

# Resource Handbook for Parents

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## INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been compiled to assist you as a parent of a child with LD/ADHD difficulties. These disorders affect home life and school life, often in an adverse way. We hope the enclosed topics will be informational and helpful to you. It is not all inclusive or exhaustive in nature. We also **strongly recommend** attendance at the parent support group, facilitated by professional staff, with opportunity for parents to discuss and exchange ideas with other parents. Many issues discussed in this handbook will be part of the agenda for discussions at the meetings.

## WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

A learning disability is an information problem caused by a known or assumed neurological dysfunction. Children with learning disabilities can have a problem in areas such as language processing (input or output), visual-spatial relations or memory, auditory discrimination /memory, or social perceptions. As a learning disability is not apparent in many circumstances, it is called the hidden handicap.

A learning disability is not any form of mental retardation, nor does it indicate lack of effort or motivation. It does not decrease with age, but learning disabled students can acquire strategies which help them circumvent their learning problems.

Having a learning disability often requires a student to work much harder than the average student to maintain their standards. They do not usually benefit from lowering of standards. However, they do need assistance in learning and classroom modifications.

## LEARNING DISABILITY INDICATORS

Students may exhibit one or more of these indicators on an inconsistent basis to some degree. Some days they may struggle with one of these indicators and others days they may not be evident. No one will have **all** of the characteristics.

1. Uneven or low achievement with average or above average intelligence.
2. Language problems-spoken or written, input or output.
3. Difficulty in speaking, reading, writing, or mathematics that can be associated with:
  - a. Process deficits
  - b. Visual discrimination, memory
  - c. Auditory discrimination, memory
  - d. Fine motor delays
4. Poor organizational skills
5. Behavioral inconsistency
6. Problems with social skills
7. Unrealistic self concept
8. Attention problems, hyperactivity, impulsivity

In diagnosing a child as learning disabled, experts check to eliminate the possibility of failure due to below-average intelligence, a physical problem, or a psychological problem.

## **WHAT IS ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER?**

When determining if a child has ADHD, it is important to consider FID, frequency, intensity and duration. If symptoms occur occasionally, during a period of time when there may be a family crisis or are mild in nature there may not be need for concern. If all three factors are present for an extended period of time, this may be the time for an evaluation. School personnel will consider all these factors before recommending a child for evaluation.

### **Characteristics of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)**

1. Easily distracted by extraneous stimuli
2. Difficulty listening and following directions
3. Difficulty focusing and sustaining attention
4. Inconsistent performance in school work-one day the student may be able to do the task, the next day cannot: the student is “consistently inconsistent”
5. Tunes out-may appear “spacey”
6. Disorganized-loses/can’t find belongings; desk and room may be a total disaster
7. Poor study skills
8. Difficulty working independently

### **Characteristics of Attention Deficit Disorder with Hyperactivity (ADHD)**

High activity level:

1. Appears to be in constant motion
2. Often fidgets with hands or feet, squirms, falls from chair
3. Finds nearby objects to play with/put in mouth
4. Roams around classroom-great difficulty remaining seated

Impulsivity and lack of self-control:

1. Blurts out verbally, often inappropriately
2. Can’t wait for his/her turn
3. Often interrupts or intrudes on others
4. Often talks excessively
5. Gets in trouble because he/she can’t “stop and think” before acting
6. Often engages in physically dangerous activities without considering the consequences
7. Difficulty with transitions/changing activities
8. Aggressive behavior, easily over-stimulated
9. Socially immature
10. Low self-esteem and high frustration

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF ORGANIZATIONAL PROBLEMS**

- ❖ Cannot organize work on paper (spatially)
- ❖ Frequently misplaces books, homework, pencils, etc.
- ❖ Gets confused directionally, e.g.: how to find a particular room in the school or where to go during a fire drill
- ❖ Easily disturbed by surrounding stimuli
- ❖ Has difficulty getting started on an activity
- ❖ Has difficulty distinguishing the main idea in presented material (written or verbal)
- ❖ Loses track of time-poor judgment of time
- ❖ Becomes confused as to when homework or projects are due
- ❖ Has messy desk, locker, notebooks, etc.

