

PS Academy

# COMPLETE GUIDE TO ADD/ADHD



# WELCOME TO THE GUIDE TO ADD/ADHD

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## IN THIS GUIDE...

We hope to demystify the often misunderstood neurodevelopmental disorder that is ADHD. From the causes, correct terminology, and diagnostic procedures as well as typical post-diagnosis treatment plans, school options, and pathways to solutions, we aim to advise and inspire anyone looking to become more educated about Attention Deficit (Hyperactivity) Disorder.

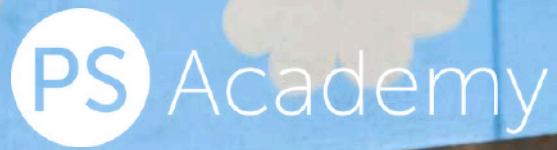
## WHAT IS ADD/ADHD?

In its broadest terms, ADD/ADHD is a disorder characterized by persistent, ongoing patterns of inattention as well as bursts of hyperactivity and impulsivity that can be hard to predict and that interfere with conventional functioning and development.

Inattention could be considered as a lack of persistence to complete tasks or inability to maintain focus even with comprehension of the subject and lack of defiance on the part of the person. Hyperactivity manifests as compulsive restlessness or a need to move incessantly in situations where it may not be appropriate to do so.

Impulsive behavior is anything considered to be done with excessive haste and a failure to think about the potential consequences as well as an inability to delay gratification and a tendency towards self-destructive acts.





SEE PAST THE LABEL.  
FOCUS ON THE ABLE.



# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

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## ADD VS ADHD

It is likely that you may see the terms ADD and ADHD used interchangeably without any seeming distinction between the two. This can be confusing for people searching for the most accurate terminology to use in their particular case. The reason is that up until the mid-90's, ADD - Attention Deficit Disorder - was frequently used to describe a specific subtype of the condition. We will explain the sub-types further along.

The three main symptoms of ADHD are inattentiveness, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. However, some people show very little behavior (mainly women as opposed to men) from the latter two categories.

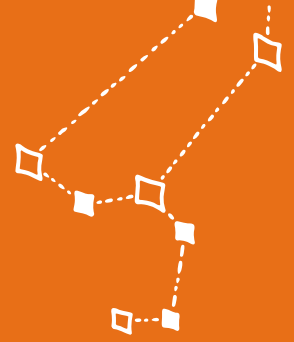
As research developed, and what would have been considered simply ADD previously, would now be classified as Inattentive ADHD, ADHD without hyperactivity or ADHD, Inattentive Type.

Therefore, ADD is a type of ADHD that doesn't involve constant movement and fidgeting. But it's a blurry distinction. This confusion dates to 1994. That's when doctors decided all forms of attention-deficit disorder would be called "attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder," even if the person wasn't hyperactive. Now it's called ADHD, inattentive type, or ADHD, hyperactive/impulsive type, or ADHD, combined type.

*Which term is right for your family to use depends on your child's specific symptoms and diagnosis. It's important to talk with an experienced mental health provider to make sure your child gets the right diagnosis.*

# SUBTYPES & DEFINING ATTRIBUTES

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## "CLASSIC" ADHD

Inattentive, disorganized, and easy to distract. Brain activity can appear normal when resting and then sharply decrease during tasks that require concentration.

## INATTENTIVE ADHD

Seen much more frequently in girls than boys and comes with frequent procrastination, daydreaming, and introversion. Distinct lack of impulsivity and hyperactivity are seen in other types.

## OVERFOCUSED ADHD

These individuals can become stuck in negative thought patterns and behaviors and also have extreme difficulty in switching attention between different tasks. As well as this they will also have all the characteristics of "classic" ADHD.

## TEMPORAL LOBE ADHD

Classic symptoms as well as learning, behavioral and memory problems. Behavioral problems can involve anger, aggression, and paranoia.

## LIMBIC ADHD

Low-level sadness is not considered depression, moodiness, lack of energy. These individuals frequently feel overwhelmed by their feelings of helplessness and guilt as well as the other classic ADHD symptoms.

## "RING OF FIRE" ADHD OR "ADHD PLUS"

Sensitivity to noise, light, and touch. Periods of mean or unpredictable behavior and deep feelings of anxiety and fearfulness. Individuals also tend to speak extremely quickly.

## ANXIOUS ADHD

Classic symptoms plus severe anxiety and tension. Frequent physical stress symptoms like headaches and stomachaches, freezing in anxiety-provoking situations, catastrophizing, and intense fear of being judged.

# THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR

## CLASSIC SYMPTOMS OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD

Symptoms of ADHD typically begin to appear quite early in young children and parents must look out for signs of unusual behavior or failure to meet developmental milestones. Many will display the "combined characteristics" of inattentiveness, impulsivity, and hyperactivity that would lead to a formal diagnosis as young as four years old.

Children with ADHD will often display highly "self-focused" behavior, showing their inability to recognize the needs and desires of others. These children may interrupt often, feel unable to wait in line, or impose themselves on situations where their presence wasn't invited. In games especially, a potential child with ADHD may struggle severely to wait for their turn or play quietly, dominating to such a level that their classmates become irritated.





