Helpful Tips and Advice for Parenting an ADHD Child

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ADHD Parenting

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be overwhelming. There is so much information online, on TV, and in print about the topic. When you're thinking about your course of action to improve a behavior, remember to keep realistic expectations. In ADHD parenting, the goal is not to cure; the goal is to manage unwanted behavior, and shape it into something more desirable. You may find it helpful to increase positive behaviors rather than reducing negative ones.

Some research indicates that lasting improvements in children with ADHD are made when medication and behavioral interventions are used simultaneously. Consult with your child's paediatrician or psychiatrist to find suitable options.

Modifying Behaviors

Children with ADHD are all unique, but there are some general rules of behavior management that apply to the majority. Here are a few:

- **Reinforce, don't punish.** Parents fall into the trap of primarily using punishment to change behavior too often. This strategy has several drawbacks. First, punishments only show the child what *not* to do. Second, the relationship between the child and the person doling the punishment will be damaged. Reinforcing desirable behaviors by giving something good to the child or taking something bad away, like having to do a chore for example, allows the child to know what to do. Also, the child will be thankful and appreciative to the person giving the reinforcement, thus improving the relationship. Punishment does have its place, it should be reserved for situations where the child risks their own safety or the safety of others.
- **Provide rewards immediately.** If your child completed his or her homework or did the dishes, reward the behavior immediately. This builds a strong cause and effect association between the action and the benefit, thereby providing an incentive for repetition of the action. If you provide a reward far removed from the behavior, the child will be happy but somewhat confused.
- **Use valuable rewards.** The reward you use is as important as when you give it. If your child cuts the grass for two hours and you give them a dime, they will be unlikely to cut the grass again because there is not enough benefit. Join forces with your child to find rewards they value. Negotiate and compromise. Be creative. Money is always desirable, but so is attention and quality time spent together.

- **Be consistent.** No behavior plan can work without consistency. If sometimes your job paid you and sometimes it didn't, would you keep showing up? Probably not. Failure to consistently reinforce your child's desirable behaviors ensures that their undesirable behaviors keep "showing up. " Anytime there is a shift in parenting style, you may notice an increase in unwanted behaviors. This does not mean that the interventions or rewards you are using are a poor match. Try a plan consistently for two weeks before choosing another course of action.

Conclusion

If your child has ADHD, take time to think about your parenting. Look at your child's behaviors and what you could be doing to either maintain or change them (the behaviors). Especially when children are young, parents have a great ability to mold and shape behaviors into something more desirable. The longer the behaviors are present and the older the child's age make change difficult, so act fast. You'll be glad you did.