## HOW TO HELP WITH ORGANIZATION AT HOME

### **Organize A Study Area**

If it is in their bedroom, have very little or nothing on the bureau and the bed should have no more than one stuffed animal or cute pillow on it. You will need a desk and a chair in a study area. Discourage laying on the bed or floor to do schoolwork. At first toys should be out of sight in a cabinet and not more than five books should be kept on the shelf near the desk. It would be good to have a dictionary and a thesaurus on this shelf. A pencil can with a few pencils, pens, an eraser, white-out pen and a ruler should be kept in this area. This is about all a disorganized child can cope with at one time and get anything accomplished. Leave the rest of the shelves empty for the time being until you begin to recognize an organized child developing.

If the study area is in another area of the home, keep it clear of clutter and distractions. NEVER allow the student to attempt to do work in front of the television or where others are conversing. Very little will be accomplished by the student. If the student is using the family computer, periodically monitor to see if they are on task and not playing games, surfing the net or doing e-mail instead of working on schoolwork.

### **Organize a “Ready for School “ Area**

How many times in the past on a school morning have you experienced lost shoes, missing papers, mismatched clothes, etc? When this happens regularly, it seems as if the only way you and your child communicate is at the top of your lungs, with tears flowing everywhere!

Change all this! Bring smiles and hugs back into your farewells in the morning. This can happen with the consistent use of a “Ready For School” area. The place that is chosen has to be a place that won’t be disturbed or changed, whether it is in your child’s room or some other place in the house like near the door which your child leaves through everyday. It is **absolutely essential** that your child place the needed books, papers, notes to teachers, lunch money, etc. in their backpack in this area each evening before they go to bed. They should also place umbrella, coat, shoes and whatever else they will need, even lunch if not perishable. If your child has difficulty making decisions, their clothing for the next day should be laid out as well.

Make a permanent check-off list and post it in that area so the child can see if everything is there. Cover a poster board with contact paper after it is made and then the monthly check-offs can be washed off for the new week. This should include a reminder to take morning medication if that is part of your child’s routine. There should be a box for papers and books which are brought home to stay for younger students, a hook for coats, hats, sweaters, etc. and a chair or shelf for the backpack. Older students will want to be a part of organizing this area to meet their needs.

(See example)



## ORGANIZING FOR SCHOOL SUCCESS

### Suggestions:

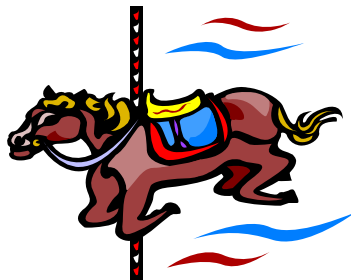
- Provide a notebook, checklist, or day-timer/organizer for older students, for recording homework assignments and sports schedules, etc. Check daily until the student has become independent and responsible in this area.
- Establish a regular routine-a set time and place each day that is designated for homework. Encourage your student to read a library book during that time if no written work is required or re-read science or social studies chapter covered in class that day. This will establish good study skills and habits for later years in school.
- Provide time before bed to organize “Ready for School” area.
- As much as possible have a routine time for meals and bedtimes.
- Enough rest is key for good learning and thinking.
- Establish an organizational system that is recommended by teachers at your child’s school such as keeping a binder with dividers for each subject. Keep all materials handed back for the quarter such as assignments and tests for review. At the end of the quarter, empty and start again. Provide the appropriate number hole punch that clips into the binder to assist your child in keeping his papers filed neatly. Check this occasionally so your student knows you are interested in their work. DO NOT remove papers to keep at home unless in elementary lower grades where this is encouraged. You never know what they might need at school. This should include the teacher’s syllabus as well. **Color coding the notebook, divider pages, and folder with the color of that subject textbook is also helpful for some students who are challenged in this area.**
- Check with your student periodically to see if they have an appropriate supply of pens, pencils and paper. Please provide supplies requested by all teachers at the beginning of the school year on list given by school. This will save your student from embarrassment and confusion when they need these things in class. (Such as: calculator, colored pencils, glue stick, certain type of paper or folder). Purchase a pencil bag to keep these types of supplies in.
- Encourage the use of a specific homework folder by which homework can be taken back and forth to school. Even an older student can benefit from this practice. Then it is not lost in an inappropriate notebook or stuffed into a text and not found when time to turn it in. Just the visual presence of it in the folder can be a reminder to turn it in.

