

Your 10 Toughest ADHD Discipline Dilemmas —*Solved!*



From ***ADDitude***'s Experts

ADDITUDE
Strategies and Support for ADHD & LD

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A trusted source of advice and information for families touched by attention-deficit disorder—
and a voice of inspiration to help people with ADHD find success at home, at school, and on the job.

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Your 10 Toughest ADHD Discipline Dilemmas— *Solved!*

ADDitude's top parenting experts on the best ways to cope with 10 behavioral problems common among children with ADHD.

Discipline Dilemma #1: My child absolutely refuses to do as he is told.

Your Solution: Sometimes families get into patterns where daily tasks (doing homework, getting ready for bed, etc.) turn into battles. The child eventually complies, but the conflict upsets and exhausts everyone. The best long-term solution for avoiding fights is to set up routines to help children get through daily tasks. For example, parents must establish and enforce regular study times. Be warned, it may take weeks until the child accepts and follows these routines.

Discipline Dilemma #2: My child doesn't care about consequences.

Your Solution: Consequences work best when they're imposed immediately following a broken rule. If you delay the consequence, you're blunting their emotional impact on your child. Consequences should have realistic time limits: long enough to teach a lesson but short enough to give your child a chance to move on to positive things. Overly harsh consequences will encourage your child to resent your authority—and generate more anger.

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Discipline Dilemma #3: I can't believe anything my child tells me.

Your Solution: For children with ADHD, lying is often a coping mechanism. A lie may be a way to cover up forgetfulness, to avoid criticism or punishment, or to avoid dealing with feelings of guilt and shame over repeated failures. Figure out the reasons behind your child's chronic dishonesty. If he lies to avoid consequences, monitor him closely and discipline any act of deception. If he lies in order to cover up failure or shame, provide appropriate help so he can overcome these feelings.

Discipline Dilemma #4: My child doesn't take me seriously.

Your Solution: There could be any number of reasons why a child fails to respect you. Are the rules clear? Put important rules in writing. Does the child consider them unfair? In that case, further discussion is needed. Ultimately, if you want your rules to be followed, you must enforce them consistently. If you make empty threats, you're undermining your parental authority.

Discipline Dilemma #5: My child overreacts to just about everything.

Your Solution: Heightened emotionality is a characteristic of ADHD. For kids with the condition, failure doesn't just discourage—it devastates. While most kids might protest a bit about being disciplined, kids with ADHD might react with intense indignation and anger. But keep in mind that chronic overreaction to discipline may not be the result of the disorder. Is your kid overreacting because she feels criticized? Unloved? Helpless? Overwhelmed? In some cases chronic anger may indicate childhood depression or bipolar disorder.

Discipline Dilemma #6: My child won't listen to me.

Your Solution: If your child regularly tunes you out, do a self-check. Have you become too negative or critical? Has conversation turned into a series of lectures, instead of a give-and-take? No matter what your child's age, try involving him in the process of establishing rules and the consequences for breaking them. A child who feels included in the making of rules will be more likely to respect them.

Discipline Dilemma #7: I'm like a broken record.

Your Solution: Children with ADHD don't respond to nagging. They either tune out, become distracted and forget what they are supposed to do,

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or respond defiantly. Getting kids to follow instructions without nagging is all about schedule. Routines can help keep kids on task and manage the frustration of transitioning from one activity to another. Have dinner at a set time every day, so kids know when it's time to wind down. Set an alarm for specific times throughout the day to keep kids moving from task to task. Create a playlist for everyday tasks so that each song corresponds to an activity like getting dressed, making the bed, or brushing teeth. Over time, using set routines can build the transitioning skill.

Discipline Dilemma #8: My child doesn't want to do anything except play video games.

Your Solution: Don't use video games as a reward. The restrictive access can make them too attractive to kids. Instead, they should be one of many normal, everyday activities like playing outside or reading a book. Try playing as a family so video games are not so isolating. You can also model moderation of screen time, and discuss it with your child. Use apps like Parental-Timelock or Kid Screen Time to monitor and set limits on video and computer game usage. If homework needs to be done on a computer, use a browser add-on like LeechBlock to prevent social media and other online distractions.

Discipline Dilemma #9: My child shoves and throws things, and ignores warnings to "keep your hands to yourself."

Your Solution: A child's physical aggression can be extremely difficult to deal with—emotionally and physically. Sometimes kids get in a pattern in which they hit for negative attention. Avoid this at all costs by removing all sources of attention during an outburst. You can say, "That tone isn't working for me. You can keep it up if you want, but then you'll lose all of your privileges and you're not going to like it." Then, put your child in a safe room with no access to you or rewards. If it's an older child, who you can't physically put in time out, remove yourself from the vicinity. Learn safe holds to restrain your child during a violent outburst so he doesn't hurt himself or others. Create a pattern that when your child swears or is aggressive, parents automatically get up and leave the room.

