “down time” are not the best fit for children with attention problems. Individual or team sports like basketball and hockey that require constant motion are better options.

Children with ADD/ADHD may also benefit from martial arts training, tae kwon do, or yoga, which enhance mental control as they work out the body.

**Better sleep can help your child with ADD/ADHD**

Insufficient sleep can make anyone less attentive, but it can be highly detrimental for children with ADD/ADHD. Kids with ADD/ADHD need at least as much sleep as their unaffected peers, but tend not to get what they need. Their attention problems can lead to overstimulation and trouble falling asleep. A consistent, early bedtime is the most helpful strategy to combat this problem, but it may not completely solve it.

Help your child get better rest by trying out one or more of the following strategies:

* **Decrease television time** and increase your child's activities and exercise levels during the day.
* **Eliminate caffeine** from your child’s diet.
* **Create a buffer time to lower down the activity level for an hour or so before bedtime.** Find quieter activities such as coloring, reading or playing quietly.
* **Spend ten minutes cuddling with your child.** This will build a sense of love and security as well as provide a time to calm down.
* **Use lavender or other aromas in your child's room.** The scent may help to calm your child.
* **Use relaxation tapes as background noise** for your child when falling asleep. There are many varieties available including nature sounds and calming music. Children with ADD/ADHD often find "white noise" to be calming. You can create white noise by putting a radio on static or running an electric fan.

**The benefits of “green time” in kids with attention deficit disorder**

Research shows that children with ADD/ADHD benefit from spending time in nature. Kids experience a greater reduction of symptoms of ADD/ADHD when they play in a park full of grass and trees than on a concrete playground. Take note of this promising and simple approach to managing ADD/ADHD. Even in cities, most families have access to parks and other natural settings. Join your children in this “green time”—you’ll also get a much-deserved breath of fresh air for yourself.

ADD/ADHD parenting tip 5: Help your child eat right

Diet is not a direct cause of attention deficit disorder, but food can and does affect your child's mental state, which in turn seems to affect behavior. Monitoring and modifying what, when, and how much your child eats can help decrease the symptoms of ADD/ADHD.

*All* children benefit from fresh foods, regular meal times, and staying away from junk food. These tenets are especially true for children with ADD/ADHD, whose impulsiveness and distractedness can lead to missed meals, disordered eating, and overeating.

**Eating small meals more often may help your child’s ADD/ADHD**

Children with ADD/ADHD are notorious for not eating regularly. Without parental guidance, these children might not eat for hours and then binge on whatever is around. The result of this pattern can be devastating to the child’s physical and emotional health.

Prevent unhealthy eating habits by scheduling regular nutritious meals or snacks for your child no more than three hours apart. Physically, a child with ADD/ADHD needs a regular intake of healthy food; mentally, meal times are a necessary break and a scheduled rhythm to the day.

* Get rid of the junk foods in your home.
* Put fatty and sugary foods off-limits when eating out.
* Turn off television shows riddled with junk-food ads.
* Give your child a daily vitamin-and-mineral supplement.



Children with ADD/ADHD often have difficulty with simple social interactions. They may struggle with reading social cues, talk too much, interrupt frequently, or come off as aggressive or “too intense.” Their relative emotional immaturity can make them stand out among children their own age, and make them targets for unfriendly teasing.

Don’t forget, though, that many kids with ADD/ADHD are exceptionally intelligent and creative and will eventually figure out for themselves how to get along with others and spot people who aren’t appropriate as friends. Moreover, personality traits that might exasperate parents and teachers may come across to peers as funny and charming.

**Helping a child with attention deficit disorder improve social skills**

It's hard for children with ADHD to learn social skills and social rules. You can help your child with ADD/ADHD become a better listener, learn to read people’s faces and body language, and interact more smoothly in groups.

* Speak gently but honestly with your child about his or her challenges and how to make changes.
* Role-play various social scenarios with your child. Trade roles often and try to make it fun.
* Be careful to select playmates for your child with similar language and physical skills.
* Invite only one or two friends at a time at first. Watch them closely while they play.
* Have a zero tolerance policy for hitting, pushing and yelling in your house or yard.
* Make time and space for your child to play, and reward good play behaviors often.

