

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

6-12 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 9-10 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.
 - **Progressive Muscle Relaxation:** Encourage your child to gently tense the muscle groups in their body, one at a time. Then, relax that muscle group and completely relax for at least 15 seconds before moving onto the next muscle. Many people will add deep breathing and imagery while relaxing the muscle group. Move through their face, neck, shoulders and back, arms, hands, chest and stomach, legs, and feet one at a time. Be careful not to cause pain when tensing muscles.
- ❖ **Recognize strengths:** Make a list of strengths, talents, and positive qualities. Think of times your child has overcome difficulties with strengths and focus on what he/she does well. 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, 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, especially after school.
- ❖ **Develop organizational skills:** Guide your child to begin using a daily planner and “to do” list, create a “homework station” clear of electronics/distractions and with necessary materials, create a folder system for homework, prepare the night before, give prompts, teach time management using clocks and timers to complete tasks in given amount of time, and develop prioritization abilities.
- ❖ **Focus on 2-4 problem behaviors at a time and break down goals:** Pick 2-4 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 duties 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.
- ❖ **Make supportive relationships with school staff, mentors, and others:** School supports can range from undocumented collaboration with teachers and staff, 504 accommodations, to Individual Education Plans (IEP). There are also many support groups, including parent to parent trainings on behavioral management, available in the community and via the internet. (See Support and Resources).
- ❖ **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.
- ❖ **Encourage child to develop “mindfulness” to pay better attention, resist distractions, be less impulsive, remember what he/she is doing in the moment, and regulate emotions:**
 - What to do:
 - **Observe:** Notice what is going on around you including your thoughts and feelings. Use your 5 senses of what you see, smell, taste, touch, and hear.
 - **Describe:** Use words to describe what you are observing.
 - **Participate:** Be in the moment, without being impulsive. Example: If child is in class, notice the things around them and then let distractions go like clouds passing in the sky.
 - How to do it:
 - **Do not judge:** Notice without adding a value judgement of “good, bad, right, wrong, dumb, etc.”
 - **Stay focused:** Do one thing at a time, let go of distractions, concentrate.
 - **Do what works:** If a skill or idea helps without causing other problems, keep doing it.
- ❖ **Use Behavior Management Plans:** Establish routines and rules for behavior, along with appropriate rewards or constructive consequences. Many families use tokens, a “check book”, or a bean jar. The child gets a token/“deposit”/bean for completing expectations or positive behavior, and loses them when not.

Rewards/positive consequences are given for reaching a designated number. These systems are best set up with daily, weekly, and longer term goals and 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.
- ❖ **Establish family expectations together:**
 - Meet as a family to determine reasonable child responsibilities and expectations. Allow child(ren) to give input regarding positive and constructive consequences. Remember you are the parent and have ultimate say, and including the child's input will do wonders.
 - Make sure expectations are realistic and not causing more damage than good.
- ❖ **Love and Logic Parenting 5 steps (Guiding Children to Solve Their Own Problems):**
 - 1) Empathetic Statement: "What a tough situation", "That stinks", "Are you kidding me???", "Geez you have your hands full".
 - Provides heartfelt validation and promotes bonding.
 - 2) Ask: "What do you think you will do about it"?
 - Gives ownership of the problem to the real owner.
 - Instills confidence they can work through it and they have the capability to solve their own problems.
 - 3) Ask: "Would you like some ideas of how others have handled this"?
 - Puts parent in the position of a consultant in a non-threatening way.
 - 4) Provide options of how others have handled the situation **only if the child is open to ideas** and ask "how that will work?"
 - Work to give a more undesirable option first.
 - Options can be thought of prior to conversation and focused in one area of need to avoid being overwhelmed with multiple situations.
 - 5) Say, "Good Luck!"
 - Re-enforces confidence in the child and whose problem it is.
- ❖ **Provide Natural Consequences by letting kids know what they CAN do or what you will do:**
 - Ex: "I'll drive you to soccer when your room is clean".
 - Ex: "I'll know you are responsible enough to drive the car when you finish tasks without argument".
 - Make sure you FOLLOW THROUGH and consequences are within your control!
- ❖ **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, host playdates, joke around, deal with teasing, stay on topic, hold that thought, and say things in an appealing way.
- ❖ **Be consistent!**

School Accommodation Possibilities (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.**
- ❖ **If child fidgets, provide foot rests, seat cushions, or resistance bands on chair legs to satisfy need to move and improve focus.**
- ❖ **Support child to use a daily assignment book or calendar.**
- ❖ **Send home assignments for the whole week in advance, and/or daily and weekly progress notes.**
- ❖ **Provide an extra set of books to keep at home.**
- ❖ **Guide organization:** Check to ensure child has needed assignments and materials, provide folders/baskets to keep desk organized, color code materials for each subject, provide written schedule for daily routines, assist with organizing the child's backpack or notebook, assign a potential peer mentor.
- ❖ **Provide extended time to complete assignments and tests, and the ability to take tests in non-distracting areas.**
- ❖ **Give frequent short quizzes rather than long tests, along with breaking down other school work tasks.**
- ❖ **Provide worksheets with fewer problems/questions.**
- ❖ **Allow various forms of work completion including answer out loud, fill in blank, or using a computer.**
- ❖ **Give credit for late assignments within reason.**
- ❖ **Provide alternative activities when assignments are completed / plan work in segments.**
- ❖ **Provide written outlines of chapters, summarize important information often, and provide copies of presentations used.**
- ❖ **Make instructions simple and clear, asking child if they understand.**
- ❖ **Use pictures, demonstrations, and visual cues.**
- ❖ **Maintain a predictable schedule with time to ensure child is organized for homework at the end of the day.**
- ❖ **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.