## GETTING OFF THE HOMEWORK MERRY-GO-ROUND

Patterns in homework can affect family relationships. Often siblings of students with LD/ADHD will resent the extra time parents must spend with the child with special needs. This may not even be spoken but anger and resentment may be internalized. The belief is that the student who struggles has no self-confidence and can't learn by themselves. They've learned to depend on someone at home to teach them. They hate the entire mess but don't know how to change it. Their whole life centers around their problems at school and they have no time for fun. Parents feel trapped and believe it is their duty to work nightly with their struggling student. The motive has become fear of failure in school for their child. They may feel the child will blame them if he/she fails. Fear, anger and guilt keep the parent going. The vicious merry-go-round continues because parents are afraid if they "jump off", something might happen to make them feel even more afraid and guilty.

**The goal is to break that cycle(jump off) and develop an independent responsible student. These are some suggestions to help in that process.**

- ❖ Present one homework assignment at a time. When it is completed, get out the next one. Encourage independence during a set work time such as 15 minutes, depending on the child's age. The older the student, the longer the work times can be. Then allow 5 minutes to get up and take a break. Continue this process until the homework or studying is accomplished. See the Rosslyn guidelines in the school calendar for the appropriate amount of time spent on homework for your child's age and grade.
- ❖ Give assistance when needed and then leave the immediate proximity while the child completes the work. This will encourage independence and self-assurance that they really can do the work. **As much as possible, avoid sitting down to do homework with the LD/ADHD child. Limit the type of help given. BREAK THE CYCLE-JUMP OFF!**
- ❖ When preparing for a test, it is appropriate to orally quiz your student on the material or have them write down material. It will depend on their learning style and what helps them best. Do this after they have taken some time to review the material during their homework time on their own. DO NOT have them stay up extra late to prepare for a test. They are then tired the next day and will probably not do well for that reason. Study for tests in the early part of their homework time.



## **HELPING WITH SOCIAL SKILLS**

### **What Parents Can Do**

Taken from No One to Play With by Betty B. Osman.

1. Provide good social models for their children by their own behaviors.
2. Talk about what is appropriate behavior so that the child understands what is expected of them.
3. Praise positive social behavior when it occurs.
4. Organize cooperative family activities and participation; foster a sense of responsibility.
5. Discuss interpersonal conflicts when they arise and suggest alternative ways of handling them.
6. Establish a level of communication with children so that their problems and concerns can be shared. Careful listening is as important as giving good advice.
7. Encourage social independence and self-reliance for the LD adolescent and young adult.
8. Find local organizations to join that he can handle and are appropriate.
9. Encourage a youngster to pursue what he or she is best at. It will enhance his image with his contemporaries and himself.
10. Arrange social contacts, even with “bait” if necessary. A well-stocked refrigerator, a trip to the park, or movies, may bring a reluctant friend to visit.
11. Teach social games and skills (bowling, roller skating, board games) to facilitate meeting peers and appropriate winning/losing skills.
12. Understand their learning disabilities.
13. Be you child’s best cheerleader and number ONE fan.
14. HUG OFTEN!!

## THOUGHTS ON DISCIPLINE

Taken from Dare to Discipline by James Dobson.

