

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

3-5 Years Old

While many of us have difficulty focusing or feel fidgety at times, kids with ADHD have significant challenges listening, following instructions, completing tasks, organizing, sitting still, talking when appropriate, or waiting their turn. Kids with ADHD exhibit these challenges in multiple areas of their life. Symptoms may negatively affect social interactions, schoolwork, home life, or other daily activities.

It may feel overwhelming if this sounds like your child - What now? There is **Good News**- your child and family can **OVERCOME** these challenges and achieve great things! Following are supports and resources, further information, skills, and school accommodation suggestions to overcome ADHD.

Support and Resources:

Understood; For Learning and Attention Issues:

<https://www.understood.org/>

Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) of Utah:

<http://www.chaddofutah.com/index.html>

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Utah:

Phone: (801) 323-9900 Website: <http://www.namiut.org>

Diagnosis Information:

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH):

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/index.shtml>

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP):

http://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/FFF-Guide-Table-of-Contents.aspx

Skills to Overcome ADHD:

- ❖ **Take care of physical health:** Feed child healthy foods regularly, ensure active play daily, eliminate caffeine, and target 10-11 hours of sleep a night.
- ❖ **Use physical techniques:**
 - **Deep Breathing:** Guide your child to take deep breaths in through their nose so the stomach rises, pausing for a few seconds, before slowly breathing out through their mouth. Deep breathing develops focus, self-control, and decreases irritation.
 - **Squeeze a ball or silly putty:** Having an object to squeeze can help control concentration.
 - **Imagine a relaxing place:** Guide your child to think of a favorite calming place, noticing what they see, smell, taste, touch, and hear to relax.
- ❖ **Recognize strengths and potential:** Make a list of strengths, talents, and positive qualities. Well-managed ADHD skills can include an innate ability to multitask, a significant focus on interesting material, and attention to details.
- ❖ **Use Encouragement:** Cheer your child on; “You can do this,” “It won’t last forever,” “You’ve got this”.
- ❖ **Put clear boundaries on screen time/media/information:** More physically active time will make it easier to sit and focus. Content of media and screen time can also cause additional stress and agitation symptoms.

- ❖ **Create predictable routines and prepare for changes to such:** Plan a functional schedule including start and stop times, with time for breaks, and try to post it visually for child. Prepare for any changes to this schedule by discussing ahead of time if possible. Transitions can be made smoother using cues such as a timer, waving, hand signal, light flicking on and off, etc. Avoid over-scheduling.
- ❖ **Develop organizational skills:** Prepare the night before, give prompts, teach awareness of time using clocks and timers to complete tasks in given amount of time, and help organize the child's personal space.
- ❖ **Focus on 2 problem behaviors at a time and break down goals:** Pick just a couple behaviors to work on, plan and practice your strategy, and implement it. Focus on what works at least some of the time. When these behaviors improve, expand effort to other areas of need.
 - Be sure to make constructive comments based on behavior, not who your child is as a person.
- ❖ **Break down chores, schoolwork, directions, and tasks into steps:** These are not as overwhelming when taken one step at a time. Most of us were not worrying about graduating college on our first day of kindergarten!
 - Give directions ONE step at a time.
 - Make sure your child makes eye contact when giving directions and ask them to return after task completion.
- ❖ **Avoid negative guilt, shame, and blame:** Guilt; feeling overly bad about action(s), shame; feeling one is a "bad" person because of action(s), and blame can be overwhelming. Focus on resolving the problem(s) that led to a tough situation instead. We may not have caused our difficulties and we have to solve them anyway.
- ❖ **Use Behavior Management Plans:** Establish routines and rules for behavior, along with appropriate rewards or constructive consequences. Many families use sticker charts, tokens, or a bean jar. The child gets a sticker/token/bean for completing expectations or positive behavior, and loses them when not. Rewards are given for reaching a designated number. These systems are best set up with daily, weekly, and long term rewards in mind.
- ❖ **Use Time out / Reset:** Choose a neutral place for time out when identifying problem behavior, don't lecture, set timer 1 minute for every year of their age, do not give attention while on time out, and discuss why time out was used calmly afterwards. It takes time to calm down and "reset" to a composed emotional state after disturbances such as anger, fear, guilt, or frustration. A time out or "reset" can support this process for kids and parents. Parents may need to leave themselves to remove negative interaction.
- ❖ **Give at least 8 to 1 ratio of positive to constructive feedback.**
- ❖ **Use visual, multisensory and "hands on" presentations/directions:** Use pictures, demonstrations, and activities.
- ❖ **Allow child to respond frequently, use role playing, and vary your voice level/tone/pace:** Have child repeat back what was said.
- ❖ **Provide social skills coaching to manage anger and act in socially acceptable ways:** Give ideas and role model how to build friendships, deal with teasing, stay on topic, not blurt out, and say things in an appropriate way. Host playdates and joke around.
- ❖ **Be consistent!**

School Preparation and Possible Accommodations (focusing on 3-4 is often most appropriate):

- ❖ **Arrange best classroom seating location, typically close to teacher and away from windows, doors, and other distractions.**
- ❖ **Provide foot rests, seat cushions, or resistance bands on chair legs to satisfy need to move and improve focus.**
- ❖ **Use daily and weekly progress notes.**
- ❖ **Guide organization:** Check to ensure child has needed materials, assist with organizing the child's backpack or notebook, use picture schedules.
- ❖ **Provide worksheets with fewer problems/questions.**
- ❖ **Allow various forms of work completion including answer out loud, fill in blank, or using a computer.**
- ❖ **Provide alternative activities when assignments are completed / plan work in segments.**
- ❖ **Make instructions simple and clear, asking child if they understand.**
- ❖ **Use pictures, demonstrations, and visual cues.**
- ❖ **Maintain a predictable schedule.**
- ❖ **Maintain a predictable behavior plan, similar to format used at home.** Speak to child about problems one on one and ignore behavior if not disruptive.
- ❖ **Encourage use of Behavioral Aides in class.**
- ❖ **Assess need for Speech Therapy.**
- ❖ **Assess need for Occupational Therapy.**
- ❖ **Assess need for an Individual Education Plan.**

Contact Utah Parent Center (801)272-1051 and your Wasatch Pediatrics Medical Home Care Coordinator to discuss school accommodations further.