

Tips on ADHD and Executive Function: Promoting Consistent Behaviors at Home

School and home life are hectic under the best of circumstances. Having a child with ADHD adds another layer of management responsibilities for a parent. Here are some ways to let the environment help you!

- **A daily schedule can help reduce arguing and confusion at home.**
 - Each week, review with your children upcoming commitments for music and sports practices, projects, nights when parents are working late.
 - Set a schedule for each child, noting on a daily basis the time when homework will be started, chores will be done, time for dinner, start time for bathing and getting ready for bed, and making room for free time.
 - Referring to the schedule rather than directly telling children what to do reduces the perception of being “nagged” by the parent about specific tasks.
- **Prepare the night before.**
 - Reduce the number of decisions that must be made in the morning by choosing clothing and packing lunches in the evening. Assign someone the task of setting the table for breakfast, complete with nonperishable items such as cereal.
 - Gather school or work materials in a specific place – the “Blast Off Site.” Each family member has her own spot for her belongings.
- **It takes months for behaviors to become habits – don’t give up!**
 - Reward the use of strategies such as writing in a plan book, using a checklist to get ready for school, or following the homework schedule. Have a menu of rewards to avoid boredom and change reward often. Rewards do not have to be big; choosing the entree for dinner, 15 minutes playing a game with a parent or choosing the movie for Friday night can be motivating.
 - Observe your children to determine what reward might serve as a motivator. Do they prefer the company of peers? Do they like public recognition? Do they enjoy having a unique responsibility? Are they in the sticker and star chart phase?
- **Be mindful of the language you use.**
 - Failing to earn a reward does not mean the child “lost the reward.” You cannot lose what you did not have to begin with. “You did not earn that privilege” would be accurate and less provocative language to use in this situation. If an adult does not go to work, he did not lose his pay; he failed to earn the paycheck.