



## The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada

**The only Canadian charity focusing solely on ADHD,  
providing leadership in education, awareness and advocacy  
to improve the lives of families and individuals with ADHD  
across Canada**



# CADDAC Interactive ADHD Childhood Parenting Course

## Parenting and Home Strategies

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# Session 4 Part A

**ADHD Kids in the Home**

**Parenting Children with ADHD**

**Parents with ADHD**

**Principals for Parenting Children with  
ADHD**

# ADHD KIDS IN THE HOME

# What do Children with ADHD Look Like in the Home?

They are:

- unable to stay focused on doing what they need to get done;
- easily distracted by others things;
- forgetful of routines, order of tasks and instructions especially when more than one if given at a time;
- unable to find their belonging and often lose things because they have dropped them anywhere and then cannot remember where;
- impulsive and intrusive, annoy others, can't their keep hands to themselves or off other's belongings;
- constantly on the move, climbing, running, talking, interrupting;
- in their own world, ignoring others and requests;
- disorganized, messy, and lose track of time;
- moody, irritable, and frequently frustrated and angry;
- challenged when asked to follow rules and do what they are told.



# PARENTING CHILDREN WITH ADHD

# Important Things to Remember

- There is no one correct way to parent children, nor children with ADHD, but some principals apply
- What may work for one child may not work for another
- Each family is unique and will need their own strategies and methods
- Trying to meet generalized family or parenting “shoulds” will only drive you crazy – do not buy into the judgement of uniformed others
- Thoughtful proactive parenting will be required until strategies that work are discovered
- Teamwork is key
- Learn to forgive imperfection and learn now to apologize



# ADHD Behaviour and Parenting

- Children with ADHD require specialized and more intensive parenting.
- Most parents parent somewhat inconsistently, but this is not good enough for children with ADHD and ODD.
- Due to the child's ADHD and ODD parents become confused and frustrated when basic parenting techniques do no work.
- They start to doubt their parenting abilities.
- Friends and extended family may blame parents for the child's behaviour which increases their uncertainty.
- Parents judge each other's parenting and lay blame.
- Parents may feel misunderstood and unsupported by their spouse, relatives and friends.
- Conflict over parenting methods arises because there has been little success in the past.
- This further fuels inconsistent parenting.



# PARENTS WITH ADHD

# Parents with ADHD

- When one spouse has ADHD things become even more difficult.
- This adds to the pattern of inconsistent parenting and increases blame and shame.
- The undiagnosed and untreated parent will be unable to follow a consistent parenting plan.
- Their own emotional dysregulation will cause havoc within the family.
- This is why it is essential that all family members with ADHD be assessed and treated.



# PRINCIPALS FOR PARENTING CHILDREN WITH ADHD

# ADHD Parenting Concepts

Parents must be able to accept the diagnosis and agree with these basic concepts:

- ADHD is a medical neurodevelopmental disorder.
- ADHD cannot be trained out of the child!
- As a parent you cannot “fix” the child’s ADHD.
- You will need to adapt and change how you are interacting with, supporting and advocating for your child.
- While we will be discussing some tips on using positive consequences, a belief that lagging skills are underlying the behaviour is essential.



# Guiding Principals for Parenting a Child with ADHD

- Although this is a hidden disorder it is no less real
- Learn as much as you can about ADHD in order to understand your child. **Child Profile**
- Reframe your thinking of the behaviours as being caused by impairments due to a medical disorder.
- Create a supportive environment by reducing family conflict as much as possible and by putting structure and supports in place to offset impairments.
- Be proactive rather than reactive, try and anticipate times, and situations that trigger behaviours and have a plan in place for when behaviours happen.
- Don't take behaviours, moods and ODD disrespect personally.
- Learn to monitor your own emotions and physical sensations to flag when you are no longer in a calm state of mind.



# “Bad” Behaviour and Punishment

- Be aware that some of the things you are asking your child to do may not be in their control.
- Interacting with the child as if the behaviour is in their control can lead to decreased self esteem, anxiety, withdrawal, acting out, depression and loss of motivation.
- Punishment may help in stopping a behaviour, if it is in the child’s control, but not in increasing a better behaviour.
- Punishment may teach a child to lie, if we ask for explanations.
- Punishment may just make them better at avoiding getting caught.
- Kids with ADHD become immune to punishment due to the frequency.
- Escalating punishment as some behavior modification plans advise can lead to abuse.



