

GUIDE TO ADHD PSYCHOEDUCATION

What is ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a neurodevelopmental condition with symptoms existing along a continuum from mild to severe. It occurs across the life span.

How is ADHD treated?

Treatment should be **multimodal**. Incorporating different interventions, such as education, medication, and behavioural modifications/ motivational interviewing/ psychotherapy, produces a better outcome.

Treatment must be collaborative among physician, the patient and the family. It should be targeted to each individual's needs and goals, which may change over time.

Two important components of a multimodal approach:

PSYCHOEDUCATION

Psychoeducation should be the first intervention. Educating the family/patient about ADHD (symptoms, functional impairment, possible comorbidities and treatment) will ensure a more successful outcome.

PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTIONS

Psychosocial interventions can reduce impairments associated with ADHD symptoms and improve overall quality of life. Interventions can be **cognitive** or **behavioural**.

PSYCHOEDUCATION

Discover

- What does the individual/family know about ADHD?

Demystify

- Myths about ADHD
- Diagnosis and assessment processes

Instill Hope

- Evidence-based treatments and interventions **do** exist and **will** promote a positive outcome

Educate

- Importance of combining pharmacological and psychosocial interventions
- Risks and benefits

Empathize

- Acknowledge feelings of discouragement, grief and frustration

Encourage

- A strength-based approach
- Make more positive than negative comments

Recognize

- Appropriate behaviour, whether observed or reported
- Goals achieved

Be Sensitive

- Ethnic, cultural and gender issues may shape the perception and beliefs about ADHD and its treatment

Motivate

- Nurture strengths and talents
- Encourage skills

Promote

- Regular exercise
- Consistent sleep hygiene
- Healthy nutrition routine

Humour

Humour can defuse awkward, tense situations and avoid or reduce conflict

Give Resources

- Website
- Local community resources
- Book lists

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At Home

Instructional

- Make eye and/or gentle physical contact before giving one or two clear instructions. Have instructions repeated back, or confirm they were understood, before proceeding.

Behavioural

- Use a positive approach and calm tone of voice. Teach calming techniques to de-escalate conflict
- Use praise, catch them being good (playing nicely)
- Set clear attainable goals and limits (homework and bedtime routines, chores) and connect them to earning privileges, special outings etc.
- Use positive incentives and natural consequences: *When you... then you may...*
- Empathy statements can be useful, such as *I understand*
- Adults should model emotional self-regulation and a balanced lifestyle (good eating and sleep habits, exercise and hobbies)
- Choices should be limited to two or three questions

Environmental

- Structure and routine are essential. Parents/carers must be united, consistent, firm, fair and follow through
- Encourage prioritizing instead of procrastination
- Post visual reminders (rules, lists, sticky notes, calendars) in prominent locations
- Use timers/apps for reminders (homework, chores, limiting electronics, paying bills)
- Keep labelled, different coloured folders or containers in prominent locations for items (keys, electronics)
- Find the work area best suited to the individual (dining table, quiet area)
- Break down tasks
- Allow movement breaks
- Allow white noise (fan, background music) during homework or at bedtime

At School

Instructional

- Keep directions clear and precise
- Get student's attention before giving instructions
- Check understanding and provide clarification as needed
- Actively engage the student by providing work at the appropriate academic levels

Behavioural

- Provide immediate and frequent feedback, rewards and sanctions
- Use direct requests - *when...then...*
- Visual cues for transitions
- Allow for acceptable opportunities for movement and facilitate movement through lesson planning

Environmental

- Preferential seating
- Quiet place for calming down

Accommodations

- Chunk down and break down steps to initiate tasks
- Provide visual supports to instruction
- Reduce the amount of work required to show knowledge
- Allow extended time on tests and exams
- Request school support services
- Scaffold work to improve executive functioning skills (mindmaps etc.)

Other referrals may be needed:

- Psychologist
- Tutor, Family Therapist
- Parenting Programmes
- Social Skills Programme
- Organizational Skills Course
- Occupational Therapist
- Speech and Language
- ADHD Coach

At Work

Accommodations

- Identify accommodation needs

Counsel

- Suggest regular and frequent meetings with manager and support collaborative approach
- Set goals, learn to prioritize, review progress regularly
- Identify time management techniques that work for the client, e.g. using a planner, apps
- Declutter and create a work-friendly environment

Tools

- Organizational apps and/or productivity websites

Relationships

- Understand the impact ADHD can have on relationships with partners, family, friends, teachers, peers and co-workers
- Recognize and accept ADHD can cause unintended friction and frustration between parent and child as well as between partners (e.g. difficulties with self-regulation, time management difficulties)
- Learn how to listen and communicate effectively
- Organize frequent time to communicate (don't just talk) to discuss goals and plans (what works, what doesn't) within home, educational and work environments
- Schedule regular fun with family, partner, friends
- Practice relaxation and mindfulness techniques
- Stay calm, be positive, recognize/validate and celebrate strengths!

