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**Calming Tips for Hyperactive Children**

**By Jeannine Virtue**

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Parents of hyperactive children know the "Would you please just settle down?!" phrase well, and likely use it on a regular basis.

There are a number of tips to help parents settle their hyperactive child down. These quick tips and relaxation techniques take the same amount of time as yelling and scolding but produce incredibly different results in hyperactive children.

**Quick Calming Tips:**

Try quick tips to calm a hyperactive child down during temper outbursts or unusually rowdy days. These calming tips are not novel to adults by any stretch. How many times have you heard "Take a deep breath and count to 10" or "Calgon, take me away." What works for big people works for little people as well. \_ Deep breathing is one of the simplest ways to calm the body. Teach your children to take deep breaths (in through the nose, out through the mouth) when they begin to feel frustrated and out of control. Parents, you do this too!

\_ Draw a warm salt bath or bubble bath to wash away the hyperactive child's stresses of the day.

\_ Take your hyperactive child for a walk or send them around the block on their own if they are old enough. Not only does walking burn off excess energy, the repetitive thump, thump, thump of feet hitting pavement brings the mind back into focus.

\_ Give your hyperactive child a mini-massage. Touch is very important to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder children. Massaging their temples, giving a shoulder rub or lightly running your fingers through their hair can calm children quickly.

## Calming Tips for Hyperactive Children

\_ Put together a "Boredom Box" that provides creative outlets for your hyperactive child. Fill this box or plastic storage bin with paint sets, coloring books, crossword puzzles, modeling clay, jewelry making kits and other artistic areas of interest. Hyperactive children bore easily and their fast spinning minds need extra stimulation. In the absence of nothing better to do, hyperactive children will lean on their own devices and you don't want them doing that. Better that they draw than set the cat on fire...

The quick-fix calming techniques work to sooth the hyperactive child after they already became too stressed or active. There are also techniques that parents can teach their hyperactive children to help them get the "stuff" out before it builds up and explodes.

Create a calming home environment:

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder children have difficulty remaining calm in a hectic environment. Clearing the clutter and taking a "less is more" approach to decorating can reduce the sensory overload on Attention Deficit and hyperactive children.

The Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder child's bedroom especially should be free of clutter. Use plastic bins to organize and store all those precious little plastic treasures (that we adults commonly refer to as "junk") and small toys. Open the curtains to provide natural lighting. Keep posters and wall hangings to a minimum. Paint the child's bedroom in calming muted colors instead of bright primary colors.

If you play music in the house, opt for soft "elevator music" or classical music instead of rock. Try to avoid loud clatters and noises when your Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder child is at home.

Follow a Routine:

All children thrive in homes that provide routines, consistency and structure. Attention Deficit and hyperactive children especially need structure and schedules to feel secure in their surroundings. For these children, a more "military" approach to routines works better. Waking up, eating meals, doing homework, and bed times should all occur at about the same time every day, with few surprises to upset the Attention Deficit or hyperactive child.

A Place to Relax:

If at all possible, find a space in the house to designate as a relaxation space. It does not have to be a large space but it does need to be away from high activity areas. This little corner (or even a portion of a walk-in closet) can have a beanbag chair and a few books, coloring books or other quiet time activities.

Encourage your child to go to this space when they become angry or out of control, but never make this a place of punishment. This special spot in the house is a positive place where they can go to settle down, sort things out or just hang out when they need to be alone.

Journaling:

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For the child who is old enough to write, journaling is an excellent way to untangle frazzled minds and get things off their chest. This technique allows hyperactive children to spill their internal stresses outside themselves and onto paper.

Develop a daily habit of having your child write a page or two, depending on their age, about anything that comes to mind. They can write "I hate school, the dog just drooled, the baby's crying is driving me crazy..." – whatever comes to mind. Eventually, they will get to the guts of what is going on inside them. Then rumple or tear the paper up and throw it away.

These private internal thoughts are not for you or anyone else to read, ever. Please respect their privacy and let them know they can write anything down without fear of reprimand.

Taking a mini-vacation with Guided Imagery:

Guided imagery is a powerful relaxation tool for hyperactive children that pulls their focus to positive thoughts, all the while encouraging creativity in your child. You can check out books on this technique at your local library if you want further information on the subject.

Last, but certainly not least, diet:

Some parents find that reducing or eliminating sugar from the diet goes a long way in calming the hyperactive child. If your child is a finicky eater, you will need to supplement the diet to make sure your Attention Deficit or hyperactive child has the fuels needed for his body to function well.

Starting the day out with a healthy breakfast balanced with proteins, fats and carbs is important. An egg sandwich, peanut butter toast and fresh fruit, protein shakes and fresh fruit smoothies are great ways to start the day for Attention Deficit and hyperactive children.