# General Parenting Tips

- Have only a few house rules e.g., we do not hurt others, we stay safe, and we do our school work.
- Decide as a team of care givers what these rules will be and make this known to the child .
- Let small things go, at least for now.
- It is important to model the behaviours you want to see.
- Avoid power struggles when possible – pick your battles (CPS).
- Keep issues in perspective – don't overreact to small things.
- Neither you or the child will be perfect, expect this and practice forgiveness – model saying that you are sorry.
- You may need to take a time out yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed.



# Questions

# Breakout Group Discussion Questions

- What do you think are your most significant challenges when parenting your child with ADHD?
- Do you have difficulty disengaging your emotions from your child's behaviour?
- Do you interpret your child's behavior personally?





# Session 4 Part B

**Interacting With Your Child**

**Monitoring**

**Organization & Problem Solving**

**External Reminders and Motivation**

# HOME AND PARENTING STRATEGIES

# Strategies for Interacting with Your Child

- Think of interactions as a bank account. You need to be more heavily loaded on the credit side – more positive interactions.
- Always use positive consequences first.
- When consequences are required, both good and bad, they must be done immediately and consistently.
- Don't engage in arguing – allow the rules to take the blame.
- When speaking with your child make sure you are telling and not asking your child to do something.
- Tone is important! (singing Mom)
- State the behaviour you want to see rather than what you don't want them to do.
- Make sure you have their attention – eye contact or touching.





## More Strategies

- Don't continually lecture or nag your child.
- ADHD is a matter of not being able to do what we want them to do rather than not knowing what to do (Dr. R. Barkley).
- Do listen to their perspective of a situation – you can obtain insight into their thinking.
- Do remember that children with ADHD are not always at fault.
- Keep your perspective.
- Keep your sense of humor.

# Monitoring of Children with ADHD

- Because self monitoring is a deficit, these children will require much closer monitoring than other children.
- They will drift off task and into unwanted behaviour more easily.
- Anticipate times and occasions when impulsive behaviour may occur – reiterate rules prior to occasion and use refueling techniques.
- Since their sense of time is impaired they will easily lose track of time, so additional reminders will be required.
- The need to report their progress after each step to an adult and receive the next step will help them to remember the steps and help you hold them accountable.
- Working along side the child can be a visual cue.
- Working with your child on a task will help you teach the skills, and allow them to use you as a cue and reminder when practicing that skill – eg. room cleaning.



# Organization Strategies

- Have routines for morning and bedtime.
- Structure work before play.
- Have a consistent time and place to do homework.
- Break larger task and assignments into more manageable chunks/parts.
- Set clear dates or times for each part to be done – the closer the initiation of the task and completion the better.
- Colour code folders, books, tools etc.
- Use a visual family calendar – colour code per child and adult and another for family events.
- Have a consistent place to keep belonging.
- Model organizational strategies.
- If organization is not a strength a professional organizer may be required to initially set up systems.



# Problem Solving Strategies

- Model calmness when a problem occurs.
- Model and practice problem solving skills by working through them with your child – think out loud while you schedule or problem solve – problem solve during family meetings.
- Encourage your children to help you brain storm around a problem – ask for their suggestions.
- CPS can be a way to practice problem solving skills with a child.
- Include empathy and understanding for other’s thinking feelings and situations when problem solving.



# Externalizing Reminders

- Reduce the load on their Executive Functioning by externalizing as much as you can.
- External reminders and cues will be required to assist with self-regulation, attention, remembering routines, sequencing.
- Restate expectations and rules before and during an activity – have the child explain them back to you, repeat them or read them out loud, to ensure that they have understood.
- Visual externalize reminders and steps – ask for their suggestions on what they think might help.
- Post pictures, lists steps of a task or wanted behaviour in highly visual locations like the back of bedroom door, bathroom mirror, front door, so children can use these as visual cues.
- Lay out clothes in the order they need to be put on.



# External Reminders Continued

- Break down tasks into smaller pieces.
- List steps to things that have a sequence.
- Have the child speak to themselves while working.
- Use timers to keep them on track while doing work.
- Use written checklists with check boxes for older children.
- Use electronic and visual reminders.

What works and does not work will be individual so some trial and error will be needed.



