

Ten Point Observation List on ADHD Behaviour

1. Eye contact: Avoidance of eye contact is ADHD behaviour – your child/young person may look as if they are ignoring you but some find making eye contact really difficult.

2. Fidgeting: Not standing or sitting still or fiddling with something whilst you are talking with them, i.e. toys, cushions etc. does not mean they are not taking in what you are saying to them; they will be. If unsure, ask them to repeat back what you have just said to ensure their understanding.

3. Wandering: Avoidance of work can be ADHD behavior. It is possible they don't know what to do or what you want from them, so rather than fail, they just won't do it. "If I don't do it then I can't get it wrong". Sometimes children/young people with ADHD prefer to be told off than to get work wrong and be perceived as 'stupid'. Getting started or completing a task may be due to the inability to direct their focus and not because they just can't be bothered or are lazy.

4. Inappropriate behaviour: ADHD children/young people have difficulty with understanding inappropriate behaviour i.e. burping in class and other uncontrollable noises: they see these things as being funny and socially acceptable. We, on the other hand, may see it as unacceptable. They also tend to make remarks that are inappropriate to the situation i.e. "why have you got a hole in your sock?" They say what they see; they have difficulty reading social cues.

5. Consequences: Children/young people with ADHD make no connection between behaviour and consequences. If you point out a behaviour issue to your child they may acknowledge it and be very sorry for what they have done, but five minutes later they may do the very same thing again. Lack of executive functioning (analysing, problem solving and understanding sequence of actions and consequences) results in impulsive and unconsidered behaviours.

6. Daydreaming: is an ADHD characteristic - not paying attention or being distracted by other events that are going on outside/inside. It is not that your child/young person is 'not' paying attention: it is more likely s/he is paying too much attention to everything and not focusing on just one thing.

7. Negative self-esteem: Personal experience of not being able to understand instructions clearly, forget instructions or information, impulsive words and actions all have social consequences. Children/young people with ADHD can easily become frustrated at their own inability to understand and communicate with others. This results in feelings of isolation and exclusion from recognition, praise, reward and affection from adults and peers. This in turn creates anxiety which exacerbates ADHD characteristics. Inevitably this causes behavioural problems for children/young people with ADHD who act out – unable to articulate what they feel. "I can't do that" before they even try (fear of getting it wrong.)

8. Being the class clown: trying to make people laugh and cause disruption (possibility due to work avoidance) is common in the ADHD child/young person: “I can’t do it so the class won’t be able to do it either” or “I will gain the esteem and friendship of my peers by making them laugh” (as they may not be able to gain the esteem and friendship from the teacher so will behave in a way that meets their instinctive need for relationship and a sense of belonging).

9. Waiting turns: Children/young people with ADHD find waiting turns, either in queues or in group work difficult; they act and speak without thinking (‘in the head out the mouth’) This is the impulsivity of ADHD. They may be clumsy or accident prone; they may break things and accidentally hurt others.

10. Rule breaking: Children/young people with ADHD will test out rules and structure: they need to know that they are there. They are not being defiant! They need boundaries and they need to know how far they can go. These children struggle in understanding boundaries as they have poor social observations.