

## Helping Your Child with ADHD

### **Ready!**

- This teaching guide is designed for 60 minutes, but can be reduced to 30 minutes if you focus more on how to help parents with ADHD children.
- This unit is designed to help parents learn about the characteristics of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder.
- This unit is designed to help parents learn strategies for helping their children with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder.
- Read and review the unit “Helping Your Child With ADHD” at <http://www.arfamilies.org>
- Review lesson materials, including lesson outline and handouts. You may extend or reduce the teaching guide based on the length of your presentation.
- It may be helpful to distribute copies of the web unit in advance if possible. Encourage parents/participants to read the unit and share any comments and/or questions at the training.

### **Grab!**

- Take copies of handouts for each participant.
- Poster board and marker.
- Take copies of the evaluation forms for each participant.

### **Go!**

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is widely referred to as ADHD. Children with ADHD have brain disorders that make it difficult for them to regulate certain activities. They may appear to be inattentive, easily distracted, and full of disruptive energy. Having a family member with (ADHD) is often frustrating and challenging. It can leave family members feeling exhausted, helpless, and confused. Identifying ADHD is no easy task. Think for a moment about a typical five-year-old boy. Does he have difficulty sitting still? Does he get easily distracted? Does the child shift from one uncompleted task to the next? Does he seem to bounce around with more energy than focus?**

[Give the group an opportunity to respond.]

**For most five-year-olds, the answer to all these questions is yes. Young children simply have not yet learned to regulate their emotions, thought processes, and behaviors. It does not mean they have ADHD. For young children, many of the symptoms we associate with ADHD are simply appropriate behaviors for their age. ADHD is not easily diagnosed. In fact, there are many myths about the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of ADHD.**

[Pass out the Activity Sheet 1: Fact or Myth. Give participants a few minutes to fill it out. Remind them that their answers are for their eyes only and will be used for a review at the conclusion of the training.]

**ADHD is a developmental disorder of self-control. It is the most common mental health disorder diagnosed in children. Children with ADHD typically have problems with inattention, impulsivity and/or hyperactivity. Sometimes all three areas are affected. Problems in these areas are to such as extreme that behavior and performance of these children is often impaired at home or school, or in social and community settings.**

**Young children with ADHD may have difficulty in relaying their emotions. They may be more active than other children their own age and they may wander around from one activity to another. They may also struggle with understanding and obeying rules. The child may not pick up on social cues and they may have difficulties making friends, may often not listen to directions or warnings, may forget things easily and may seem absentminded. They may be easily frustrated, may be bossy towards others, may have trouble problem solving and may lack self-control.**

**There are three types of ADHD:**

- 1. predominantly inattentive type**
- 2. predominantly hyperactivity-impulsive type; or**
- 3. combined type (exhibits symptoms of inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity)**

**Of course all people have some of the characteristics but when a child consistently shows more of this behavior than classmates and shows the behavior over a period of time, there is reason to wonder if the child may have ADHD. If your child has had any of the above symptoms for at least six months, it is important to consider getting a professional evaluation by a doctor or psychologist who has experience dealing with ADHD.**

[Have participants close their eyes and think of a time when a situation was out of their control. Give participants a few seconds to recall.]

**Now, open your eyes. How did it make you feel? Children and adults with ADHD often have no control over their actions. Remember, ADHD is a developmental disorder of self-control. Try to imagine what it takes to control our behavior. We often take for granted that as adults we can stop and think before we act. However, for children with ADHD such natural abilities are very difficult for them.**

**Young children are the hardest group of people to diagnose with ADHD. Young children commonly display varying degrees of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. It is very hard to distinguish when problems in these areas are due to the child's normal development or whether it may be the result of ADHD. What should you do as a parent if you suspect your child has ADHD?**

[Give participants a few minutes to respond to the question.]

**The diagnosis typically occurs when a team of professionals gathers a variety of information, including observation and direct assessment. The most effective treatment for ADHD has been medication. Stimulants have been effective in helping 50% to 95% of children with ADHD. Any use of medication should be carefully considered with a physician. There are other important things that parents and teachers can do to help a child with ADHD. Caring for a child with ADHD can be demanding and challenging. The high rate of movement, constant interruptions and disruptions, and talkativeness can be hard to handle at times. Feelings of frustration, anger, and hostility are very common feelings. One of the most important things to remember is: Don't take it personally! Children with ADHD are challenging to the most "experienced" parents. There are many things that parents can do to help a child with ADHD function better. It's important to provide positive attention for the child's efforts and accomplishments. Children with ADHD need variety and parents can help provide variety by introducing new tasks and surroundings. They work best with close supervision and personal attention. Working side by side with your child will also provide positive one on one interaction.**

[Refer participants to Guide for Raising Children with ADHD.]

**Dr. Russell Barkley's book, Taking Charge of ADHD, is highly recommended resource for parents of children with ADHD. Dr. Barkley recommends 14 guides for raising children with ADHD.**

Discuss Guide for Raising Children with ADHD.

