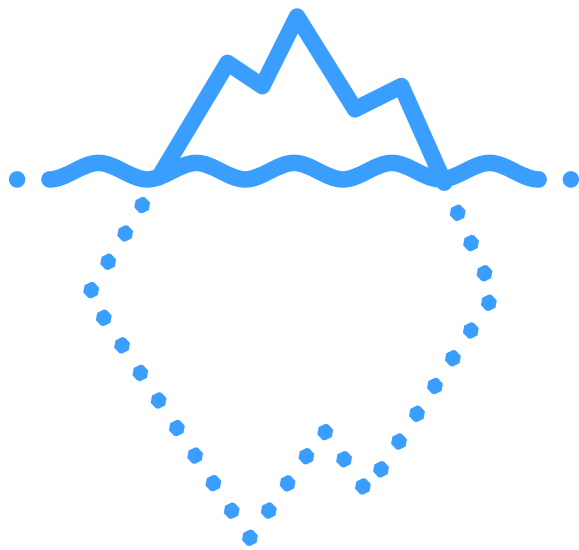


# ADHD Behaviour & Communication

Techniques to manage behaviour which may work with other children might not work well for an ADHD child. The best results come from clear communication; simple instructions; having a small number of important rules and positive feedback.



## Responsive Parenting

All behaviour communicates a need, and like an iceberg, what you see on the surface is often not the root cause of the problem. Look underneath the iceberg and try to find the need your child is trying to communicate.

**“When we look below the surface of a behaviour, we begin to see what our children really need. That is the root of responding, not reacting. By responding with compassion, we find ways to support our children, not punish them”**

E. A. Sautter, Additude, 2022

## Communication

ADHD children struggle with communication. They don't seem to listen when spoken to, blurt out answers, talk excessively and sometimes interrupt or intrude on others. They have problems sustaining attention, struggle with forgetfulness and have difficulty picking up on social cues or 'rules' of socialising.

See our [‘ADHD Strategies’ factsheet](#) for some communication tips:

- Six steps of more effective communication,
- Descriptive verbal praise
- ‘Do’ commands



## House rules

Keep it simple – choose only a few behaviours at once and be very clear with expectations. Sit down together and make it an activity. Remember to take your child's opinions into consideration. Review regularly, and display them where they can be seen!



## Rewards

Give rewards regularly and consistently at the time that you see the desired behaviour, but rewards must be desirable. Always follow through on promised rewards, and once awarded, don't take them away. Rewards can be 'hard', 'soft' or cumulative. 'Hard' rewards could be money, food treats or special privileges. 'Soft' rewards are praise, enthusiasm and parental pride.

**Verbal, positive praise is the best tool to change ADHD behaviour.**

Cumulative rewards use a 'token' (e.g. stars, stamps) to build up to a larger 'prize'. Creating a token economy can be an effective way to change behaviour. It can be a slip of paper, sticker or token which is awarded immediately after or during a positive behaviour, to be exchanged for a reward later.



## Consequences

Consequences are less effective at changing behaviour than rewards.

It is important to be clear with your expectations. Remember good communication, try and use a calm tone of voice.

Have consistent and appropriate consequences up your sleeve, which are to be used immediately.

- **Don't** use the same consequence that you use as a reward
- **Don't** use consequences that are unhelpful to child or family
- **Don't** give negative attention
- **Don't** give delayed consequences
- **Don't** give disproportionate consequences



## Daily Quality Time

Spend 5 minutes with younger children, and 15 minutes with teens. Let your child choose an activity they enjoy. Actively listen and let them lead the conversation.

Validate their choices and interests. Focus on giving positive attention to good behaviour while ignoring minor misbehaviour. Avoid directing the activity or criticising.