

Things That Parents of ADHD Children Wished Every Teacher Knew

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1. Having an ADHD child is very challenging and we need all the help we can get. Teachers play a vital role in the way that our child feels about himself and we hope that you will do whatever you can to help our child learn and maintain his self-esteem.
2. Just like a blind person needs to learn coping strategies so that he can lead an independent life, our goal for our ADHD child is that together with his teachers and his medical professionals, we will help him to learn the special ways that he can be successful in all areas of his life. These special strategies include things like developing ways to keep organized, be on time, control behaviour, plan and complete work, make and keep friends. This requires consistent effort on the part of his support team, of which you are vital part.
3. All current research emphatically shows that ADHD is not caused by bad parenting. Please be assured that we are doing everything we can to learn and use effective strategies for managing ADHD at home. Research also shows that the more consistent we are in the ways we manage ADHD in the home and school environment, the greater chances for success.
4. Children with ADHD have many talents and strengths: creative minds, curiosity, boundless energy, humour, courage, leadership abilities, physical abilities, stamina and often show amazing gifts in specialized areas like computers, math, music, etc. Sometimes as parents and teachers we tend to focus on the weaknesses rather than the strengths in our aim to change behaviours. As parents and teachers we need to seek out these strengths and utilize them to help this child be successful in their own way.
5. Unfortunately, our highly structured, standardized education system which requires all students to sit quietly at a desk, listen and do independent work for several hours a day can be the worst possible environment for ADHD children. Although, we understand that we cannot change the system, from our own experiences we recognize the value of learning to understand this condition and how it effects these children. We would be more than willing to work with you to develop strategies, reward systems and any other problem-solving that is required.
6. Please feel free to contact us as frequently and as often as you need to and don't wait until issues get to a crisis stage. And remember that we would love to hear about positive developments and not just the negative stuff.
7. In turn, we may need to contact you frequently, but rest assured that we will not take advantage of the situation. Please help us by giving us a way to do that. Email could be very helpful for this.

8. Because ADHD children often misunderstand social interactions, they quite regularly report events inaccurately. It's important for you and us to remember that what he tells us about what happened at school or at home may need to be verified to make sure that it is correct before we take any action.
9. A daily communication tool is often helpful but we need it to record progress towards desired behaviours and not report on negative behaviours. Our children will work very hard for much-needed positive reinforcement but will shut down cooperation and effort if they only receive negative feedback. They will not cooperate with either of us if they feel we are only joining forces to share negative information on their behaviour.
10. ADHD is not an excuse for poor behaviour - but it is an explanation. Our child is expected to act appropriately but will need your help and encouragement to learn and practice it. Immediate feedback is important - positive and constructive. Our child needs specific instruction and modeling in this area. If he acts inappropriately, take him aside and tell him that his behaviour was not appropriate, explain why (tell him how it affected the person it was directed at) and show him what he should do instead. Then make sure that you praise him whenever you notice improvement.
11. Homework is an enormous challenge for our child and also for us because he has challenges with organization. Please work with us to develop strategies to help him learn better organization skills. We expect him to work on improving his organization skills and will not accept his ADHD as an excuse for not doing his homework.
12. Short term memory deficits can be an inherent problem of ADHD. Insisting that the student needs to take responsibility for remembering things without giving him strategies and tools to do this only sets him up for failure and frustrates all of us.
13. When our children arrive home without the necessary books and materials to complete homework, it causes enormous stress for our child and us. Please help him to develop a strategy which ensures that he has everything he needs before he leaves school. Having a second set of books at home is helpful.
14. Our child has trouble remembering multiple instructions. Please provide written instructions so that we can ensure that assignments are being done correctly and completely. Unfortunately, without assistance, our child may then forget the instructions at school. Emailing instructions home or providing the phone number of a classmate would be helpful.
15. We will do our best to ensure that our child completes all homework on time but we may need your help with deadline extensions if our child legitimately needs more time. We will help our child to plan out larger assignments by breaking them into smaller pieces and setting deadlines and then ensuring that the deadlines are met, but any assistance that you can give him at school would be most helpful.

16. We will not do our child's homework for him. It is important that he do the work and earn the marks himself. Doing his work for him will only rob him of his self-confidence and self-esteem and will not give you an accurate picture of his progress.
17. We will develop and maintain a system to ensure that all assignments come back to school. Please create a consistent routine and place for him to hand his work in. If any assignments are missed, please contact us immediately.
18. When our child has a teacher who understands how extremely difficult and frustrating it is to have ADHD, he has the potential of having a wonderful school experience where he can grow, learn and feel proud and successful. However, when his ADHD is not understood, he often feels like a failure and we run the risk that he will give up on school and himself and turn his fantastic energy and gifts to unproductive and possibly destructive activities. I hope that we can work together to nurture the wonderful qualities of our special child.