**In closing, let's review the Activity Sheet 1: Fact or Myth. This will be a good review of the main points of this lesson.**

Answer key to Activity Sheet

1. Fact
2. Fact
3. Fact
4. Myth
5. Myth
6. Myth
7. Myth
8. Fact
9. Fact
10. Fact

**ADHD is challenging for everyone, including the child. It is important to treat each child as an individual and avoid stereotypes. More than anything, children with ADHD need understanding adults who patiently guide and help them. Refer back to the two handouts for additional strategies to help children with ADHD.**

Refer participants to website [www.arfamilies.org](http://www.arfamilies.org) for further information.

**Original work by Traci Johnston**

**Helping Your Child with ADHD**  
**Sheet 1: Fact or Myth**

Read each question and write whether or not you think the question is a fact or a myth. Use the extra space after each question to write any notes.

1. ADHD is a developmental disorder of self-control. \_\_\_\_\_
2. ADHD is the most common mental health disorder diagnosed in children.  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Children with ADHD typically have problems with inattention, impulsivity and/or hyperactivity. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Very young children are the easiest group of people to diagnose with ADHD. \_\_\_\_\_
5. An “experienced” parent can make the medical diagnosis of ADHD.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Bad parenting and a dysfunctional family life are the major causes of ADHD in children. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Children with ADHD do not need much structure or clear boundaries.  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. There is NOT a simple test for determining if a child has ADHD.  
\_\_\_\_\_
9. The most effective treatment for ADHD has been medication.  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. With the extra stresses of ADHD, it is possible for families to become negative and reactive. \_\_\_\_\_

## **Guide for Raising Children with ADHD**

Dr. Russell Barkley's book, *Taking Charge of ADHD*, is the book most highly recommended for parents of children with ADHD. Use the following list of 14 guides for raising children with ADHD.

1. **Give your child more immediate feedback and consequences.** Positive feedback can be expressed in the form of praise, rewards or even better physical affection. Whatever the choice of feedback is, it should be provided immediately.
2. **Give your child more frequent feedback.** Feedback is more helpful to children when it is given often. It's great to provide words of encouragement to keep working hard and stay on task until the assignment or task is completed.
3. **Use larger and more powerful consequences.** Children with ADHD will need more powerful consequences to guide them to perform tasks, follow rules, or behave appropriately.
4. **Use incentives before punishment.** Parents often resort to punishment when their children misbehave. A child with ADHD will constantly be punished! Remind yourself of this rule: Positives before negatives. Rewards and incentives actually teach the child.
5. **Break assignments into small steps.** This allows little pieces of the task to get done each day. Without this method, the child is likely to leave the work to be done until the very last minute.
6. **Provide reminders.** Children with ADHD have impaired memory, or the inability to keep in mind information that is necessary to complete a task. Physical reminders can help the child focus and stay on task.
7. **Provide a reward closely connected with the task.** Children with ADHD often have trouble internalizing time, rules and motivation. The reward/incentive should be closely linked to the task. The incentive can be something the child would like when the work is completed.
8. **Make thinking and problem solving more physical.** Children with ADHD often respond impulsively. Finding ways to solve problems in a physical way requires the child to capture his thoughts down on paper before he forgets them. Using pictures and/or symbols is another good way to remind them of their problem-solving tasks.

9. **Strive for consistency.** It is crucial to use the same strategies for managing a child's behavior each and every time. You need to be consistent over time, not giving up too soon, respond the same way even though the setting is different, and making sure both parents are using the same method.
10. **Act, don't yak!** Stop talking and use consequences that are already in place. Children are more sensitive to the consequences and feedback you use and much less sensitive to your reasoning.
11. **Plan ahead for problem situations.** Try these five simple steps before entering a potential problem setting.
  - a. Step 1: Stop
  - b. Step 2: Review two or three rules with the child
  - c. Step 3: Set up the reward or incentive
  - d. Step 4: Explain the punishment
  - e. Step 5: Follow your plan
12. **Remember your child has a disability.** Keep your head. It's important to remember at all times that you are the adult. React to the child reasonable, fairly, and rationally.
13. **Don't take your child's problems personally.** There may come a time when you need to remove yourself from the situation. Don't conclude you are a bad parent when a situation gets out of control or does not turn out as you expected.
14. **Practice forgiveness.** Practicing forgiveness the most important principle when dealing with an ADHD child. It is, however, difficult to implement consistently everyday.

## Helping Your Child with ADHD

Please answer the following question in order to help us know whether this session was helpful to you.

1. This workshop gave me specific ideas that will be helpful to me.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

2. I think this session will help me be a better family member.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

3. I am glad I attended this workshop.

- I strongly agree.
- I agree.
- I neither agree nor disagree.
- I disagree.
- I strongly disagree.

Comments or suggestions: