



What do parents tell each other about parenting a child with ADHD?

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The ADHD Foundation has been delivering a course for parents and carers of children and young people with ADHD entitled “Parent’s Skill Building Course” for many years. As part of the course, there is an opportunity for parents to share with each other what ideas and strategies have worked for them. In this article, I will share with you the five most popular ideas that parents have shared during these courses:

1) Don’t waste time with self-blame – learn all you can about ADHD:

ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions in children, affecting up to 5% of the population. It is caused by certain differences in brain function and is often inherited. It is not caused by poor parenting. Learn as much as you can about the different ways that it could affect your child, both in school and in their life in general. Act soon, research has shown that early diagnosis and treatment can have very positive outcomes for children with ADHD. Understand that there are myths and misconceptions about ADHD i.e. that it’s about naughty children. If you’re reading information online, be aware of the source of the information and stick to reputable medical or charity websites. Learn what the myths and misconceptions are and then ignore them in terms of how you relate to your child and challenge them when others try to put those misguided “labels” on your child.

2) Develop an ADHD Friendly parenting style:

Provide clear, consistent expectations and boundaries. Children with ADHD succeed more if they know exactly what is expected of them. Consistency is crucial and always follow through with consequences.

Be proactive. Constantly reward appropriate behaviours and adopt a choices and consequences system in which you respond to poor behaviour with alternatives, for example, loss of privileges or time outs. Discuss your parenting style with all other key adults in your child's life so that everyone is interacting with your child with the same consistent boundaries and expectations.



3) Build your child's self-esteem:

There are going to be challenges ahead for your child, such as in relationships with peers and in learning environments. Help your child to be resilient by building their competencies in interests and hobbies they enjoy. Identify their strengths, facilitate their changing interests and notice their successes, however small. Build upon these strengths and provide your child with opportunities to be successful in the pursuit of their interests. Do not withhold these activities as a consequence for poor behaviour. Share your child's achievements with your wider circle. Create a daily "special time" with your child. Let your child take the lead in deciding how this time will be used to ensure that every day, despite the challenges that they have experienced, there is time that is about enjoyment, fun and your relationship. Finally, tell your child that you love them unconditionally, often.

4) Work with the school:

Develop a relationship with your child's teacher(s) and SENDCO. Talk to them about how ADHD impacts upon your child. It doesn't matter how many children they have taught with ADHD over the years, every child is unique and let them know as much as you can about your child and challenge any misconceptions the education professionals might have. Let them know what works for you at home and explore together how you might develop a consistent approach. Be clear about how much information you would like from school and negotiate how often and how information might be communicated. Encourage the teachers to let you know when your child has done well. Your ability to further affirm your child's school achievements at home will help to build your child's self-confidence. Whatever happens, always try to retain a working relationship with the school.

5) Teach your child about ADHD:

Let them know about their ADHD as soon as you feel that it is appropriate. Encourage the school to explore and discuss neurodiversity in academic environments. Challenge the idea that your child might feel from a young age that there is "something wrong" with them. Teach them respect for diversity and encourage all of the adults in their lives to do the same. When you feel it is appropriate, share with your child examples of public figures who have ADHD and talk to them about the unique strengths and qualities of ADHD. Counter the feeling that your child may develop that they are "stupid" and "can't do many things" and "will never be successful." Rehearse social skills with them and support your child to eventually feel empowered to be able to tell others with confidence that they have ADHD.