<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/985.html>

[Home](http://www.additudemag.com/index.html) > [Parenting ADHD Children](http://www.additudemag.com/channel/parenting-adhd-children/index.html) > [Parenting Skills](http://www.additudemag.com/topic/parenting-adhd-children/parenting-tips.html)



**12 Parenting Strategies That Work for Kids with ADHD**

**Raising a child who has ADHD isn't easy. Use these parenting strategies to smooth out the rough spots and avoid common mistakes.**

by [Deborah Carpenter](http://www.additudemag.com/authorID/2.html)

[Print](http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/print/985.html)

ADDitude Magazine

Most parents are good parents. But if your son or daughter has attention deficit disorder (ADHD), "good" may not be enough. To ensure that your child is happy and well-adjusted now and in the future — and to create a tranquil home environment — you've got to be a *great* parent.

Fortunately, it's easier than you might imagine to go from good to great. All it takes is a few small adjustments in your parenting strategies and the way you interact with your child. Here's what works, and why:

1. Accept the fact that your child — like all children — is imperfect.

It's not easy to accept that there's something not quite "normal" about your child. But a child who senses his parents' resentment — and their pessimism about his prospects — is unlikely to develop the self-esteem and can-do spirit he'll need in order to become a happy, well-adjusted adult.

"For a child to feel accepted and supported, he needs to feel that his parents have confidence in his abilities," says Ken Brown-Gratchev, Ph.D., a special education instructor at Kaiser Permanente in Portland, Oregon. "Once parents learn to look at the gifts of ADD — things like exceptional energy, [creativity](http://www.additudemag.com/adhdblogs/7/9503.html), and interpersonal skills — they can see the shine inside their child."

Carol Barnier, of New Fairfield, Connecticut, certainly sees the "shine" in her ADHD child. "My child is destined for something wonderful, something that would be impossible for those calmer, regular-energy level children," she says. "I can think of several occupations where boundless energy would be an incredible asset. I'm even jealous of his tireless enthusiasm for life and wonder what more I could accomplish if I were so blessed."

Do your best to love your child unconditionally. Treat him as if he were *already* the person you would like him to be. That will help him become that person.

2. Don't believe all the "bad news" about your child.

It's no fun to hear school employees describe your child as "slow" or unmotivated. But don't let negative remarks deter you from doing everything in your power to advocate for his educational needs. After all, kids with ADHD can [succeed](http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/788.html) if they get the help they need.

"While it's true that your child's mind works differently, he certainly has the ability to learn and succeed just like any other kid," says George DuPaul, Ph.D., professor of school psychology at Lehigh University in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. "Look at it this way—if your child was diabetic or had asthma, would you, for one single minute, hesitate to advocate for his benefit?" Just as a diabetic needs insulin and an asthmatic child needs help breathing, the ADHDer needs his learning environment regulated.

Sue Greco of Warwick, Rhode Island, is adamant about being her 11-year-old's strongest advocate. "My son has a great brain," she says. "He's a leader, with great ideas, but he's been labeled 'unable to succeed' at the local public school. Because I know he's capable of more, I've enrolled him in a Catholic school, hoping the higher academic expectations and greater structure will challenge him in a positive way."

3. Don't overestimate the importance of medication.

There's no doubt that, for many children with ADD, the right medication makes a huge difference in behavior. But by no means is medication the only thing that makes a difference, and talking about it as if it were will leave the child feeling that good behavior has little to do with her own efforts. When you catch your child doing something you've repeatedly asked her not to do, fight the urge to ask, "Did you forget to take your medication this morning?" And don't *ever* threaten to increase her dosage because she did something inappropriate.

"Statements like these give your child the impression that her behavior is controlled solely by external factors," says Dr. Brown-Gratchev. "It's a parent's responsibility to send the clear message that, while medication will improve the skills she already possesses, it won't magically fix all of her troubles."

As Sara Bykowski, a mother of two sons with ADHD living in Angola, Indiana, puts it, "I tell my kids that their medicine is like glasses. Glasses improve eyesight that the person already has. My kids know that their self-control, no matter how limited, is the main factor in their behavior management."

4. Make sure you know the difference between discipline and punishment.

How often have you complained to friends or family members (or even a therapist), "I've yelled, lectured, threatened, given time-outs, taken away toys, canceled outings, bribed, begged, and even spanked — and nothing works!" Do you see the problem with this approach? *Any* child exposed to such a variety of "sticks" would be confused. And one of the most effective approaches to discipline — the "carrot" of positive feedback — isn't even mentioned.

