

# PRACTICAL TIPS TO ELIMINATE AT-HOME SKIRMISHES WITH YOUR CHILD WITH ADHD

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# WHAT IS ADHD?

- ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder) is a neurological disorder that impacts the parts of the brain that help us plan, focus on, and execute tasks.
- “Attention deficit” is, some experts assert, a misleading name. “Attention deregulation” might be a more accurate description since most people with ADHD have more than enough attention — they just can’t harness it in the right direction at the right time with any consistency. And so individuals with ADHD hyperfocus and lose track of time, or misplace their keys, or blurt out an unrelated thought when their focus breaks free from its chains.

- ADHD is a brain-based, biological disorder. Brain imaging studies and other research show many physiological differences in the brains of individuals with ADHD. Additional research suggests that exposure to certain chemicals may increase a child's risk of having ADHD.
- Research suggests that genetics and heredity play a large part in determining who gets ADHD.<sup>4</sup> However, scientists are still investigating whether certain genes, especially ones linked to the neurotransmitter dopamine, play a defined role in developing ADHD.
- Additional research suggests that exposure to certain chemicals may increase a child's risk of having ADHD.

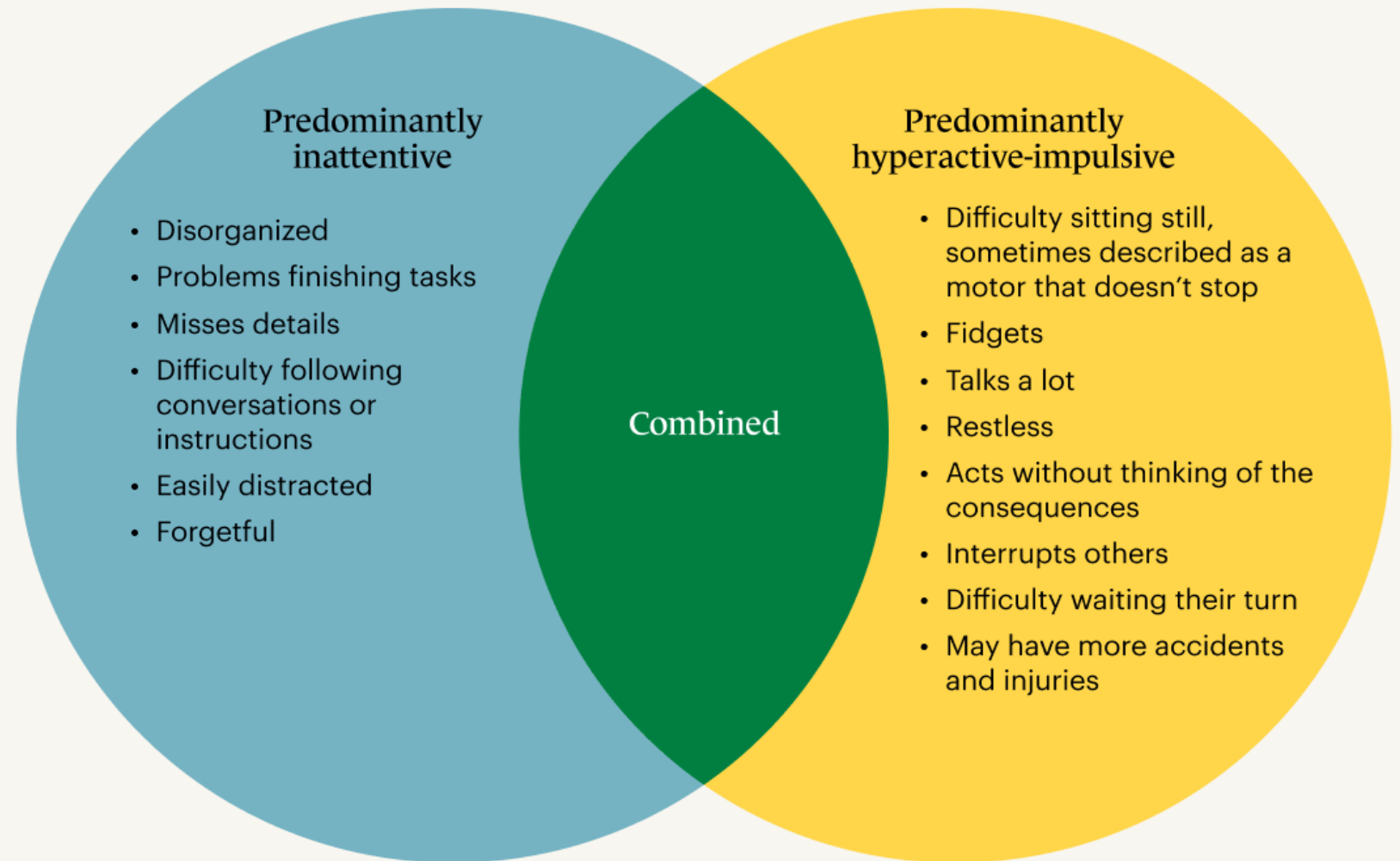
# ADHD IS NOT...

