

COVID-19: ADHD and DISTANCE LEARNING

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Distance learning is a new venture for many of us. However, this may be particularly challenging for children and teens who have struggled to sustain attention in typical school environments.

Tips:

- Create a workspace with needed materials and minimal distractions
- Seat children separately from siblings and other distractions. Cover any items that cannot be moved with a table cloth or bedsheet
- A tape line or homemade "study carrel" can help your children maintain personal work space
- Some children focus better when standing or sitting on a yoga ball
- Discourage doing schoolwork in bed as this can interfere with productivity and sleep
- Minimize extra noise; providing noise canceling headphones or earbuds

- Allow child to engage in activities to calm down for 15-30 minutes before needing to focus or sit still (e.g., swinging, go for a walk, reading)

- Break large tasks into shorter, more manageable bits to optimize your child's level of concentration. Length of time depends your child's development and age; can vary from less than 5 minutes to 45 minutes

- Most children are not adept at keeping track of time, but some benefit from visual sand timers or setting timers on smart devices. For others, music can be a useful way to keep track of time *IF* it does not interfere with concentration (e.g., "you should be getting out of the shower at the end of these songs;")

- Make sure that your child has understood directions before they begin to work on their own. When giving directions: make eye contact, vary tone and pitch as cues for them to listen, give directions one step at a time, and provide both visual/written and verbal instructions.

- Provide prompts and cues to help your child redirect her attention and behavior:
 - agree on signals to help them stay on task and to ask for help if needed
 - allow your child to quietly talk through the steps of a task
 - remind your child to check work carefully
 - provide incentives for your child to complete the work in a timely manner (e.g., extra free reading or computer time)
- Provide additional structure to help your child learn organizational skills:
 - use checklists, calendars, and assignment books to organize daily activities
 - fold worksheets in half to decrease amount of distractions on page
 - use paper to help them keep their place when reading
 - use graph paper (or turn notebook paper sideways) to help keep math columns aligned
 - remind your child to use the specific strategies and routines they used in school for learning new information and solving problems. (e.g., “What would Mrs. X say how to do this?”)

Remember:

- Children who struggle to sustain attention or learn new information are likely to become more quickly upset by perceived failure, criticism or disapproval; often worse when caregivers have now become the teachers
- Most children respond *very well* to frequent praise for positive behavior. It is especially important to maintain clear, consistent expectations and to use lots of positive reinforcements
- Encourage your child to “use their words” to express their emotions and to appropriately ask for help or to take a break when anxious or frustrated
- Boost child’s self-confidence by allowing time for them to use their strengths to help others or to have special jobs