

PARENT'S GUIDE TO EARLY CHILDHOOD ATTENTION DEFICIT DISORDERS

**Stephen B. McCarney
Nancy W. Johnson**

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HAWTHORNE

Educational Services, Inc.

800 Gray Oak Drive

Columbia, MO 65201

Telephone: (573) 874-1710

FAX: (800) 442-9509

www.hes-inc.com

www.hawthorne-ed.com

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I. Introduction

The *Parent's Guide to Early Childhood Attention Deficit Disorders* was developed to provide parents of young children with specific, practical strategies to use in helping their child be more successful in the home environment. The intervention strategies have been tried and tested by parents of children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders and are presented in the most convenient and practical manner possible.

The format chosen for the guide was designed for ease of use in identifying the problem the child exhibits and providing a selection of strategies parents may implement to successfully respond to that problem. This format reduces the need for lengthy reading exercises, indecision over how or exactly what to do, and whether the intervention strategies are appropriate for the child.

Because of differences in situations and the kinds of behaviors associated with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders, the interventions take several forms. Some interventions are appropriate for the prevention of problems, while others reduce problem behavior, increase the child's self-control of his/her behavior, or help the child learn more appropriate behavior. A variety of intervention strategies is presented for each behavior problem associated with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorders so that **parents** will be

able to choose the interventions best suited to **them**, to **their child**, in **their home**. We chose to produce a collection of strategies parents can practice in the home, without the need for a therapist or counselor to explain how to "implement" those strategies. We also chose to develop a reference guide format that parents can keep available in their homes to answer that primary question, "What do you do when your child. . . ?" rather than a text parents read one time and then shelve without further use. And, lastly, we chose the most logical and common sense approaches because they are the ones that work best with children.

We believe it is extremely important that the intervention strategies employed to help a child succeed are those with which parents are most comfortable. Parents are likely to be more successful implementing those interventions they think are best for themselves and their child rather than attempting to implement interventions suggested by a third party who would not have the same insight the parents have relative to their child's behavior.

The *Parent's Guide to Early Childhood Attention Deficit Disorders* was written for all parents who are genuinely concerned about their child's success and are willing to do all they can personally to make that success possible.

**S.B.M.
N.W.J.**

II. Interventions

1 Is easily distracted by other things happening in the home

1. Is the child capable of task or behavior? Be sure that the behavior or task is within the child's capability level, and respect the outcome in terms of the child's age.

2. In clear, simple language, and actions establish rules for performing everyday tasks (e.g., putting toys away, clearing dishes, etc.). The rules should be consistent and reinforced by all household members. Frequent reminders help to reinforce expectations.

3. To help your child remember what is expected, establish a daily routine for your child to follow when getting up in the morning, performing chores, or getting ready for bed.

4. Accentuate everything that your child does remember to do in a variety of ways. Do this by using verbal praise (e.g., "You put all the toys in the basket. The room looks great, and you'll be able to find your toys when you want them!"), a hug, a kiss on the cheek, offering to read a story, going for a walk or bike ride, or joining the child in finishing the task.

5. If there are other children in the household who get things done without being distracted, reward them for this behavior.

6. Children need to see adults get their work done without being distracted. Set an example by getting your daily tasks accomplished in an orderly and efficient manner. Young children love to help adults. Discuss your strategies for sticking to the task at hand while your child helps you.

7. Young children need to see the relationship between behavior and logical consequences (e.g., if the plants don't get watered, they wither). Very young children will need numerous examples of this before they develop their own understanding of logical consequences.

8. When your child does not get something done because he/she was distracted, clearly and simply explain to the child what he/she did wrong, what should have been done, and why.

For example: Your child is supposed to put her small toys away when she is done playing with them. She did not do this, and the shoes to her doll have been sucked up into the vacuum cleaner. Now she will not have shoes for the doll.

9. Make a chart for your child to keep track of responsibilities.

For example: Draw pictures or cut them out of magazines, then write a caption for each task you want the child to accomplish (e.g., pick up toys, put clothes in the hamper, or feed the dog).

Leave spaces for the number of days the child is expected to accomplish the task. Keep a supply of stickers handy, and place a sticker in the appropriate space for every task accomplished without distraction. In some instances it may be best to focus on one task at a time. Discuss a reward that could be received as a result of accomplishing the task for the desired number of days (e.g., watching 30 extra minutes of TV, going on a picnic, inviting a friend over to play).

10. Allow natural consequences to be the teacher if your child fails to accomplish a task due to distraction (e.g., toys not put away become lost, plants not watered wither and die, etc.).

11. Parent from a positive perspective. Let the child know what the next step after the task will be (e.g., "After your bath, we can read a book.").

12. Young children need frequent reminders. These need to be in verbal, picture, and written form. Make a list with words and pictures (perhaps get copies made so your child can have a fresh one each day). Your child will feel a sense of accomplishment when he/she can mark off jobs on the list as they are done.