

10 Ten Tips for Painlessly Growing a Chapter

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead

BACK IN 1987, a handful of professionals and parents met in Broward County, Florida, wondering how to address the needs of one child with ADHD. That small group of individuals founded CHADD. Before long, chapters mushroomed throughout the United States, and interest was generated all over the world.

If you live in an area that doesn’t currently have a CHADD chapter, you may be thinking, “How can I start a small group in *my* town or city?” Or, if your local chapter is small, you may be wondering how to make it gradually grow. Perhaps you’re scared by what seems a daunting task.

Start by looking *realistically* at how much time you have for this undertaking. A small group may be all you can handle right now. How can you painlessly help it to grow? Is there a way to work smart rather than work to exhaustion and frustration? Here are some recommendations based on lessons my chapter learned as it grew.

MY TEN TIPS

1 De-stress about how many people are attending. Focus on helping each other in ways small and big. A parent support group is a parent support group. Success is more than numbers. Successful groups can be small or large. A group can grow naturally and gradually. Worrying about numbers defeats the purpose of parents supporting each other.

2 You need someone to help organize your meetings. Who is the most organized? Is it you or someone else? If no one in the group is a good organizer, the group may require two people to check on each other.

3 Make sure not to overwhelm your chapter helpers. Be realistic about how much the group can accomplish. Take on one project or one program at a time. Only take on projects that someone in the group is very interested in. Let them be the project driver. If no one is interested, don’t take on the project.

4 Help members become knowledgeable. Find out who can give your group the information it needs. Free training is available from many sources, if you ask. Have the members of your group make a list of what they want to learn.

5 Foster leadership. Exhausted leaders end up doing everything themselves. Have everyone in your group feel that they can make a valuable contribution. Seek out those too shy or reticent to speak up and help them to become active members. Value their input. Let people feel that what they are doing is important. This is contagious!

6 Be open to new ideas. Don’t always do things the same way. Expand your leadership base as your chapter grows. Create a dynamic and involved organization.

7 Keep the evolution of the chapter within member limits to avoid burnout.

8 Form committees to specialize in certain areas of interest. This is only if your group is large enough. Assist the committees in accomplishing their goals. Carefully choose the chairperson of each committee.

9 Seek community doctors, clinical psychologists, behavioral specialists, educational advocates, and school staff members to join your chapter partnership. Many are happy to be asked.

10 Remember this quote: “Some people want it to happen. Some wish it would happen. Others make it happen.” (Michael Jordan). You can make it happen and also enjoy it! 🍀

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