Sugar cereals are quick and convenient but should not be used as a breakfast mainstay. Fruit juices are high in calories and sugar and not recommended for children, especially those with Attention Deficit or hyperactivity. Instead of juice or sodas, get in the habit of offering plain old H<sub>2</sub>O. With plenty of bottled waters that offer fruit flavors and vitamin enhancements, getting your children hydrated is easier now than ever before.

Jeannine Virtue is a freelance journalist and mother of an Attention Deficit son. Visit the Attention Deficit Disorder Help Center at

for information about treating

Attention Deficit Disorder without the use of Ritalin or other ADHD medications.

**Homework Help for the Attention Deficit Child**

**By Jeannine Virtue**

## Calming Tips for Hyperactive Children

Does the homework battle so typical with your hyperactive or A.D.D. child have you at the end of your rope? Relax. We have some tried-and-try ADHD information that should get your A.D.D. child on the right homework path.

The hyperactive or A.D.D. child especially needs consistency, a work place free of distractions, solid encouragement and praise – along with established consequences if the positive homework tips fail.

### Establish a Set Homework Routine:

Because the A.D.D. child functions best in a consistent environment, homework should be done in the same place, at the same time and for a set amount of time every day.

Work with your child to develop that routine. Some Attention Deficit and hyperactive children work best immediately after school while others need an hour or two to settle down before jumping back into studies.

To help the A.D.D. child better focus, the work area should be free of distractions, such as televisions, video games, music and other people. The kitchen table might not be the best place if there is too much activity in that room. The bedroom can offer distractions if the television or stereo have a way of "turning themselves on" when you are not there to monitor.

### Mandatory Homework Time:

We are strong proponents of establishing an allotted amount of homework time on school days. This set amount of time gives consistency to the hyperactive or A.D.D. child and discourages rushing through homework.

Talk with your child's teachers about the average recommended homework time for the child's grade level. In general, elementary school children should spend about 30 minutes each night on homework. Middle school and high school students should spend about one hour on homework.

If the child does not have homework that evening or they finish before the allotted time, the child can read until their mandatory homework time is over.

### "Chunking" and Scheduled Breaks:

The hyperactive and A.D.D. child often experiences difficulty with long-range tasks. "Chunking" homework for the hyperactive or A.D.D. child helps break the homework task into smaller, more manageable pieces.

You can break a 20-problem math assignment into four chunks of five problems each, with a small

break in between chunks. If using the mandatory homework time schedule, set a kitchen timer to ring every five to 15 minutes, depending on the child's attention span. At every break, give your hyperactive or A.D.D. child a few minutes to move around or grab a snack to refocus their attention.

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### Rewards/Consequences:

As with any parenting issue, rewarding good behavior and disciplining poor behavior motivates kids toward good behavior. The A.D.D. child needs all the rewards they can get, along with firm and consistent consequences.

A "homework contract" is an effective motivator for the A.D.D. and an especially valuable tool to encourage the A.D.D. child to accept responsibility for their work.

The homework contract clearly states that when the homework is completed, the child will earn a reward. The contract also clearly outlines consequences for not completing homework.

You can offer daily modest rewards like earning time to play Gameboy, the right to choose a favorite dinner or a modest treat or special privilege. Or, you can develop a point system for larger weekly rewards. You can give out one point for every night of completed homework for the child to cash in for a trip to the zoo after earning five points, for instance.

Effective consequences for not completing homework are losing phone, computer, stereo and television privileges for the evening. To add a little more discomfort to the situation, have the child stay inside for the evening without friends.

It is important that you remain calm, firm and consistent on nights when Attention Deficit Disorder child decides to get into a power struggle over homework. It may take a couple consequence days before the child realizes that completing homework makes for a better night than not doing homework.

It is also important that you reward for effort and not just grades for the A.D.D. child. The goal is to develop a solid homework habit. With a homework habit established, better grades will automatically follow.

Don't forget to offer the intangible rewards of smiles and praise when your child puts the effort into completing his homework. A "way to go" goes a long way in positive reinforcement for Attention Deficit Disorder children.

**Additional Homework ADHD Information:** Using an assignment book for the A.D.D. child helps parents keep track of the child's daily and weekly homework. If the teacher does not use an assignment book, develop a system with the teacher so you know the child's homework assignments.

If the A.D.D. child insist on heavy parental homework help, require that the child attempt problems at

least twice before asking for homework help. They may need homework help, but make sure he puts a genuine effort into solving the problem first. Attention Deficit and hyperactive children may not be able to receive "A"s on every homework and school assignment. Instead of getting hung up on the traditional grading scale, give you're A.D.D. child an "A" for effort.

Jeannine Virtue is a freelance journalist and mother of an Attention Deficit Disorder son. To learn more

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about natural and effective alternatives to Ritalin and other ADHD medications, visit

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