"Many parents use the terms 'discipline' and 'punishment' interchangeably," says Sal Severe, Ph.D., the author of [*How to Behave So Your Preschooler Will Too!*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0142004588/additudemagaz-20) "In fact, they're vastly different." Discipline, he says, is preferable because it *teaches* the child how to behave. It includes an explanation of the inappropriate behavior and redirection to acceptable behavior — along with positive reinforcement each time the child makes a good behavior choice. Punishment, on the other hand, uses fear and shame to *force* the child to behave.

Punishment certainly has its place. However, it should never involve physical or verbal abuse, and it should be used only as a last resort. For example, if your child continues to yank the cat's tail despite being repeatedly told not to — he should be punished.

Often, the best way to discipline an ADHD child is via a simple program of behavior modification: Define age-appropriate, attainable goals and then systematically reward each small achievement until the behavior becomes routine. By rewarding positive behavior (rather than punishing negative behavior), you help your child feel successful — and further increase his motivation to do the right thing.

5. Never punish a child for behavior that he is unable to control.

Imagine telling your 10-year-old to make his bed. Now imagine finding him, minutes later, lying on his unmade bed playing cards. What should you do? Give him a sharp word and put him in time-out?

According to Dr. Severe, that's probably not the best approach. In many cases, he says, a child with ADHD fails to comply not because he is defiant, but simply because he becomes distracted from the task at hand (in this case, making the bed). Distractibility is a common symptom of ADHD — something that he may be unable to control. And when you repeatedly punish a child for behavior he can't control, you set him up to fail. Eventually, his desire to please you evaporates. He thinks, "Why bother?" The parent-child relationship suffers as a result.

The best approach in situations like this might be simply to *remind* your child to do what you want him to do. Punishment makes sense if it's abundantly clear that your child is being defiant — for example, if he *refuses* to make the bed. But give him the benefit of the doubt.

6. Stop blaming other people for your child's difficulties.

Are you the kind of parent who finds fault with everyone *except* your child? Do you say things like "That driver has no control over the kids on the bus," or "If only the teacher were better at behavior management, my daughter wouldn't have so much trouble in school?"

Other people *can* contribute to your child's problems. But trying to pin the blame exclusively on others encourages your child to take the easy way out. Why should she take personal responsibility for her actions if she can blame someone else (or if she repeatedly hears you blame someone else)?

7. Be careful to separate the deed from the doer.

"Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me"? Don't believe it. Kids who repeatedly hear bad things about themselves eventually come to believe these things.

No matter how frustrating your child's behavior, never call him "lazy," "hyper," "spacey," or anything else that might be hurtful. And stop yourself if you start to say something like "You're such a slob — why can't you keep your room clean?" or "What's wrong with you? If I've told you once, I've told you a thousand times... ."

Carol Brady, Ph.D., a child psychologist in Houston, explains it this way: "Parents must make ADHD the enemy — not the child. When you personalize a child's ADHD-associated problems, her self-esteem plummets. But when you team up with your child to problem-solve various negative behaviors, you create a climate where your child feels loved and supported despite her shortcomings."

Next time your child's room is a disaster, tell her, "We have a problem, and I need your help to solve it." Tell her it's hard for you to tuck her in at night because you're afraid you might trip over the toys on her bedroom floor - or that leaving food in her room attracts bugs. Ask for her input. The more involved your child is in the solution, the better the outcome.

8. Don't be too quick to say "no."

All children need to be told "no" at certain times—to keep them from doing something dangerous or inappropriate. But many parents say "no" reflexively, without considering whether it might be OK to say "yes." And a child who hears "no" too many times is apt to rebel — especially if he is impulsive to begin with.

Why are parents so quick to say "no"? Often, it's out of fear ("No, you cannot walk to school by yourself."), worry ("No, you can't sleep over at Jake's house until I meet his parents."), a desire to control ("No, you can't have a snack before supper."), or a competing need ("Not tonight, kiddo, I'm too tired."). Smart parents know when to say "no," and when it makes more sense to take a deep breath and answer in the affirmative.

In many cases, a small change in the way you use the words "yes" and "no" with your child can mean the difference between a pleasant interaction and a nasty confrontation.

Let's say your child wants to go outside to play but you want him to sit down and do his homework. "Instead of automatically saying no," suggests Dr. DuPaul, "ask him to help you brainstorm a workable solution." That way, he feels that he has at least some measure of control over the situation and that you are trying to accommodate his wishes. He will feel less frustrated and be more cooperative.

9. Pay more attention to your child's positive behavior.

In their quest to quash behavior problems, many parents overlook all the positive ways in which their child behaves. The resulting negativity can cast a pall over the household that affects every aspect of life.