- a behavior disorder.
- a mental illness.
- a specific learning disability. ADHD is, instead, a developmental impairment of the brain's self-management system.
- caused by bad parenting, too much sugar, or too many video games. ADHD is a brain-based, biological disorder. Brain imaging studies and other research show many physiological differences in the brains of individuals with ADHD. Additional research suggests that exposure to certain chemicals may increase a child's risk of having ADHD.

# TYPES OF ADHD

- Insert picture

## 3 presentations of ADHD

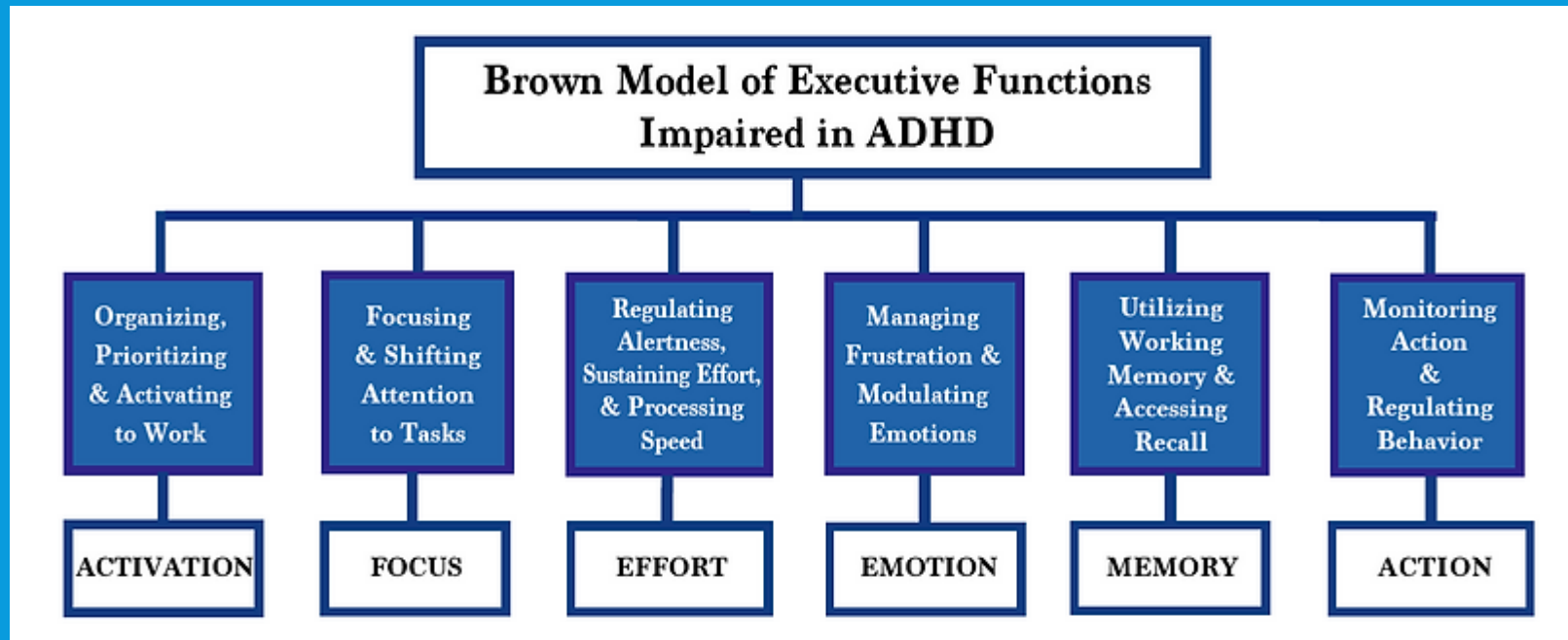


# RED FLAGS FOR ADHD

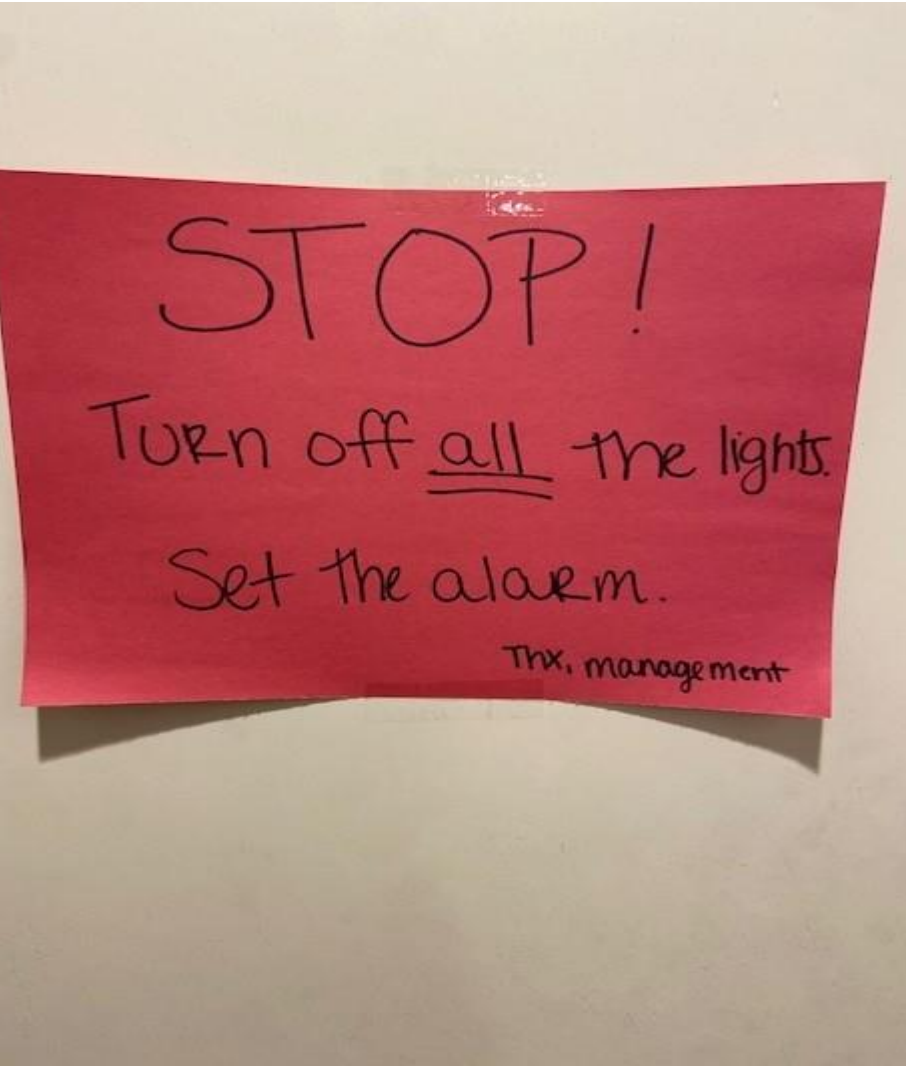
**What are the signs of being ADHD? Common ADHD symptoms include:**

- inattention
- lack of focus
- Poor time management
- weak impulse control
- exaggerated emotions
- hyperfocus
- hyperactivity
- executive dysfunction

# WHAT ARE EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS



# ACTIVATION



## ORGANIZING

- Notebook, locker and room are a mess.
  - Provide a place for everything.
  - Color code.
  - Have a weekly clean-out of the backpack and notebook.
- Organizing thoughts.
  - Write things down. To-do lists and reminders.

## PRIORITIZING

- What should I do first?
  - Is it a rubber ball or a glass ball?

## ACTIVATING TO WORK

- Professional procrastinators
  - Rewards and punishment need to be immediate.
- Fear and pleasure are the best motivators for students with ADHD.



# FOCUS

## FOCUSING

- Hyperfocus instead of lack of focus. Cues to bring attention back to task.

## SUSTAINING ATTENTION

- The brain gets really tired when it is working all of the time. Take breaks.

## SHIFTING ATTENTION TO TASKS

- Transitions are extremely difficult.
- Let the child know what is next. Remind the child that in 5 minutes we are going to shift. As much as possible, inform the student of a change.
- Before school begins, meet the teacher, visit the classroom and other parts of the school.
- If it is a new system like changing classes, walk the schedule multiple times, especially if they will be changing classes independently.

