



USING STRUCTURE AND GUIDANCE TO SUPPORT ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Children with ADHD struggle with following instructions and meeting expectations due to their difficulties with focusing, remembering information, switching between activities, and following through on intentions. Because of these challenges, they can struggle with classroom expectations. It is important to help children with ADHD learn adaptive behavior skills so they can choose appropriate behavior that will benefit themselves or others based on the situation. Children need clear instructions and rules, along with expectations that match their abilities. They also need plenty of structure so that it is easy to choose the right adaptive behavior.

SUPPORTING ADAPTIVE BEHAVIORS

- Draw the child's attention to rules or expectations in the current moment.
- Announce any changes in rules or expectations and check for understanding. Give notice before transitions. Give ten- and five-minute reminders so the child feels more prepared to switch to a different activity.
- Talk with the child about what happens as a result of their behavior. Connecting rewards directly to actions, both beforehand and when giving the reward, helps them learn new behaviors.
- Talk about which behavior will lead to a reward, especially in situations where there could be unintended rewards for undesired behavior (such as getting attention for acting out). This is especially important in situations involving delay.
- When possible, remove distractions from the classroom. Try not to reinforce unwanted behavior by giving the child attention for minor inappropriate behavior. To do this, make the classroom as distraction-free as possible and structure daily activities to make it easier for children to choose adaptive behaviors.
- Be aware that too little stimulation can also be distracting for some students. Consider integrating movement, appropriate fidgets, or music. Plan time for social breaks during the school day.
- Tell children when you will give fewer or no rewards for adaptive behavior. Do not assume children with ADHD will know what to do when a learned behavior is no longer rewarded.

SELF-MANAGEMENT

As part of behavior management, children with ADHD may need to be taught emotion regulation techniques, frustration management skills, and how to manage the experience of delay (increasing appropriately with age). For children who struggle with developing positive behaviors, focused interventions that address emotion recognition, frustration management, and behavioral and cognitive coping skills may be needed.