

# For Parents: ADHD – Now What??

So your child has just been diagnosed with ADHD. What does that mean?? Let's just cover a few of the basic facts and try to help you put things in perspective.

ADHD affects approximately 9.5% of the school age population (CDC). You are probably aware by now that the hallmark traits of ADHD are Distractibility or Inattentiveness, Impulsivity, and Hyperactivity. Each of these conditions can make life for a child and those around them challenging, to say the least. Along with this, as many as one-third to one-half of all children with ADHD have at least one other coexisting condition including learning disabilities, anxiety, oppositional defiant disorder, conduct disorder, and depression. You might see signs of some of these in your child. Most children with ADHD also have impairments with their Executive Functions. Executive Functions are the cognitive processing that is responsible for planning, organizing and emotional regulation. This explains why so many children have difficulty as they approach the middle school years where the academic, organizational and time management demands increase greatly.

ADHD is a name for when a child is intelligent but does poorly simply because he can't pay attention and keep working long enough to get the job done. When a child truly cannot focus for an extended period of time, he cannot develop or deepen his or her understanding or skills. Put simply, the intellectual capability is there, but the performance does not meet up to the potential. We need to look at ADHD not as a curse or character flaw, but as a problem that can be managed. We need to help them develop the tools and strategies to be successful. We also need to develop parenting strategies that will help us help them thrive.

Many parents may question why their child has ADHD. Let's start off with a basic statement of fact...Poor parenting cannot and does not cause ADHD. It is a child's neurobiological condition that exists in the brain and the central nervous system. It is their neurobiological makeup that causes an inability to regulate their own behavior. It's not your fault, not their fault, and there is no one to blame.

The statistics pointing to the potential hazards of having untreated ADHD are daunting, and they are real. That is why you need ADHD specific parenting techniques- some say you need a Black Belt in parenting! You will need to ignore the opinions and advice of well meaning people who have no experience with the disorder. All is not hopeless – not even close. It's just going to take a little longer to see results and a bit of real work. It will require a great commitment on everyone's part, but the efforts will be rewarded.

In addition to providing support in school, often through an IEP or 504 Plan, you may want to consider whether medication might be an asset for your child. In many cases, it can help the child attend and regulate their emotions enough that learning can occur more smoothly and deeply.

Coaching is another aid that has been recognized as tremendously helpful. Widely respected organizations and individuals including the National Institute of Mental Health, Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder (CHADD), Russell Barkley (ADHD: A Handbook for Diagnosis and Treatment), and Edward Hallowell (Driven to Distraction) have endorsed Coaching as a vital missing link for achieving success. A trained ADHD Coach will provide you with the support, strategies, and structure individuals need to make the real and sustainable changes they desire. Using powerful questioning, true and active listening, and creating a partnership of mutual accountability, a professional ADHD Coach will help individuals replace the negative, defeating patterns and behaviors that have kept them from achieving

their goals.

Most importantly, keep in mind ADHD looks different in each child. The more you, and your child, can learn about how ADHD affects them specifically, the more equipped you and your child will be to face the challenges ahead. With proper strategies and a pro-active approach, the road may still be difficult, but success and satisfaction will be well within your reach.

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