# EFFORT

## Regulating Alertness

- Day dreaming
- Difficult time going to sleep.
  - Sleep hygiene.
- Difficult time waking.
  - Alarmy – ap that makes you answer questions before it turns off.
  - Alarms that have wheels.

## Sustaining Effort

- Cues can be helpful.

## Processing Speed

- Dr. Tridas's example of a funnel
- Most students with ADHD need extra time

# EMOTION

## Managing Frustration

- Know and avoid triggers.
- Try to intervene before the frustration accelerates.
- If possible, do difficult activities at the most advantageous time. Perhaps early, but not immediately after waking up.

## Modulating Emotions

- Role Play and talk about the emotions the child is experiencing.
- Behavioral therapy if necessary.
- Deep breaths and taking a break will often subside intense emotions.
- Be extra careful not to punish for an emotion; separate the emotion from the action.

**Emotions can gobble up brain space!**

# MEMORY

## Utilizing Working Memory

- Working memory is the ability to hold information and use it for processing.
- Very difficult problem.
  - May try games like Simon.
  - Math – manipulatives, counting, calculators, emphasize the process .

## Short-term Memory

- Where did I put my keys?
  - Sticky note reminders.
  - Keys, Phone, Glasses.
  - To-Do Lists

## Long-term Memory Recall

- Our brain has its own filing system.
- Something gets filed in the wrong place.
  - Make Notes
- Sometimes the wrong file gets pulled.

# ACTION

## Monitoring and self-regulating action

- Struggle with seeing the consequences of their actions.
- Impulsivity.
  - Practice self-regulation.
- Struggle with empathy.
  - Talk about how it feels to wear the other's shoes.
- Research from Tom Brown.

# TIME MANAGEMENT IDEAS

- Use a clock that has a face that you can color with a vis-a-vis to show the movement of time.
- Use a daily schedule.
- Use a monthly calendar.
- Color coat items.

# BIG ASSIGNMENTS

- Discuss and break down the assignment into smaller chunks.
- Schedule when the chunks will be completed.
- If the assignment is a paper, use a graphic organizer.
- Always use an editor. The professionals do it.
- Use Grammarly or another punctuation/spelling checker. If the student focuses too much on trying to get the punctuation and spelling correct, there isn't any room to get the thoughts onto the paper.

# HOMework TIPS FOR PARENTS

- Try to study at the same time each day in a place away from distractions. May need some downtime before starting homework.
- Create a clean and organized space.
- Make sure all of the necessary tools are handy.
- Create a checklist together as a planning procedure before beginning homework.
- Take brain-breaks as often as necessary. Break assignments down into 15-20 minute chunks.
- Ask the teacher how she communicates homework assignments.
- Use behavior charts for motivation.
- If turning work in is a problem, ask the teacher if the homework can be scanned and emailed or a picture sent.



# HOMWORK TIPS FOR TEACHERS

- Read assignments aloud and post them each morning.
- Allow enough time during class for students to write down the assignments. Consider posting online for students and parents. Make sure you refer to them often during class.
- Use a calendar/syllabus for students to refer to.
- Assign study buddies, but don't put one in charge.
- Consider allowing students to submit assignments in many forms (paper copy, email, picture).
- Work with parents to determine how much time is needed to complete homework. Be conscience of each student's ability. Remember that your job is to make certain students understand the concepts you are trying to teach. PLEASE don't assign homework without a purpose.

# DON'T MISTAKE YOUR CHILD'S ADHD SYMPTOMS FOR BAD BEHAVIOR

- Your child is not deliberately willful, disobedient, scattered, demanding, obnoxious, aggressive, or lazy. Your child has ADHD – a neurological condition.
- Research shows that criticizing your child is likely to make the symptoms worse.
- Don't forget that you are the expert when it comes to your child.
- Almost every child wants to please teachers and parents. Give them those opportunities.
- Reward for better behavior. Talk about why that behavior was good and how it made both of you feel. A study of boys with ADHD showed that they had the most brain activity linked to short-term memory when they received large rewards.

# HOW PARENTS CAN CHANGE THEIR OWN “BAD BEHAVIOR” OF BEING OVERLY CRITICAL

- **S is for symptom.**

Would you punish a child for having a runny nose? It’s a medical problem and so is ADHD.

- **A is for ADHD.**

Once you’ve identified the behavior as a symptom, say to yourself, “ADHD is a medical problem, not a behavior problem.” Your child is not doing it to irritate you. Your child aims to please you.

- **I is for “It’s OK.”**

In the big picture, the behavior is probably not that big of a deal. Tell yourself, “It’s OK.”

