

ADHD Interventions for Parents

Create a Simple List of Rules

Focus on the most important behaviors by creating a short and straight-forward list of rules. Let the small stuff slide. If your child completes their homework and chores but forgets a dirty dish, focus on the accomplishments rather than the mistake. Perfection is an unrealistic expectation.

Use Praise

Praise your child for simple good behaviors that you would like them to continue. A simple “good job” or a smile can go a long way. If you’re finding it hard to find behavior to praise, compliment your child for extended periods where they do not get into trouble.

Create a Reward System

Rewards are more effective than punishments to motivate a child to change their behavior. Reward systems can be as simple as a token for each day of the week a specific good behavior is completed, which can then be exchanged for a reward. Talk with your child to figure out what reward they want, and how many tokens it will cost.

Homework Hour

Set aside a time each school day for your child to complete homework. If there are no assignments for that evening, they can still spend the time studying or reading. This routine reduces the chance that your child will forget or avoid their homework. Additionally, homework hour reduces the reinforcement that children usually receive for completing their homework as quickly as possible.

Establish Structure

Children with ADHD do their best when they know what to expect. Establish a routine for homework, meals, playing, bedtime, and preparing for school. For example, your child may learn to brush their teeth at a specified time, get a glass of water, and then lay out their clothes for the next day. You can use a reward system to begin establishing these routines.

Use Consequences Effectively

Consequences should be explained in advance, they should occur immediately after the unwanted behavior, and you must always follow through with your stated consequence. Time-out and the removal of privileges are effective. Be careful not to over punish—your child will not remember why they are grounded after 2 weeks, and you have no leverage if your child has nothing.