In extreme cases, you might need outside help to reset the pattern of disruptive behavior in your home. If your child is still not seeing any improvement after two weeks, it might be time to start thinking about other options. Have your child evaluated for another mood disorder that could need additional, separate treatment. Work with a behavioral psychologist to figure out why the aggression and violent outburst are happening. Put your child in a residential treatment facility

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like a hospital or boarding school where they can receive therapy and treatment. Enroll your child in a behavioral day program like a special school.

Discipline Dilemma #10: My child's tantrums keep us homebound.

Your Solution: Parents of defiant children can feel held hostage by their child's bad behavior, unable to go out to dinner, the movies, or anywhere for fear that their ADHD child will throw a tantrum. When your child acts up in public, say no in a calm, matter-of-fact tone. Make it clear what "misbehaving" means when you're in public, and set the consequences in advance. Plan how your child can react to potential letdowns before you go out. If a meltdown happens, remember you can choose your reaction. Don't take it personally. Acknowledge your child's disappointment, and suggest squeezing a ball to let out frustration. Stay calm and pull your child into an alternate activity with you, or give him a job to do like fetching straws if you're at a restaurant. Try dropping down and doing five push-ups. Kids will be so stunned by the weird behavior, it will often stop a fit. Then say, "Do you want to do five with me? Because I can tell you need to do something." All of these strategies demonstrate ways to calm down with movement, physical activity, and without an outburst.

ADDitude Experts—

Ross Greene, Ph.D.: Dr. Ross Greene is the author of the well-known books *The Explosive Child* and *Lost at School*, and the originator of a model of care emphasizing collaborative resolutions to the problems contributing to children's behavioral challenges. He is also associate clinical professor in the Department of Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School. (livesinthebalance.org)

Peter Jaksa, Ph.D.: Dr. Peter Jaksa is president and clinical director of ADD Centers of America and a clinical psychologist in private practice in Chicago. (addcenters.com)

Randy Kulman, Ph.D.: Randy Kulman, Ph.D., is the founder and president of Learning-Works for Kids (learningworksforkids.com), an educational technology company that specializes in using video games and interactive digital media to teach executive-functioning and academic skills.

Kirk Martin: Kirk Martin, founder of celebratecalm.com, has helped more than 300,000 parents and teachers tackle the most challenging issues—defiance, disrespect, bullying, sibling fights—with specific, concrete strategies that work in everyday situations.

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A Parent's Guide to Effective ADHD Discipline

A better-behavior plan for the most oppositional, defiant children

Nothing works. You take away electronics or special activities, and he couldn't care less. You try rewards, points, praise, consequences—nothing turns around his behavior. He shows no remorse, and you feel like a failed parent. Sound familiar? This 25-page ebook, filled with expert tips and solutions is a game-changer.

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A Parent's Guide to ADHD Diet and Nutrition

The foods, vitamins, minerals, supplements, and herbs than can help your child

What is the connection between the food your child eats and his or her hyperactivity, impulsivity, and distractibility? The editors of *ADDitude* have curated scientific information about foods and additives to avoid; how omega-3s, iron, and zinc boost the brain; why you should remove foods with artificial dyes and flavors; and much more.

>> Learn more about this special report: <http://additu.de/nutrition>

Video Games and the ADHD Brain

A parent's guide to setting limits, easing transitions, choosing brain-building games, and keeping kids safe online

Is your child addicted to Minecraft? In this ebook, the editors of *ADDitude* present research on hyperfocus and video games, recommend games that build thinking, and offer advice on setting limits your child will honor. Includes frequently asked parent questions answered by gaming expert Randy Kulman, Ph.D.

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When You Have ADHD Too

18 tips for parents with ADHD—advice on balancing career, housework, and childcare when you share a diagnosis.

Homework Help for ADHD Children

Addressing homework problems is critical – here's how to do it.

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>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10272.html>

Ross W. Greene, Ph.D., outlines positive parenting techniques that will help oppositional and defiant kids manage frustration and develop greater empathy skills. He addresses your questions about: calming your defiant child, how to “reason” with your ODD child, and strategies to problem solve.

Calming Intense ADHD Emotions

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10892.html>

Emotionally intense: that’s what ADHD kids and parents are, and it takes some finesse to manage it. Experts Elaine Taylor-Klaus and Diane Dempster offer strategies to keep those turbulent emotions in proportion, and prevent your child’s anger from getting out of control.

Why Does He Do That?

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10265.html>

How does attention deficit disorder affect your child’s behavior and development? Russell Barkley, Ph.D., explains, and offers insightful tips on providing structure, consequences, and rewards.

The Calm Parent

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10270.html>

Parents of ADHD children with challenging behavior may be locked in a cycle of defiance, disrespect, bullying, sibling fights, meltdowns, and power struggles. Kirk Martin, founder of Celebrate Calm, explains how to stop that cycle. Learn how to keep your cool when your ADHD child acts up.

Emotions in Teens and Adults with ADHD

>> <http://www.additudemag.com/RCLP/sub/10788.html>

Dr. Thomas E. Brown joins us to share strategies for achieving and maintaining emotional control, as well as advice for teaching teens to find emotional balance in the face of emotional flooding and executive function deficits.

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