How to Encourage Your ADHD Child to Be More Organized

by ANGELA FINLAY

Keep ADHD Kids Organized

Children with attention problems don't mean to leave messes, or wish to burden you with all the housework. More likely, their wavering focus won't allow them to finish the task, or they may forget about cleaning up altogether. Instead of getting frustrated, get creative: take some helpful tips to encourage and enforce neat and tidy behavior, so your house stays intact while your children gain important experience.

The Importance of Learning to Clean Up

It's vital that children learn how to manage their messes now, so they can function independently down the road. You may feel a need to help pick up the slack – if only to keep the house in a reasonable state of repair – but since many long-term habits begin in childhood, take the time to encourage good organizational skills whenever the opportunity arises.

Get your child to pitch in with some easy, everyday chores so they get a feel for the types of household responsibilities that go on behind the scenes. Rather than assign a to-do list, work with them on the garden, the dishes, the laundry or the dusting. You'll stand a better chance of keeping their attention with short cleaning spurts and a liberal use of praise and positive attention.

Tips to Keep ADHD Kids Organized

- **Make rules, and stick to them.** Begin by setting a rule for the morning and one for after school – two notoriously messy times – to develop helpful new habits. You can start small, like insisting on making the bed before moving on with the morning or installing some hooks next to the door with a gentle reminder to hang up all coats right away. Once you have a couple of rules in place, gradually add more, and be sure to discuss them regularly.
- **Set a routine.** Routines can be tough to develop, but they're very helpful to keep a household on track. Make it fun and rewarding, and don't expect too much too soon: baby steps can lead to big improvements, especially when your child can connect their efforts to praise and satisfaction.
- **Make cleaning convenient.** A bit of rearranging can go a long way. Take stock of where the mess tends to collect, and think about new storage solutions in those areas. Do you need some extra waste paper baskets in each room? Are the hooks, shelves or baskets in plain sight? How can you organize your closets more effectively?
- **Use color to your advantage.** A child with ADHD counts on strong sensory experience to focus their attention, so inject your living space with bright colors in clever places. For instance, neon waste baskets in every room will command attention (and keep litter in its place), and bright sticky notes with helpful reminders are hard to ignore. Extend the colorful approach to anything and everything that poses a challenge, from toothbrush holders to laundry hampers.

One great way to keep things organized is to simply keep fewer things around. Try to eliminate clutter, and go

easy on the toys. When toys, clothing, papers or any other household items lose their usefulness, get rid of them right away. If you notice certain things wind up on the floor too often, you may need to find a better, more convenient home for them.