# External Motivation

- Rewards need to be externalized – internal rewards are insufficient
- External motivators can be helpful for some children if they have the existing skills required to meet our expectations.
- If skills are not developed sufficiently using rewards will only frustrate the child. Teach skills first to ensure competence.
- Goals should be small and able to be consistently met more than not at the beginning.
- Rewards should be very frequent and as immediate as necessary – more so than with other children.
- Specific, frequent, consistent and immediate praise when steps to tasks accomplished – will increase desired behaviour
- Rewards may need to be concrete. Be creative and change rewards frequently.
- The reward must be of value for that child.
- Each child will be individual as to what type of system or rewards work for them.



# Token Reward System FYI

- Ensure that skills are developed enough to meet the expectations that you are requiring to earn tokens
- When the child displays the desired behaviour a token is given immediately and consistently
- Focus system on no more than 3 behaviours at a time, possibly a behaviour they are doing well with, one they need improvement on and one they are struggling with
- Obtaining the reward for the tokens needs to be fairly immediate – end of the day maximum
- Never take away tokens for unwanted behaviour once earned – different views on this – possibly give opportunity to earn back
- Reward after good behaviour rather than bribe before
- Different children in a family can receive tokens for different accomplished tasks



# Problems That May Occur with a Token System

- If the task or behaviour is too difficult to accomplish the child will become disinterested and unmotivated – undeveloped skills?
- The child should be involved in choosing the rewards and the number of tokens required
- If the child already has too many privileges they may lose interest
- Keep reward systems positive
- Children with ADHD become bored, frustrated and confused quickly – keep rewards interesting, change frequently, and make sure that they are actually able to earn several tokens a day – keep the system simple and praise control of frustration when they do not earn tokens
- Do not loose track of tokens earned!



# Questions

# Breakout group Discussion Questions

- There are No correct or incorrect strategies if they help to build good habits!
- Have you used any of the strategies mentioned or other strategies to assist with routine and structure that you could recommend? Are there any that have failed?
- Did any of the listed strategies catch your interest that you think you might try?





# Session 4 Part C

## Developing a Home Care Plan

# CREATING A HOME PLAN

# Creating a Home Care Plan

1. List behaviours and situations that are causing issues in the home.
2. Prioritize in order of importance. Focus on one or two issues at a time until resolved, or at least improved.
3. List impairments that you think may be contributing to certain behaviours or issues. (These may need to be broken down for each individual family member)
4. Are there expectations that you need to alter until the impairment is supported or the skill developed?
5. How are you going to support or accommodate the symptom or lacking skills? (post reminders, reduce distractions, list steps, increase monitoring, improve organization)
6. How are you going to teach, model or practice that skill?
7. What ways can you reinforce the use of that skill once it has improved?





# Entire Group Discussion Session

Lets pretend that we have decided that our first priority is to tackle the issue of getting out of the house in the morning on time.

- Let's think about this time of day and the difficulty of getting everyone out of the house on time, along with everything they need and in a good mood.
- Can you name some of the issues that you face every morning?
- Can you think of any ADHD symptoms or impairments (lagging skills) that may be contributing to the issues that you are having?
- Are there skills that can be improved? How?
- Can you share some strategies that you have found to be helpful?
- **Pick one person to share your discussion with the whole group at the end of the session.**

# Some Things to Think About

## Getting Out of the House in the Morning on Time

- Which family members having difficulty getting started?
- Which family members avoiding doing what needs to be done? Why?
- Is a parent, child or teen unsure of what needs to be done and in what order?
- Are family members getting distracted from the task, why?
- Is there not enough time to get everything done?
- Is the load too heavily weighted on one person?
- Are belonging not easy to find? Have they been misplaced?
- Are the materials not available or handy?



# Tips

**Prioritize the issues and pick the most important one to start on.**

- Decide on the contributing factors.
- Make a list and discuss strategies that might help.
- Some questions to ask:
  - Do you need more tools to help you get more organized? Family Planner, better alarm clocks, visual reminders?
  - Do schedules need to be changed? Does everyone need to get up 15 minutes earlier?
  - Do you need a better organization system? One place for each item?



# More Tips

- Are there family habits that you can start promoting?
- Can the load be divided?
- How can other family members assist the ones who are struggling?
- Can some of the work be done ahead of time?
- Can you bring someone else in to help you set up an organizational system?
- Make a game (race) of practicing getting ready in the morning.