"Retrain yourself to look at the positives," says Dr. Severe. "Catch your child being good or doing something well, and praise her. When you point out and praise desirable behaviors, you teach her what you want — not what you don't want."

Bear in mind that some of the problem behaviors you ascribe to ADHD may be common to all children of that age. It's helpful to read up on the stages of childhood development - especially if your ADHD child happens to be your first-born.

Make happiness and laughter the cornerstones of family life. Spend fun time with your children. Go with them on bike rides. Play with them at the park. Visit museums together. Take them to the movies. Sure, life with ADHD can be challenging. But the rewards are great for parents who really connect with their children.

10. Learn to anticipate potentially explosive situations.

Imagine that your daughter has been invited to a party. That's good news, especially for a child who isn't very popular with her peers. Now imagine that the party is hosted by a girl with whom your daughter recently quarreled. Do you simply cross your fingers and hope for the best?

"Absolutely not," warns Dr. DuPaul. "Parents spend a lot of time in reactive mode instead of thinking ahead and planning ahead." A simple plan, he says, is all it takes to keep a positive experience from turning negative for all concerned.

"In our house, we have 'the plan,'" says Sara Bykowski. "Before we go into a store or to a friend's home, we talk about the behavior that is expected and possible pitfalls. We also have a routine for any problems that arise. I might say, 'Can I talk to you for a minute?' and then take him away from the group. We discuss what's happening and try to come up with a solution. Sometimes we still have to leave early, but that happens much less often now."

Whatever you do, be consistent. "All kids benefit from consistency," says Dr. DuPaul, "but ADHD kids, in particular, need consistency. It's not a luxury for them." A last-minute change in schedule or an interruption of a familiar routine can wreak havoc with a child who already feels like she spends most of her time off-balance and "catching up." Better to have set routines and plans and do all you can to stick to them.

"Set your home up in a way that encourages organization and responsibility, then run it like an army barracks," suggests ADHDer Shirley McCurdy, an organizational expert and the author of [*The Floor Is Not an Option*](http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/0971634203/additudemagaz-20). "Think easy and accessible - clear storage bins for clothes, zippered pouches for homework, and a large, color-coded family calendar."

Make sure you and your spouse are in agreement on matters of organization and discipline. "Parents who aren't on the same page in their general approach to motivation and discipline with their ADD child can cause problems," says Stephen Grcevich, M.D., a child psychiatrist in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. "Behavioral interventions for kids with ADHD are unlikely to be successful unless applied consistently."

When parents present a united front, their children know exactly what to expect. Ultimately, the more predictable and consistent your child's environment becomes, the happier the whole family will be.

11. Be a good role model.

Parents are a child's most influential role model, so think carefully about your behavior. If you're unable to control yourself, how can you expect your child to exercise self-control?

"Yelling sets a poor example of how your child should handle his emotions," says Dr. Brady. "Parents tend to think that, the louder they get, the bigger the impact on the child — but it doesn't work. The only thing the child hears is the anger. The situation quickly spirals out of control."

It's perfectly normal to feel angry at your child from time to time. It's *not* OK to continually shout at her. You wouldn't dream of screaming and swearing at friends or coworkers, so you know you can control your anger if you must.

Next time your child does something that causes your blood to boil, leave the room, take a few deep breaths, or do something else to calm yourself. When you demonstrate self-calming techniques in this way, you teach your child the importance of managing her emotions.

If you do lose your temper, do not hesitate to apologize to your child.

12. Seek help from others.

Some things in life simply cannot be done well alone, and raising an ADD child is one of them. "If you take the Clint Eastwood approach, you'll wind up exhausted mentally, emotionally, and physically," says Dr. Brown-Gratchev. "Build a NASA-worthy support system. That way, when your own 'system' overloads or fails, as it inevitably will from time to time, there's someone to put you back together again."

Ask your pediatrician for the name of a psychologist or other mental-health professional who specializes in ADHD. Or contact [**CHADD**](http://www.chadd.org/) - chances are, there's a chapter in your community.

Sue Kordish, of Tyngsboro, Massachusetts, knows the value of a reliable support system. "For years, my husband and I worried that no sitter would understand our son's special needs," she says. "We tried hiring a teenager, but it didn't work out, and the experience left us even more wary. With no family members living nearby, the situation was hard. We just didn't go out. Then we found a sitter who works with special-needs kids. We were finally able to relax and enjoy some seriously overdue couple time."