

Homeschooling Kids With ADHD

Marianne Sunderland





Today's session:

- Understanding ADHD
- Increasing Focus
- How ADHD Affects Learning
- Strategies for Teaching
- Big Picture Encouragement

Understanding ADHD

Why Understanding ADHD is so Important

- Understanding is the foundation for helping or kids
- Increases compassion
- Helps with expectations
- Directs you to appropriate resources

Myths About ADHD

- People with ADHD are always hyperactive
- People with ADHD are just lazy.
- ADHD is a drug company fabrication.
- ADHD is rare.
- ADHD is harmless.

Truths About ADHD

- ADHD is one of the most treatable conditions in psychiatry
 - behavior and lifestyle strategies
 - exercise
 - harnessing the ADHD imagination
 - finding the right kinds of work
- There are MANY successful adults with ADHD
- ADHD is NOT a lack of character or discipline. It is a lack of focus.

The Paradox of ADHD

Paradox: A statement that seems to contradict itself but nonetheless, may be true

- Have a lack of focus with an ability to hyper-focus
- Have a lack of direction but then be a highly directed entrepreneur
- Have a tendency to procrastinate but have a knack for getting a week's worth of work done in 2 hours
- Have impulsive decision-making but also have massive skill in out-of-the-blue problem solving
- Can have interpersonal cluelessness combined with uncanny intuition and empathy

3 Types of ADHD

DSM-V

1. **ADHD predominantly inattentive type** is characterized by distractibility and difficulty sustaining mental effort and attention.
2. **ADHD predominantly hyperactive-impulsive type** is characterized by fidgeting with hands and feet, squirming in one's chair, acting as if driven by a motor, and interrupting and intruding upon others.
3. **ADHD combined type** has both sets of inattention and hyperactive/impulsive criteria.

Signs of ADHD: Inattentive Type

What you may be seeing

- doesn't pay attention to details
- makes careless mistakes
- trouble staying focused; is easily distracted
- appears not to listen
- difficulty remembering things and following directions
- trouble staying organized, planning ahead, and finishing projects
- gets bored with a task before it's completed
- frequently loses or misplaces schoolwork, books, toys or other items

Signs of ADHD: Hyperactive Type

What you may be seeing

- constantly fidgets and squirms
- runs or climbs inappropriately
- talks too much
- difficulty playing quietly or relaxing
- always on the go – as if driven by a motor
- may have a quick temper

Signs of ADHD: Impulsivity

What you may be seeing

- acts without thinking
- blurts out words without hearing the whole question
- trouble waiting for a turn
- often interrupts
- trouble keeping strong emotions in check – angry or emotional outbursts
- guesses rather than taking time to solve a problem

Causes of ADHD

- Nature: Genetics
 - Many genes that cause ADHD
- Nurture: Environmental
 - Head injuries
 - Lack of oxygen at birth
 - Maternal health: weight, smoking, alcohol

The Relaxed Brain and the Focused Brain

What happens in the brains of people with ADHD

Focused Brain:

Activated when you are focused and deliberate about an activity

Like a muscle: atrophies without use

Relaxed - Creative Brain:

Activated when you allow your mind to wander from a task whether you are finished, taking a break, or pause too long while working.

Helps with processing and creativity.

Neurotypical people toggle between the two.

People with ADHD often get stuck in the relaxed/creative state.

Increasing Focus

Lots of ways

Connection

Environment: Structure & Communication

Creating a healthy learning environment

Nutrition

Sleep

Exercise

Medication

How to Increase Focus

Vitamin C: Connection

Positive connection has incredible healing power.

Study after study shows the positive effect of loving, healthy connections on healing.

Ways to Increase Connection

- Make a point of having meals with the family
- Get a pet
- Be friendly and say hello to people you meet when you're out and about & be intentional with friends
- Plan a playdates for your child (aim for kids a few years younger if your child is young for their age or invite a family with kids who are a variety of ages)
- Plan for some uninterrupted one-on-one time with your child every week
- Find some kind of group that holds meetings and attend them! Especially in areas of strength of interest.
- Practice gratitude - some kids can get in a habit of negativity. Have them regularly say 3 things they're thankful for or, if able, write/journal things they are thankful for in a gratitude journal.
- Make a point of paying compliments/ find the good
- Engage in some kind of spiritual practice - prayer, meditation
- Go for a walk in nature alone or with a friend

The Impact of Environment

- Daily Structure: predictable daily routines help
- Playful attitude, especially with regards to mistakes or errors "everyone makes mistakes"
- No ridicule or teasing
- Open communication
- Normalizing ADHD: especially helpful if you as the parent have ADHD
- Having an attitude of gratitude
- A major reason homeschooling is so good for kids with ADHD

Nutrition

- Whole foods
- Plenty of protein (avoiding simple carbohydrates)
- Keep hydrated
- Avoid simple sugars
- Dairy and gluten
- Gut health: more information on resources page

Sleep

Insufficient sleep is associated with increased risk of obesity, depression, high blood pressure, depressed immune function, and anxiety disorders.

Turn off electronics at least 1-hour before bed

Make bedroom as dark as possible

Turn down the heat - open a window

Melatonin or magnesium

The Power of Exercise on Focus

Exercise improves mood and motivation, reduces anxiety, regulates emotions, and helps maintain focus.

ADHD linked to faulty dopamine metabolism.

Many ADHD meds increase levels of dopamine.

Exercising for 20-30 minutes has similar effects as stimulant medication.

How ADHD Affects Learning

- Lack of focus and ability to sit still
- Easily bored
- Procrastination
- Assignments take forever to complete
- Lack of motivation
- Resistance
- Poor organization; time, space, materials, thoughts
- Negativity or a lack of confidence
- Co-existing learning struggles: as many as 45%

Overcoming Resistance to Learning

Emergency measures

- Can be normal, especially in the teen years
- Take a break or a season of deschooling
- Hire a tutor
- Find an outside source of accountability: courses

Strategies for Teaching

- Start with empathy: your kids want to do well but have a really hard time!
- Include focus-enhancing strategies into the school day: exercise, frequent breaks, nutrition & hydration, environment. Start the day with movement and water. And maybe coffee!
- Break teaching time into smaller chunks of time. Use a timer.
- Create checklists or use student planners.
- Collaborate with your child. Ask questions.
- Enhance the learning environment: no clutter, sit on ball, observe what is distracting

Strategies for Teaching

- Modify curriculum; do less problems, give answers orally, let them choose how to show what they know
- Communicate: tell them the daily schedule, give 5-minute warnings for transitions
- Include fun; watching documentaries or movies, going on field trips, playing games. Games are excellent for increasing executive functions.
- Include interests where possible.
- Give them autonomy when possible: where can you offer a choice?
- Challenge should be appropriate; not too hard or too easy

What to do when you're doubting your abilities.

Remember what would be happening to your child if they were in a traditional school setting.

- Trying to hide their weaknesses from their peers,
- Constant feelings of frustration
- Constantly misunderstood or disliked
- Fighting to get accommodations
- Struggling socially
- Struggling to keep up with school work and internalizing all kinds of negative thoughts about themselves
- Fighting stress and anxiety all day everyday



Parent Education Courses
Books
Resources
Homeschool Guides
Online Mentoring Groups
Consulting

www.HomeschoolingWithDyslexia.com
