

## **INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES WITH Children/Young people with ADHD/ADD.**

### **Important first note:**

Any of the techniques below are less effective with young people who are suffering from Oppositional Defiance Disorder. (Please see section on Information for Families with young people who have ADHD and ODD).

### **Why usual Behavioural Parenting Methods can fail:**

Behavioural Parenting Methods Require the child to:

- Listen
- Organise and Plan ahead
- Remember
- Think before acting
- Be motivated by rewards

A child with ADHD can have difficulties with all these areas so small steps need to be taken to ensure that parenting methods can be as effective as possible and these include:

- Clear Communication
- Simple instructions
- Small number of important Rules
- Regular and Repeated words

In addition to the above, the following points need to be taken into account:

### **Routine, Structure and Consistency**

The child with ADHD needs fixed routines, Structure and consistency to help them each day. If they do not have this then the young person's day will be sent into chaos, disorder and confusion engulfing all those in close proximity.

### **Gaining attention**

1. Eye Contact: Look them in the eye, get down to their level. For the younger child hold their hands out in front or direct their face towards you. For the older child, approach from the front and gently touch to gain attention.
2. Simple Words: speak clearly, directly and address them by name
3. Enthusiasm-show enthusiasm

#### 4. Stepwise Instructions: clear, simple, step by step

If the child is not oppositional, ask for feedback to ensure they have understood

#### **Ignore the unimportant**

It's hard, but for yours and the child's sake, taking a step back, ignoring the small, unimportant irritations and only engaging in the bigger battles will make for a more successful parenting programme.

#### **Identify the triggers for unwanted behaviour.**

You won't always be able or want to avoid events that may trigger unwanted behaviour such as parties, visitor, late nights etc but being able to anticipate them will make things easier to manage.

#### **The In-between times**

Children with ADHD will handle the routines, Structure and consistency of the classroom and the freedom of the playground but may struggle with the areas in-between acting like a 'caged animal' to get out to play and finding it hard to settle after play. It is important to be aware of these times as again, being able to anticipate them will make things easier to manage.

#### **Medication?**

When required, medication can bring the child to a place where they can engage with parenting programmes effectively.

#### **Firm or gentle approach?**

There must be some degree of rules and discipline, how much is hard to say and may need to be tailored to the individual child but Green & Chee (1997) suggest 90% gentle and 10% firm.

#### **Children need rules**

- Small, sensible framework of rules is required which are simple, fair, few in number and clear to understand.
- Draw the rules up in advance when all is calm.
- When a rule is challenged, clearly restate the rule and enforce....a rule is made, a child is reminded and action follows.

#### **Avoid Arguments**

Don't debate, you will lose....State the rule and stand your ground.

## **Avoid Escalations**

Stay calm, use matter of fact voice, and keep repeated rule like a broken gramophone record. Escalating every unimportant behaviour will add fuel to the fire.

## **Counting 1,2,3.**

State the rule and say one, wait five seconds, then say two, wait five seconds, then say three, then act (see Thomas Phelan (1995) 1-2-3 magic).

## **Time out**

When rules and counting techniques are ineffective and things are spinning out of control space is required and the child must be removed from any attention.

- Use a quiet corner, time out chair, sit on a step, period of isolation in their bedroom.
- Have a name for this place e.g. 'the step', 'the room', 'the room'.
- Put the child into the time out zone without anger or debate.
- Do not respond to calling out.
- If the child for instance leaves the room...put the child back in the room without saying anything to the child.
- The time in time out is a minute for each year of life.
- Once time in time out is complete let the matter drop
- Can be used up until adolescent years.

## **Back up plan**

When all is failing and you are faced with blank refusal, have a backup plan. Remain calm, use an inexpressive voice and give the young person a choice. Choice reduces the chance of refusal and gives room to move.

'I want you to tidy your room please' 'No!' 'Emma, if you tidy your room you can watch your DVD, if you choose not to there will be no DVD tonight'.

## **Encouraging positive behaviour with rewards.**

Reward positive and wanted behaviour with small, frequent rewards the wanted behaviour will occur more often.

Ignore negative and unwanted behaviour and this behaviour will reduce and hopefully stop.

**Different reward schedules**

Hard rewards-money, food, special privilege

Soft rewards-praise, enthusiasm, show of pride

Cumulative rewards- collection of stars, stamps and tokens for a small period of time and adding up to a major reward at the end (see Token rewards and star charts below).

For soft and hard rewards they should be given for specific behaviours and repeated on a regular basis to be effective. Change reward frequently to maintain interest.

**Token rewards**


Starting the day with no tokens

For every wanted behaviour the young person is given a small token of little value after a period of time of the wanted behaviour this adds up to a more meaningful reward for example, Tim is going on a long car journey of around six hours. For every 15 minutes of good behaviour mum puts a sticker on a chart...when 6 are collected Tim is allowed to have a meal treat at the next McDonalds.

**Starting the day with tokens**

Young person starts the day with 10 tokens. For wanted behaviour 2 tokens are added, for unwanted behaviour 1 token is taken away. A reward is given when a stated number of token is achieved for example if Tim has 6 tokens by the end of the day he can choose a treat to eat for supper.

**Star Chart**

DAY	TARGET BEHAVIOUR 1	TARGET BEHAVIOUR 2	TARGET BEHAVIOUR 2
	Bringing home reading book	Helping to tidy bedroom	Feeding fishes
MONDAY			
TUESDAY			
WEDNESDAY			
THURSDAY			
FRIDAY			
SATURDAY			
SUNDAY			

Use no more than three, specific and easily measured target behaviours at a time. Put a star (or stickers that the young person has chosen) in the right

column each day the target behaviour is carried out. Not to be used in children under age 4. Chart effective for two weeks if used correctly after this the young person will lose interest.

### **Encouraging behaviour with privileges**

Good for older children. Good behaviour is rewarded with privileges such as late bedtime, meal out, friend to stay over....it must be something the young person gains pleasure from.

Privileges can be withdrawn when unwanted behaviour is shown but don't be over the top. Examples of suitable withdrawal no extended bedtime tonight, only having half the time on computer. Keep it short, make sure the privilege is meaningful to the young person and do not enter into debates.

### **Punishments and smacking**

Limit the use of punishment to aspects such as 'Time Out'. Punishment can soon spiral out of control to the point where all parties are out of control and unaware of how and why things got to this place...in other words, it's ineffective, damages relationships and is dangerous.

Limit use of punishment, give a clear warning of what will come, think before you act, stay calm, don't escalate, once finished let the matter drop.

Check the young person's behaviour during the day and give warnings where needed...not doing this and leaving it until an explosion at the end of the day leaves the young person unaware of what they have done.

It is the young person's behaviour you do not like, not the young person so change 'You' to 'I'.... 'You are always messing your bedroom up' 'I get upset when the house becomes such a mess'.

### **Last words**

- Notice, Reinforce and Reward good behaviour and ignore the bad behaviours (as long as the child and others are safe).
- Use equal amounts of firmness and encouragement
- 'When in doubt take the peaceful path, hold out the olive branch of nurture, not the stick of punishment' (Green & Chee, 1997).

(Adapted from Green and Chee, 1997)