Steps for Discipline:

1. List areas of behavior and set realistic expectations.  
(e.g. Relating to people-We will treat others with respect, treatment of materials, schoolwork, care of your environment-dirty clothes will be put in the hamper).
2. Create short clear rules for the area and refer to them consistently. Literally, use the same words repeatedly. **DON'T ARGUE THE POINT, JUST STATE THE RULE.**
3. (With ADHD children) Model the self-monitoring questions. ie. What am I doing? What should I be doing?
4. Give clear choices with appropriate consequences.
5. Follow up immediately with consequences. (Do not repeat yourself or give repeated chances).
6. Always, reinforce the GOODS, try to ignore the bads, and punish only when necessary.

### SOUL SEARCHING

A. For several days “watch” your child’s misbehaviors.

1. What does he/she do, What do I do right before the misbehavior occurs?
2. What does he/she or I do right after the behavior occurs?
3. Is it possible that I am reinforcing my child’s misbehavior by my own responses and reactions?
4. Right before the misbehavior occurs or at the point of misbehavior, give the child a choice of misbehaving or behaving, stating the consequences of each, and then follow up with the consequences. Voice tone should be neutral, but firm, as possible.

(Example-“You are to put your clothes in the hamper. If you do so, they will be washed. If you choose to leave them on the floor, they will not be washed because I only wash what is in the hamper.” **Follow through** Do not pick up the clothes yourself! And do not nag.

B. An assertive, firm tone and consistency in what you as a parent carry out are the **KEYS** to discipline.

C. ADHD kids need an extra at this point. The natural thought processes of being in tune to the demands around them are not strongly developed. Most children have a natural awareness of the following questions, but the ADHD child may not: What am

I doing now? What should I be doing now? What is the first step to doing what I'm supposed to be doing? Am I doing it? As parents, you will need to verbalize these questions for the ADHD child for a while, until the brain "has got it."

D. How to deliver assertive message.

1. Use good eye contact, which indicates sincerity and self-confidence but do not intimidate by glaring.
2. An assertive message is delivered close enough that the speaker cannot be ignored. For smaller child, get down at their level, directly in front of the child and an arm's length away. With adolescents the best position is one which rivets attention to the interpersonal engagement, but does not invade the teenager's space. If the parent is seated, the posture is forward leaning with legs uncrossed to indicate openness. If the parent is standing, head and shoulders are up and weight is on both feet to project confidence.
3. Facial expressions and tone of voice fit the words of an assertive message. If the message is to be taken seriously, then the face needs to be serious, without smiles or twinkles in the eyes. The tone of the voice needs to be firm and controlled and not weak and apologetic, syrupy or belligerent. Physical gestures which accompany the words are comfortable rather than nervous and emphatic but not threatening.
4. Like all other techniques of parenting, assertive requests can be used too much or too little. The proper balance is maintained by selecting situations which are worth a strong parental stance.

**Differences Among Unassertive, Assertive, and Aggressive Messages**

Unassertive Style	Assertive Style	Aggressive Style
Voice soft, apologetic, syrupy	Voice firm, controlled	Voice too loud, belligerent
Questions	Statements	Exclamations
Shifting or averting gaze	Open, direct eye contact	Glaring
Pleading, timid, fearful facial expressions	Engaged, serious but relaxed facial expressions	Tense, impassive or threatening facial expressions
Distant position, shifting posture, fidgeting hands	Respectful distance; if sitting, forward leaning, rather than backward slouching; if standing, upright, balanced position	Position too close, body rigid or arms, legs crossed; hands clinched, finger pointing
Not touching	Engaged touch, gentle grasp, holding to calm, restrain or comfort	Grabbing, poking, squeezing
Silence used to pout or withdraw in fear	Silence used to calm or wait	Silence used to punish

