How to Successfully Parent With ADHD

by ANGELA FINLAY

Parenting With ADHD: How Does Adult ADHD Affect Parenting?

When you live with ADHD, and all of the challenges that come along with it, parenting can become your main source of stress. Losing focus, being late, missing appointments — falling short in your personal life is one thing, but when your responsibilities mesh with your child's life and development, things can get very complicated.

Raising a family isn't simple, and learning to provide for your kids while taking care of yourself can seem like a daunting task, but rest assured there are some clear and effective measures that will make parenting with ADHD a whole lot easier. It's time to make some smart changes that will ease the burden on you and your children.

Define the Challenges of Parenting With ADHD

Before you can improve in your role as a parent, you'll need to figure out just how your ADHD leads to problems. Every household is different, and it's important to take a step back and honestly consider your own situation.

However, there are a few general challenges that most ADHD parents face, like:

- **Paying less attention than you should.** Sometimes ADHD gets in the way of focusing on your children, rewarding them when they achieve, and simply lending an ear when they need it. If you find your children acting out at you or pouting, you might need to set aside specific time to devote to their needs.
- **Inconsistency.** ADHD and hypersensitivity can be an emotional rollercoaster: one day you're happy and upbeat, the next day anything and everything seems to set you off. Unfortunately, this translates to inconsistent parenting, and that will be confusing to your children. You'll need to find a method to control your impulsive reactions and tailor your responses to each type of situation so your child will understand how to behave and how not to.
- **Lack of preparation.** Organization is probably not your strong point, but raising a family means juggling a lot of things every day. Without the right preparation, you will find yourself buried under obligations, struggling to keep your sanity. On the other hand, educating yourself about your own condition and taking extra steps to prepare for the day ahead will ease the burden.

One of the best ways to overcome these problems is with routine. A solid household routine — including set meal times, bedtimes, and homework times — will help things get done efficiently, with less stress.

When you make planning a part of your personal routine, you won't fall behind with daily obligations. Finally, routinely devoting time to interact with your children will keep you from neglecting their emotional needs and desire for attention.

Tips to Help You Be the Best Parent You Can Be

Routine may be the template for running a household with ADHD, but there are some specific tactics that can

keep you sane, happy, and in control of your parenting role and responsibility in every situation.

Get the Treatment You Need

If you can't keep your ADHD under control, things will get more and more difficult for your family. It's crucial that you visit your doctor, take their recommendations, and follow through with the prescribed therapy or medication every day. Taking matters into your own hands will almost certainly overload your mental to-do list and your emotional equilibrium.

Give Yourself the Space You Need

All children have a certain set of demands, but as a person with ADHD, your own requirements will be different than those of other parents. If you cannot handle the constant demands of parenting, make them less constant: hire a babysitter to watch the kids for a few hours, even if you're in the house, so you can have some room to regroup.

Taking time out of the home with your spouse is another important part of managing your parenting responsibilities. Stick to lighthearted activity and conversation to reduce stress and join positive forces when you return to the house.

Educate Yourself

Many parents will benefit from a parenting class; those with ADHD could make huge strides with the right educational help. Consider attending a parenting class made especially for parents with ADHD, so you can learn just how your condition complicates your home life, and what you can do to counter that.

If a class isn't an option for you, find a support group (either in-person or online), and get a couple of good reference books on the matter. The better you understand the physiological processes behind the ADHD mind, the more patient and proactive you can be.

Look to Professional Home Help

When everything stays in its place, it's much easier to stay calm and focused. Of course, certain things take priority over keeping a clean and organized household, like crying children or a busy after work schedule.

If you find yourself drowning in clutter and stressing out about the mess, consider hiring a professional organizer (and perhaps a biweekly cleaning service). It may seem like an unnecessary expense, but quickly ticking that chore off your list — and getting your physical space back — will make a huge difference in your attitude and productivity.

Lighten Up

Forgive yourself for having limitations. You can find ways to circumvent your ADHD to live a happy and productive life, but your condition runs deep, and it will probably get the better of you at times.

Missing an event, burning dinner, or forgetting to run an errand is not the end of the world. Your children will forgive you your shortcomings, and you should, too. The sooner you can learn to get over the little lapses, the easier it will be to get back to what matters most.

Get Personal

Since there is a genetic component to ADHD, many ADHD parents also have children with ADHD. Dealing with a lack of focus, irritability, and poor organization on both sides of the equation can make things twice as hard, but then again, you may both respond to the same single solution.

Instead of struggling to follow in the footsteps of your family and friends, take cues from your children, and channel your energy into building a personalized parenting with ADHD plan that works for your household.