

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

What is Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

ADHD is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescence and adulthood. ADHD is characterized by difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity (over-activity).

There are three subtypes: Predominantly hyperactive-impulsive (ADHD), predominantly inattentive (ADD), and combined hyperactive-impulsive and inattentive (ADHD and ADD).

Most children have the combined ADHD subtype.

How common is ADHD?

According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), around 3-5% of children have ADHD. Some experts estimate that ADHD may occur in up to 8-10% of school-aged children. 100 PYD mentees are diagnosed with ADHD.

Characteristics of ADHD include:

- Inattention:
 - Is easily distracted
 - Does not follow directions or finish tasks
 - Does not appear to be listening when someone is speaking
 - Does not pay attention and makes careless mistakes
 - Is forgetful about daily activities
 - Has problems organizing daily tasks
 - Avoids or dislikes activities that require sitting still or a sustained effort
 - Often loses things, including personal items
 - Has a tendency to daydream
- Hyperactivity:
 - Often squirms, fidgets, or bounces when sitting
 - Does not stay seated as expected
 - Talks excessively
 - High Intensity Energy Level
- Impulsivity:
 - Has difficulty waiting for his or her turn
 - Blurts out answers before the question has been completed
 - Often interrupts others

Tips for Mentors:

- Give immediate and positive feedback when you want to encourage your mentee's behavior.
- Ignore or re-direct behaviors that you want to discourage.
- Point out what your mentee does well.
- Structure outings with your mentee in order to encourage positive behavior - for instance, if your mentee gets over-stimulated, schedule more quiet activities.
- When performing tasks, break down larger tasks into smaller parts.
- Take periodic breaks to decrease sensory overload, may have low sensory threshold.
- Try to keep a routine with your mentee- for instance, schedule phone calls for the same time weekly, or hang out at the same times/days each month. Try to inform your mentee of any changes in scheduling as far in advance as possible.
- Be clear and consistent with any rules you would like your mentee to follow in your mentoring relationship.
- Use both verbal and visual instructions.
- Give verbal cues before transitions.
- Give mentee time to process directions .
- Pace activities, and allow time for decompression.
- Be aware of the setting and environment:
 - Many youth with ADHD may have difficulty sitting still.
 - Permitting some movement will allow the youth to focus on the activity or task at hand.
 - Forcing your mentee to sit still will require a lot of energy on their part and they may not be able to focus on other things.
- Activities that are interesting to youth with ADHD tend to have the following characteristics:
 - Novelty: fast-paced activities are usually best.
 - Immersion: children with ADHD tend to focus on the here and now, so the best activities require or allow the mentee's complete physical and mental immersion.
 - Peer modeling: modeling how others look, talk, and act.
 - Sensory tactile art or science activities.

Real Life Example:

Your mentee is playing with their backpack instead of putting things away and getting ready to leave for your activity. Instead of focusing on the negatives, you touch his shoulder and say in a clear voice, "Put your books into your backpack. Once you put them away, we can get in the car and go to the Science Museum."

Sources:

1. National Institute of Mental Health <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder/complete-index.shtml>
2. CH.A.D.D. -Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder <http://www.chadd.org>
3. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities <http://www.nichcy.org/>

4. Mentoring Children with ADHD
http://www.additudemag.com/q&a/ask_the_organizer/6166.html
5. ADD / ADHD and School http://www.helpguide.org/mental/adhd_add_teaching_strategies.htm
6. Help your ADHD Child Make Friends <http://add.about.com/od/childrenandteens/a/peers.htm>