## Examples of Problems and Logical Consequences

Problem	Logical Consequences
Leaving clothes on floor	“You are to put your clothes in the hamper. If you choose to leave them on the floor, they will not be washed because I only wash what is in the hamper.”
Procrastination in getting ready for bed	“You are to be ready for bed at 8:30. if you choose to take longer than that, I will not read to you or you cannot read yourself, or I won’t tuck you in.”
Coming late to meals	“You are to be on time for meals. If you choose not to, you will miss your meal and may not eat until the next meal.”
Forgetting to take out trash (or other chore)	“You are to take out the trash each day. If you choose not to, I will do it for you. You will be charged a fee for my services. The fee will be subtracted from your allowance.”
Intolerable table manners	“You are to wash your hands (use a fork or chew with mouth closed, etc.). If you choose not to, we will set a place for you at another table.”
Begging for candy (something) at the store	“You will not whine or beg for candy. If you choose to, you will not go shopping with me the next time I go (or will lose the privilege of preparing the list).
Taking too long to get ready	“ You are to be ready by 8:15. If you are not ready, you will be left or will be taken without being ready.”
Using tools(supplies) and not putting them away.	“You are to put away any tools (supplies) you use. If you choose to leave them out, the tools (supplies) will be locked.
Tracking in mud	“You are to take off your shoes in the back room (at the door). If you wear them in, you will have the responsibility for cleaning the floor for two weeks.”
Making bothersome noises while others are watching TV	“You may settle down and watch the program with us or leave the room. You decide.”
Dawdling at the table	Parent clear off table, removes food.
Coming in late (teenager)	“Next weekend you will need to be earlier.”
Neglecting to take care of kitchen messes (teenager)	“You are to clean up your messes in the kitchen. If you do not, you will take over kitchen duty from the one who cleans up your mess” (or will lose kitchen privileges; or will not receive food services by the family).
Neglecting assigned tasks to watch TV	“If you choose to watch TV before this is completed, the TV will be off limits for two days.”

## **BUILDING SELF-ESTEEM**

Taken from: 25 Ways Parents can Build Responsibility in Children ...and Help Them do Better in School, The Parent Institute

Years ago, children had to help with the family business or on the farm. They often had to watch younger brothers or sisters. Today, some kids seem to have no responsibilities at all. They can watch TV as much as they want or stay out as late as they want. They wait to do their homework until their parents nag them or they don't do it at all.

Then these children get to be teenagers and are faced with making responsible decisions about drug use and sexuality. WHAM! They don't know how to make responsible choices because they've never had to make them.

Children need to learn responsibility at home. As a parent, you have a critical role in helping your child to become a responsible adult. Another word for responsibility is "self-discipline". Responsible children do better in school and grow up to be responsible, productive adults. Below are a few suggestions to help you accomplish this goal.

1. Make sure that your child learns that choices and actions have consequences.
2. Don't make it easy to forget by bailing them out repeatedly.
3. Consider giving your child an allowance and teach money management.
4. Help your child see that he has a responsibility to his community they live in (not littering for example).
5. Be a model of responsibility yourself.
6. Instill that making a promise should be kept by example and seeing consequences of unkept promises.
7. Let your child make choices. As often as possible, try to let your child make choices within limits you have set. Make statements like, "You decide".
8. As your children grow older, they deserve more freedom. Each year, on their birthday, spend some time rethinking the rules. Let them see that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand.
9. Talk to your child about moral choices they must make.
10. Buy your child an alarm clock and assume the responsibility of getting themselves up in the morning.
11. Make yours an equal opportunity household. Teach boys to prepare food and run the wash machine. Show girls how to use a hammer and screw driver or other household tools.
12. Don't redo chores. Show your child step by step how to do a task and then let them try. Redoing a chore hurts your child's self-esteem.
13. Teach your child to prepare some healthful snacks.
14. **If you haven't expected much from your child, schedule a family meeting and explain what needs to be done to keep the family running. Talk about how everyone's help is needed and assign tasks. A checklist will help everyone to remember to check off their responsibility.**