- **L is for listen.**

This can not be overstated. Listening to your child helps you understand them, their perspective, their strengths and interests as well as their problems. Ask your child what will help them most. Their answer may be contrary to your thinking, but respecting their views is very important to your relationship and their self-esteem.

# POSITIVE PARENTING ADVICE

- Accept that your child is imperfect, just like everyone else's child.
- Don't believe all the "bad news" about your child's ADHD. Your child has potential!
- Don't overestimate the importance of ADHD medication. Fight the urge to say, "Did your medication wear off?"
- Make sure you know the difference between punishment and discipline. Discipline teaches the child how to behave. Punishment uses fear and shame to *force* the child to behave.
- The best way to discipline a child with ADHD is with a simple program of behavior modification by systematically rewarding the attainment of small goals.
- Rewards and punishment (if used) must be immediate. Delaying seems to be less effective.

# POSITIVE PARENTING ADVICE (CONT.)

- Never punish a child for bad behavior that they are unable to control. When you repeatedly punish a child for behavior they can't control, you set them up to fail. Eventually, the child will quit trying.
- Don't blame other people for your child's difficulties. Placing blame on others allows the child to NOT accept responsibility for their actions.
- Separate the deed from the doer. Never call a child with ADHD "lazy," "hyper," or ask questions like, "What's wrong with you?" Instead, ask your child, "We have a problem, and I need your help to solve it. Can you help?" The more your child can be part of the solution, the better the outcome.
- Don't be too quick to say, "no." There are those times when "no" is necessary, but try to say "yes" as often as possible. ADHD children hear "no" way too much. Try to find a compromise if the answer can't be "yes."

# POSITIVE PARENTING ADVICE (CONT.)

- Pay more attention to your child's positive behavior. Dr. Fredrickson's research shows that a ratio of 3 positive comments for every one critical comment results in the best outcomes in terms of building resilience and maintaining healthy relationships.
- Anticipate potentially explosive situations. Plan ahead if you know there will be a potential melt down. Talk about what the behavior that is expected.
- Be a good role model. Make sure you and your spouse (or ex) are in agreement with the structure and discipline. A behavior plan is ineffective if not applied consistently.
- Don't lose your temper in front of your child.
- Make happiness and laughter an integral part of your family life.

# ASSESSING SOCIAL SKILLS

Children may show deficits in social skills as follows:

- Difficulty paying attention when spoken to, missing pieces of information
- Appears to ignore others
- Difficulty taking turns in conversation (tendency to interrupt frequently)
- Difficulty following through on tasks and/or responsibilities
- Failure to use proper manners
- Missed social cues
- Disorganized lifestyle

# ASSESSING SOCIAL SKILLS (CONT.)

- Sharing information that is inappropriate
- Being distracted by sounds or noises
- Become flooded or overwhelmed, shutting down
- Disorganized or scattered thoughts
- Rambling or straying off topic during conversations
- Ending a conversation abruptly



# WAYS TO MASTER SOCIAL SKILLS

- Explicit instruction is needed regarding social skills. Most people just pick up on social behavior by watching others, however, those with ADHD don't.
- Encourage your student to have a positive attitude and not get discouraged.
- Choose a goal regarding social skills to allow the child to master a particular skill.
- Observe others. Point out positive social skills in others to your child.
- Role play!
- Visualization allows a child to rehearse interactions in their head to prepare for a social interaction.
- Have a secret language with your child as a prompt. It can be a gesture, a spoken reminder or a simple wink.

# DIET

- Studies have shown that processed foods have been positively associated with the risk of ADHD.
- Healthy eating patterns, such as the Mediterranean diet and vegetarian diets, have been associated with ADHD.
- There is no research associated with specific nutrients or supplements.

Source: Pinto, Sofia; Dorreia-de-Sa, Teresa; Vasconcelos, Carla; Moreira, Pedro; Ferreira-Gomes, Joana. *Eating Patterns and Dietary Interventions in ADHD: A Narrative Review*. *Nutrients*, October 14, 2022.

# RESOURCES

- [CHADD.org](http://CHADD.org)
- [Additudemagazine.org](http://Additudemagazine.org)
- [NIMH.org](http://NIMH.org) (National Institute of Mental Health)
- [ADD.org](http://ADD.org)
- [Childmind.org](http://Childmind.org)
- [LDAAmerica.org](http://LDAAmerica.org)
- [PRNTexas.org](http://PRNTexas.org)

Thank you!