Parenting Tips for Moms Dealing With Adult ADHD

by CHRISTINE LEE

Being a Mom with ADHD

I was already a parent when I received my diagnosis of adult ADHD. Reeling with exhaustion and overwhelmed, I had sought help for what I thought was depression. I can remember that moment of complete shock after the doctor told me, before I began to wail that I couldn't, I was a mom for Pete's sake, how was I supposed to raise a son when I had ADHD?

Clearly, it was not one of my finer moments.

When I look back now, I can't help but grin at the poor frazzled woman I was then. I had no idea what I was about to get into. I've learned so much about being a mom with ADHD since then.

1. Routines Are Your Friends

Weekday morning and evenings, school routines and weekend routines, I've become a schedule fiend. While I still inwardly cringe when the word 'schedule' is spoken aloud, and suspect I'll always will, even I have to admit that this is the very thing that saves my sanity.

I rely on the security that a routine provides, as does my son. It makes for a smooth morning for us both and much easier transitions. Bad days happen. But when they do, knowing what step comes next allows me and my son to reroute and move forward out of the chaos, instead of becoming stuck and floundering.

2. Being Consistent with Consequences is Tough

Duck isn't a perfect kid, and he sure isn't above trying to use the art of distraction to get out of being grounded. He's gotten really good at it and sometimes he gets away with it. For a minute. The trouble with my ADHD is that I ride the see-saw of extremes.

I'm either, "Oh, it's okay," mom or, "To your room! Don't you roll your eyes at me!" mom. No happy medium to be found. It was confusing for Duck, to say the least, and very frustrating for me, as I'd realize that I'd done it again. While there is no easy answer to this, I can suggest hanging up a consequences chart.

I list the most common offences; lying, having a smart mouth, not doing homework or his chores, etc. I put them in a range from bad to worst of the worst. Across from each one, I list a punishment. Ranging from the very simple, apologize sincerely and give a hug, or apologize and hand over his favorite wii game, to the more creative, apologize and verbalize understanding that the router password has been changed and only after a certain length of time and doing extra chores will it be given to him.

We've had this chart so long that when Duck does do something he shouldn't, or vice versa, we both automatically look towards the chart. I kid you not. Having something like this in place does help. It takes some

time and effort in the beginning, is certainly a habit that needs establishing, but I feel it’s worth it.

Next page: taking time for yourself and connecting with other moms.

3. Take a Mom Time-Out Each Week

Second only to my legendary struggles with inconsistency is my struggling with guilt. Guilt over my not being the Perfect Mom, the Super Mom, the Most Understanding Mom or Patient Mom. I can’t tell you how many tears I’ve cried over my feeling like I’m not good enough to be Duck’s mom, or how many hours I’ve wasted wishing I were more like my own mother, who does have the patience of a saint. It’s one of the worst feelings in the world, isn’t it?

To combat this, take a regular time-out. Nothing crazy – I’m not suggesting you schedule a weekly trip to Tahiti. Well, not unless you take me with you. No, the reason you need to do this is you’re going to have to realize you aren’t ever going to be a perfect mom, but that’s okay. Your child doesn’t want any other mom than you. And this means good and bad, the untied shoe days *and* the I-just-got-my-hair-done-and-I-love-it days.

What your child wants and you need, is for you to be unhindered by the 'I’m not good enough' thoughts and bombarded with the constant guilt trips. Understand that you are good enough, you do have what it takes to be a god mom, and that being a perfect mom is boring. And probably lonely.

Get a hobby. Take a yoga class or just take a walk. It’ll help keep the junk at bay and give you a better overall perception of what’s important enough to keep and work on and what needs to be let go.

And then do it.

4. Connect with Other Moms

There are plenty of places on the net just for ADHD moms. Type 'ADHD moms' into Google and you’ll get approximately 1,060,000 results. It’s important to remember you aren’t the only mom out there who has adult ADHD and wonders if she’s doing her kids good or steering them straight into a hermit’s life.

You can believe me or not, but there are plenty of us out there and we all wonder about this. Okay, maybe the hermit thing is just me, but we all are going through similar struggles and nightly guilt trips over what we’ve done or not done.

You aren’t alone. Sharing with others can help with getting some ideas on how to make mornings run much faster or how nighttime can be less of a bear. Or give you a second to laugh. And that may be all you need to smile and drop the stress and be grateful that that particular parenting incident didn’t happen to you.

You want to be a better mom? Get out of your own head. Quit comparing yourself with other moms. Cut yourself some slack. Go hug your kids. They’ll thank you for it.