
Introduction for Parents and Teachers

It's a fact: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is the most common of the five major behavioral disorders that affect children ages five to eighteen. It is also very interesting to note that something else major happens to all children between the ages of five and eighteen. What is it? Simple—they go to school. Suddenly, children who have been allowed to move freely and make choices about their play are required to conform to a classroom setting. They are asked to sit quietly, listen, learn, and memorize facts that are not always of interest to them. Some children make the transition with ease, others do not. It's not surprising that attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is first diagnosed in early primary grades.

When dealing with children, the old adage “talk is cheap” isn't exactly timely or correct. When a child has a problem, talking about the problem and listening to the child's feelings is the first step to help the child cope and become empowered. Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is no exception. The less of a mystery it is, the better.

On the negative side of the disorder are characteristics such as:

- attention deficit, which makes it difficult to focus, and
- hyperactivity, which makes sitting still long enough to learn extremely difficult.

It is important to let the child know that ADHD is a disorder, not a disability. ADHD may be inconvenient, but it isn't an excuse for not learning. It is vital that children with ADHD understand all aspects of the disorder so they can acquire the skills and the support system to help them learn and master social skills.

Children with ADHD often have low self-esteem. It is especially sad that children with ADHD have the added burden of thinking they are in some way not as good, smart, or as acceptable as other children. Further, teens with ADHD sometimes demonstrate addictive behaviors and have trouble with the law. It is crucial that teachers and parents help young children with ADHD focus on the positive aspects of the disorder so they can establish strong, healthy relationships.

Begin by teaching children that many ADHD traits are positive. Children with ADHD often have above average I.Q's and are usually highly creative, artistic, intuitive, inventive, and humorous. Many display other positive characteristics that make them special individuals. Helping each child celebrate the positive traits of ADHD will give them the pride and courage needed to face each day and grow up to be happy, productive adults.

Author's Special Note: Not all children with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) are hyperactive. To avoid redundancy in this book, Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) will both be indicated by the acronym ADHD.