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**Homework Help for the Attention Deficit Child**

**By Jeannine Virtue**

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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.

## Homework Help for the Attention Deficit Child

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.

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

### **How ADD Affects Families**

**By Sarah K. Jenkins**

Typically, there is a lot of blame and frustration associated with Attention Deficit Disorder. Depending on how long the problem has gone before being diagnosed, there may be serious mental and emotional scars as family members and the child dealt with issues associated with ADD. This disorder is not only difficult for parents, but also the child with ADD and other siblings in the family.

The obvious victim of ADD is the child it affects. Being accustomed to negativity, these children usually suffer from very low self-esteem. Although they want to behave well, they have impulsive actions that typically result in constant punishment. Parents and teachers of an ADD child often are not aware or do not accept that the child suffers from a disorder and they are not always acting on a conscience level. The child, after being reprimanded and not being able to control their actions, is left feeling as though they will never be adequate or meet everyone else's expectations.

The parents of an ADD child suffer from incredible frustration and doubt of their parenting skills. Often ridiculed by teachers, family members, and other acquaintances, they are often viewed as being the cause of their child's behavior, as though lack of discipline is the root cause of their child's actions. Attention Deficit Disorder sometimes places a strain on the parents' marital relationship as well, as parents blame each other for being overly lenient or harsh in their rearing habits. This can lead to many arguments and disagreements that prove to be difficult on spouses.

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An often forgotten casualty of Attention Deficit Disorder is the siblings of a child with ADD. Often not apparent, siblings in this situation often experience similar frustration and anxiety as the parents and child with ADD. Jealousy sometimes plays a factor in their feelings as their sibling requires so much more attention, even if it is negative in nature. Also, these children often get the brunt of their sibling's impulsive actions, including aggressive behavior typical of ADD. These children may also find themselves being categorized in school and other social environments because of their sibling's behavior, which can also have a negative connotation.

In addition to immediate family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins may also be affected when a child has ADD. Depending on the closeness of the family, behavior outbursts and discipline issues may be a factor dealt with on various levels. In extreme cases, ADD may actually cause some familial relationships to be severed.

Sarah is an acclaimed writer on medical matters, and has written extensively on the subjects of Attention Deficit Disorder, Bird Flu and Cohn's Disease. For more of her articles, go to

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