

# Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder

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## Description

Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a condition that includes attention difficulty, hyperactivity, and impulsiveness. Children with ADHD often fidget, have short attention spans, difficulty focusing, and may be aggressive or easily excitable. This disorder can also be found without hyperactivity, which is known as attention-deficit disorder (ADD).

## Characteristics

Signs of hyperactivity include habitual tapping of pencils or fingers, moving around constantly, incessant chattering, rambling randomly from one topic to another, and talking during inappropriate times. Children with ADHD may have difficulty remaining in their seats or may blurt out answers repeatedly. A lack of impulse control can cause them to perform actions without first thinking about the possible outcomes, which can lead to unintentional harm to themselves, others, or property.

Children often exhibit symptoms of ADHD at an early age but are usually not diagnosed until they are school age, which is when the disorder begins to cause problems with their school performance. An inability to focus often leads to unfinished work, disorganization, and lack of persistence.

## Keith's Story (as told by Richelle Votaw)

Living with ADHD can provide challenges, but these can be overcome with environment control, behavior management, and in some cases, medication. For example, a student I will call Keith was diagnosed with ADHD not long after starting school.

Keith was disruptive in class, sullen and disrespectful when corrected, and generally uncooperative. The first step to helping Keith manage his behavior was to keep him busy. Unstructured time was especially difficult for him, so I made sure he always had something to keep him occupied. Keith still talked constantly, which led to a lot of distractions for other students.

The next thing I tried was giving him more than one activity to do simultaneously. Instead of growing bored, he could simply switch from one activity to the other as he chose to do so. For example, I would give him a paper to color and a puzzle to complete. This helped him quiet down and remain on-task because he had choices for which activity he did and

when. While Keith was still a very active boy, he was able to remain focused during quiet times in the lesson.

Alternating activities between those that required Keith and his classmates to sit still and those that invited movement was also a big help in keeping Keith engaged and included in our activities. The more regular the class routine was, the better prepared Keith was for the coming activities because he knew what to expect. All of this worked together to improve Keith's attitude, and he became a pleasure to teach.

## Accommodations and Supports

Seat students with ADHD away from the areas of most distraction, such as windows, doors, aquariums, or other high-interest areas. This helps the students pay attention to the task at hand without being distracted.

During church services, seat them near the back and close to the aisle in case they need to step out. Give them something to focus on during the service, such as listening for a particular word or phrase. Bring a small, inconspicuous notepad and a pencil to keep the child's hands occupied.

A resistance band can be placed around the legs of a chair to give students a quiet way to satisfy their need to move without causing disruptions in class. This involves their feet and legs being occupied with movement, so it leaves the hands free to keep working.

Flexible seating is another way to give students a way to move while remaining seated. A wide variety of flexible seating options are available, including balance balls, wobble cushions, wobble chairs, scoop rockers, carpet squares, and floor pillows. These help the child move while remaining seated and part of the group.

Some students with ADHD can focus better with tactile stimulation. This does not mean you should allow toys that will cause a disruption. Instead something simple and silent, such as a carefully placed Velcro strip to touch, a stress ball, Wikki Stix, or other similar objects can help students focus.

Frequent movement activities will not only help the children with ADHD in your classroom but all the children will benefit. Incorporating activities that involve gross motor skills keep all students active and attentive and give them a break from sitting still during lessons.

## Practical Tips

Establish a set routine and stick to it, no matter what. This helps all students thrive, not just those with ADHD. While children appear to love chaos and lots of noise, they actually crave a consistent routine. I have seen it many times in the public school setting where students came into my classroom after being with a substitute teacher. They were loud and wound up, and I thought to myself, Oh, no, here we go. Yet when they stepped into my room they immediately calmed down and went right to work. Some students literally breathed a sigh of relief because they knew what to expect and what was expected of them.

Have something ready for them to do the minute they walk in the door. In some churches the children trickle in over a period of fifteen to thirty minutes. Waiting is never appealing to children, but to those with ADHD, it is torturous! For younger students, a puzzle, a coloring book, or a play area such as a Lego table is a great way to keep students occupied while they wait for everyone to arrive. For older students, an activity page or game that will tie into the lesson or review the previous week's lesson is helpful.

When giving directions, avoid giving multistep directions. For younger students, give one step of directions at a time. This helps them to focus on each step of an activity. For older

students, written directions can be beneficial. Students will most likely need extra reminders to complete activities.

All students with ADHD are unique, so it is helpful to talk to the parents of the child and learn what strategies they have had success with at school. If something is already working, it is best to implement that strategy. Never be afraid to talk to parents about problems their child may be having. Talk to them and ask for their advice.

## Resources

Book: *How to Reach and Teach Children and Teens with ADD/ADHD* by Sandra F. Rief.

Book: *Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete, Authoritative Guide for Parents* by Russell A. Barkley.

Web Article: "Helping Students with ADHD and Learning Disabilities in the Classroom," [www.educationworld.com](http://www.educationworld.com)

Web Article: "How to Reach the Hyperactive Child" by Jenny Funderburke, [ministry-to-children.com](http://ministry-to-children.com)

Web Articles: Search "ADHD" on the Focus on the Family website ([www.focusonthefamily.com](http://www.focusonthefamily.com))

## Connect with ABLE

If you have questions regarding special needs, contact ABLE (Accepting, Believing, Loving, Embracing). ABLE Ministry is a program of the Ladies Ministries Division of the United Pentecostal Church International (UPCI) and is dedicated to assisting the special needs and disabled populations within the church and the community. ABLE is committed to increasing awareness about disabilities in the community, the church, and the world. They strive to provide the strength, support, and assistance necessary to meet the needs of those affected by disabilities—physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

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