

INFORMATION AND RESOURCES



ADDvanced Solutions
Supporting you to find the answers

Children and Young People's Guide: You, Me and ADHD

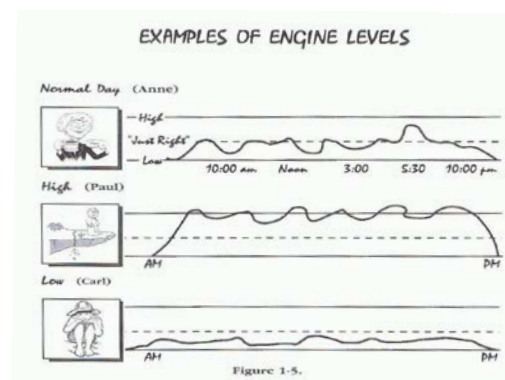
Self-Management

You will feel happier and more in control as you learn to manage the characteristics of ADHD as they affect you. If you are in the habit of putting things off, decide to take control and choose to do them as soon as possible, or set yourself a starting time (you may need a little help with this to begin with!) This will greatly reduce stress and will free up time to do the activities you enjoy.

Think about how your energy levels are: If you are easily over-excited, learn what you can do to calm down. Some young people find concentrating on breathing slowly can help, or doing a calming activity. Listening to music is helpful for a lot of people - though you will have to find the type of music that has the effect you're looking for.

If your energy levels are very low and you find it difficult to engage with what's happening around you, you may need to find something that will stimulate you. This could be physical activity – going for a quick walk, or jumping on a trampoline if there's one available! Again the right kind of music can help, or a change of environment.

Get to know your rhythm. Some individuals with ADHD work best in short bursts and need regular activity breaks, others take a while to settle to a task but once they are focused they can stay engaged for longer – if you are like this then frequent breaks would be very disruptive to your concentration.



Medication & Me

Medication won't be the first suggestion if you are diagnosed with ADHD, as some young people find that understanding and putting strategies in place at home and school is enough to deal with the symptoms. However if your symptoms are quite bad and other support has not helped your doctor will assess which, if any, medication is right for you. You would usually be started on a low dose and monitored for its effectiveness to find the correct dosage for you, as it differs for individuals. Be sure to ask your doctor any questions you have about taking the medication.

Recommended medications include methylphenidate (including Ritalin), atomoxetine, dexamfetamine and lisdexamfetamine.

Methylphenidate is a stimulant medication and may help reduce hyperactivity and improve your concentration. It comes as:

- Equasym XL
- Medikinet XL
- Matoride XL
- Xenidate XL
- Ritalin®
- Concerta XL®

(XL indicates that they are slow-release and will have a consistent effect through the day)

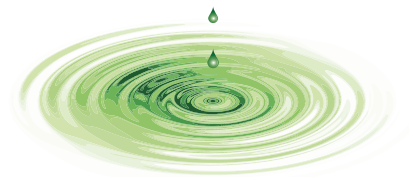
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Dexamfetamine is also a stimulant medication that works in a similar way to methylphenidate, by stimulating areas of the brain that play a part in controlling attention and behaviour. It is licensed for children from 3 years.

Lisdexamfetamine is a similar medication to dexamfetamine, and works in the same way. It can be used by children with ADHD over the age of six if treatment with methylphenidate hasn't helped.

Atomoxetine is a non-stimulant medication which is also long-acting and will help with attention and comes as Strattera®.

Other options for treating ADHD include psychological therapy, where you talk with a professional on a one-to-one basis about your feelings, mood and behaviour, and making changes to your lifestyle including diet and exercise – young people have found that certain foods and drinks have negative effects on their behaviour.

Relationships

Friendships are very important to our sense of worth, and having good relationships can help us through the more difficult times in our lives. Having good relationships with our parents, teachers, and others who care for us will also mean a happier life.

Here are ten tips to help maintain good relationships:

- **Good listening** is important to maintain friendships; people need to feel they are important to you, and paying attention to what they say is a key way to show this.
- Maintain **eye contact** without staring, to show you're interested.
- **Try not to interrupt** when they're talking.
- Try to **remember the important things** about your friends; for example make a note of their birthday somewhere that you will see it – nowadays there are all kinds of apps on your phone or social media that can help with this.
- Try as far as you can to **keep to arrangements**. If you are always cancelling, they will feel your friendship is not important to you. Again, use a calendar or app that works for you.
- **Apologise** if you make a mistake (being impulsive can often lead to mistakes, but you can always let your friend know you are sorry).
- Your spontaneity can be a real source of joy to your friends – give them **nice surprises**!
- Try to be aware of, and open to, **other people's points of view**.
- **Be there** for your friends if they're having a hard time.
- Everyone feels angry or frustrated with their friends at some point, but talk with your parents or other people who can help you to find the best ways of dealing with these feelings.

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Tips for my teachers in school - How you can help me:

- **Help me to focus:** Look at me, make sure you have my attention and speak to me clearly.
- **Give me structure and routine:** Let me know in advance if you are going to change things or if things are going to be different.
- **Don't rush me or I will get confused:** Rushing me will only stress me out I will forget the things I need to do, to take or what I need to do next.
- **Help me when I don't understand:** Don't leave me to struggle, I won't always be able to work things out for myself, give me instructions one at a time and let me repeat them back to you.
- It helps me to have **visual aids** whenever possible, and to be allowed to handle objects relevant to the subject we are learning about if it is appropriate; this really helps me to learn and to remember information.
- **Tell me when I am getting it right:** Give me small achievable goals and tell me I am doing well at least 20 times a day, this will let me know I am doing things right.
- **Please try to ignore me when I am being silly or irritating:** I don't do it to upset you; I need you to tell me what you want from me rather than always telling me off for getting things wrong. I will have bad days but I want you to let me have a fresh start every day.
- Sometimes I forget things – try to understand what my brain is like! It's hard for me when I'm punished for the things I struggle with.
- I will probably need **practical help** in organising myself and my books and equipment. Sometimes I forget things no matter how hard I try! A spare text book and essential equipment kept in the classroom would reduce a lot of my stress and embarrassment at school.
- **Homework:** I might need extra time at the end of the lesson to make sure that I have copied down any homework correctly; or even better, put the homework and any other instructions on a sheet for me to fix into my book at the end of the lesson.
- **If you need to correct me, please talk to me calmly and not in front of the class;** I will be much more able to hear what you are saying and respond positively and cooperatively this way.
- Please listen to me, respect me, value me and help me to feel appreciated.

These tips were developed by and with a group of young people living with neurodevelopmental conditions.

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