

At Newbridge School we sometimes work with young people who have a condition known as ADHD.

Here is some information about ADHD which you might find helpful:

ADHD is a common behavioural disorder that affects about 10% of school-age children. Boys are about three times more likely than girls to be diagnosed with it, though it's not yet understood why. Children with **ADHD** act without thinking, are hyperactive, and have trouble focusing.

What is ADHD

If you have attention deficit hyperactive disorder (ADHD), you may have lots of energy and find it difficult to concentrate. It can be **hard to control your speech and actions**.

ADHD is the most common behavioural disorder in children. It usually starts at about 18 months old, but symptoms usually become noticeable between the ages of 3 and 7.

We don't know what causes ADHD but experts think it runs in families. It could also be caused by an imbalance in brain chemicals.

A related condition, ADD (attention deficit disorder) has similar symptoms, but there is less hyperactivity and the main problem is difficulty concentrating.

The symptoms of ADHD

Symptoms of ADHD include:

- feeling restless or fidgety
- talking a lot and interrupting
- becoming easily distracted

- finding it hard to concentrate
- saying or doing things without thinking

Just because you experience one or more of these symptoms, it doesn't mean you're definitely affected by ADHD.

Managing a teenager with ADHD:

Here are some ideas we find useful:

1. MAINTAIN REALISTIC GOALS.

ADHD cannot be "cured" because there is nothing to cure; it's not an illness or a disease. A realistic goal is to help your teenager manage it well by providing strategies and interventions helpful to that particular individual. Even with ideal interventions in place (a great IEP, therapeutic and tutoring help, the right medication at the right dosage), most young people will continue to struggle at times. Expecting too much from your teenager, or from yourself as a parent, isn't fair to either of you.

2. MINIMIZE THE GUILT AND FEAR.

ADHD is a biological condition that, in most cases, is genetically transmitted. It's no one's fault. Feeling guilty or worrying excessively leads to trying to do too much. Take a breath, relax, and remind yourself that your teenager isn't doomed to a life of failure.

3. LET YOUR CHILD MAKE SOME MISTAKES.

It's a good thing to let your teenager make and deal with "safe" mistakes in situations that won't cause irreparable damage. Let him/her learn from the natural consequences that result from his/her behaviour. To learn responsibility, there must be accountability.

4. RESPECT YOUR CHILD'S NEED FOR PRIVACY.

Monitoring your teenager's behaviour at home is a basic parenting responsibility, but it can be overdone. Excessive fears can turn you into more of a police officer than a parent. Every child or teen needs personal space.

5. DON'T TRY TO CHOOSE YOUR CHILD'S FRIENDS.

This strategy almost always backfires, particularly with teens. Identifying with one's friends and sticking up for them if they're criticized is a normal part of maturation. It may be better in the long run to tolerate the friendship than to fight over it. One exception: Any friends who place your teenager in danger, as from drug use or criminal activity.

6. MONITOR YOUR CHILD SELECTIVELY.

Most young people with ADHD need frequent monitoring and supervision; it's a fact that maturity comes more slowly to kids with ADHD. Take your cues from the teenager's behaviour. Too little monitoring increases the chances of problems being overlooked or repeated, or of the child getting into situations that hold unacceptable risks. Too much monitoring may cause excessive conflict, resentment, and rebelliousness.

7. INCREASE PRIVILEGES JUDICIOUSLY.

As your teenager demonstrates his/her ability to behave responsibly, increase his/her freedoms. The parent who is overprotective holds the reins too tightly. "If you abuse it, you lose it" is a good rule to lay down. On the other hand, restricting freedoms that the teenager is ready to handle may stunt his/her emotional growth.

8. ENCOURAGE AND SUPPORT INDEPENDENCE.

Our job is to raise a teenager who no longer needs us. Most parents would agree with this statement on a cognitive level, but accepting it on an emotional level can be tricky. Confidence, self-esteem, and the ability to manage life's responsibilities come from a sense of being competent and self-sufficient.

9. DON'T MISTAKE MILD REBELLION FOR DISRESPECT.

Developing a sense of identity is the major developmental task of adolescence, and it is often expressed in disagreement, conflict, and simply being "different" from the parents. Given the impulsivity that comes with ADHD, the process of adolescent maturation can become very lively indeed!

10. PICK YOUR BATTLES CAREFULLY.

Not everything is worth fighting over. Being overprotective virtually guarantees more conflicts between parent and teenager. Take a stand on the important issues and don't stress over what doesn't matter.