

50 Quick Tips on the Classroom Management of Attention Deficit Disorder

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For children with ADD to do well, it is imperative that their teacher understand what ADD is and knowhow to work with these children in the classroom. The classroom experience can make or break the self-esteem, as well as the intellectual foundation, of children with ADD.

To assist in the classroom, we offer 50 tips written for ADD children in school. Since these tips were written explicitly for the classroom teacher, you may find it useful to share them with your child's school.

Teachers recognize what many professionals do not: that there is no one syndrome of ADD, but many; that ADD rarely occurs in "pure" form by itself, but rather it usually shows up entangled with several other problems such as learning disabilities or mood problems; that the face of ADD changes with the weather, that it's inconstant and unpredictable; and that the treatment for ADD, despite what may be serenely elucidated in various texts, remains a task of hard work and devotion. The effectiveness of any treatment for this disorder at school depends upon the knowledge and the persistence of the school and the individual teacher.

The following suggestions are intended for teachers of children of all ages. Some suggestions will be obviously more appropriate for younger children, others for older, but the unifying themes of structure, education, and encouragement pertain to all.

1. First of all, make sure what you are dealing with really is ADD.
2. Build your support. Find a knowledgeable person with whom you can consult when you have a problem.
3. Know your limits. Don't be afraid to ask for help. You, as a teacher, cannot be expected to be an expert on ADD.
4. Ask the child what will help. Children with ADD are often very intuitive.
5. Remember the emotional part of learning. These children need special help in finding enjoyment in the classroom.
6. Remember that ADD kids need structure.
7. Post rules. The children will be reassured by knowing what is expected of them.
8. Repeat directions. Write down directions. Speak directions. Repeat directions. People with ADD need to hear things more than once.
9. Make frequent eye contact. You can "bring back" an ADD child with eye contact.
10. Seat the ADD child near your desk or whatever you are most of the time.
11. Set limits, boundaries. This is containing and soothing, not punitive.
12. Have a predictable a schedule as possible. Post it on the blackboard or the child's desk.
13. Try to help the children make their own schedules for after school in an effort to avoid one of the hallmarks of ADD: procrastination.
14. Eliminate, or reduce the frequency of, timed tests.
15. Allow for escape-value outlets such as leaving class for a moment.
16. Go for quality rather than quantity of homework .
17. Monitor progress often. Children with ADD benefit greatly from frequent feedback.
18. Break down large tasks into small tasks.

19. Let yourself be playful, be unconventional, be flamboyant. People with ADD love to play.
20. Still again, watch out for overstimulation.
21. Seek out and underscore success as much as possible.
22. Memory is often a problem with these kids. Teach them little tricks like mnemonics, flash cards, etc.
23. Use outlines. Teach outlining. Teach underlining.
24. Announce what you are going to say it. Say it. Then say what you have said.
25. Simplify instructions. Simplify choices. Simplify scheduling.
26. Use feedback that helps the child become self-observant.
27. Make expectation explicit.
28. A point system is a possibility as part of behavioral modification or a reward system for younger children.
29. If the child has trouble reading social cues - try discreetly to offer specific and explicit advise as a sort of social coaching.
30. Teach test taking skills.
31. Make a game out of things. Motivation improves ADD.
32. Separate pairs and trios, whole clusters even, that don't do well together.
33. Pay attention to connectedness. These kids need to feel engaged, connected.
34. Give responsibility back to the child when possible.
35. Try a home-to-school-to-home notebook.
36. Try to use daily progress reports.
37. Physical devices such as timer and buzzers can help with self-monitoring.
38. Prepare for unstructured time.
39. Praise, stroke, approve, encourage, nourish.
40. With older children, suggest that they write little notes to themselves to remind them of their questions about what is being taught.
41. Handwriting is difficult for many of these children. Consider developing alternatives.
42. Be like a conductor of symphony. Get the orchestra's attention before beginning.
43. When possible, arrange for some students to have "study buddy" in each subject.
44. To avoid stigma, explain to the rest of the class and normalize the treatment the child receives.
45. Meet with parents often. Avoid the pattern of meeting only when there are problems or crisis.
46. Encourage reading aloud at home. Read aloud in class as much as possible.
47. Repeat, repeat, repeat.
48. Encourage physical exercise.
49. With older children, stress preparation prior to coming into class.
50. Always be on the lookout for sparkling moments.

These 50 Tips are from Dr. Hallowell's and Dr. Ratey's book, *Driven to Distraction*, from Pantheon Books.