## CLASSIC SYMPTOMS OF CHILDREN WITH ADHD, CONTINUED

Similarly, they will have more difficulty controlling their emotions, therefore temper tantrums and destructive outbursts when engaging in group activities may be a common occurrence.

Extreme levels of fidgeting are another classic symptom, with children constantly moving, squirming, or running around to such a degree that they struggle to sit in their chairs long enough to eat adequately.

Some tend to avoid tasks that require sustained mental effort, especially schoolwork, often losing focus while their teacher is trying to explain the work. Frequent mistakes while trying to follow instructions or planning and executing an idea are par for the course, though it is rarely ever due to laziness or a lack of understanding. They may struggle to organize themselves at the most basic level and so inadvertently come across as less mature than their peers.

These are all common tendencies in those with ADHD and may not necessarily be the case for your child. The important thing to remember is that there are solutions - and we will be covering them later in the guide!

# CAUSES - BIOLOGICAL, ENVIRONMENTAL

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## ADHD CAN BE CONSIDERED HEREDITARY

ADHD also tends to run in families. However, there are a number of both biological and environmental factors that are considered to be potential contributing causes.

Research lends itself to the idea that the biggest biological contributor is genetic - a parent or sibling with an ADHD diagnosis makes it more than 50% more likely that a child will also be diagnosed with the condition.

## RESEARCH ALSO SHOWS...

The most influential environmental cause is alcohol and drug abuse as well as smoking during pregnancy, as it can have a profound impact on prenatal development. There are also instances in which the pregnant mother has been exposed to high levels of air or water-based toxins or the infant has come into contact with significant lead sources that have directly contributed to an ADHD diagnosis.

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Having a very low birth weight, being born prematurely, or being victim to a brain injury in infancy can also lead to inhibited development in the frontal lobe which is a fundamental characteristic of ADHD.

## TAKING A LOOK INTO THE CAUSES OF ADHD...

Can help scientists understand better how to prevent it. However, if you have a child with ADHD, the best thing you can do is look to the future!





# GETTING THE CORRECT DIAGNOSIS

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Getting a true diagnosis of ADHD requires a comprehensive evaluation by a licensed clinician. In the case of a child, this could be a pediatrician, psychologist, or psychiatrist with demonstrated expertise in the disorder. Likewise, their symptoms of inattention or hyperactivity-impulsivity must be considered chronic, having persisted consistently over a long period, leading to a huge impact on their functioning and causing them to fall behind on typical developmental milestones.

## WHAT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

If you are concerned that your child may have ADHD, then the best option is to always seek advice from a qualified medical professional.

But what should you be asking your doctor? To arm yourself in the best way possible, you need to research, research, research. The infinite amount of resources online means that many of the questions you may have will have also been asked by others before you and you can take comfort in sharing your experience.

### A FEW QUESTIONS YOU CAN CONSIDER ASKING AFTER DOING YOUR OWN RESEARCH

- What are the various types of treatments used for child ADHD?
- Has one been shown to be better than the others?
- Which of these do you think would be best for my child and why?
- Does ADHD change with age?
- How will ADHD affect my child over the long term?
- What are the key components for successfully managing the challenges of ADHD?
- Does my child need medication, or can she be treated effectively without it?

## QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR, CONTINUED

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### IF YOUR CHILD IS PRESCRIBED MEDICATION, THESE QUESTIONS MAY HELP

- How often and for how long will my child need to take this medication?
- Is there medication that my child can take on an as-needed basis, such as when he needs to focus or concentrate?
- What type of drug are you prescribing for my child, and how does it work?
- Where can I get more information about this drug?
- How will the medication make my child feel, and how will we know if it's working?
- When can my child expect to notice improvements in how she feels?
- What are the risks if my child doesn't take his medication as directed, or if he misses a dose?
- How has this medication been tested? Are there any recent clinical studies on it?
- What should we do if my child experiences any side effects? Are there any that may require us to call a doctor? Are there any that may require my child to stop taking the medication immediately?
- Could this medication interact with other medication my child is taking?
- Are there any foods, drinks (such as alcohol), vitamins, herbal supplements, or over-the-counter drugs that my child should avoid while taking this medication?
- Can other conditions affect or be affected by my child's medication? What if we have a family history of heart disease?
- Is this drug habit-forming?
- Can this medication be taken on an empty stomach, or should it be taken with food?



## HOW DO THEY TEST FOR ADHD?

No singular exam will conclusively diagnose a child or adult as having ADHD. A diagnosis that you can trust will come through extensively gathering information from a wide variety of sources and a complete understanding of their overall health is fundamental.

A physical medical exam may be taken to rule out any other possible causes such as hypothyroidism, fetal alcohol syndrome, or visual or auditory impairment that can cause similar symptoms.

Furthermore, a full previous medical history interview will be undertaken, in which the parents are asked about the child's developmental milestones and education up until that point.

After this, an accurate mental health assessment must be completed to rule out the possibility of depression, anxiety, or any other mental health condition.

The child will be interviewed, to gauge their perception of their difficulties, and then their wider caregiving circle, including their teachers, will be asked to provide feedback on what they observe.

All of these pieces together create an image that a medical professional can use to feel confident in whether or not a diagnosis of ADHD is accurate.





## COEXISTING CONDITIONS

### COMORBID DIAGNOSES

It is possible, although not always the case, that a diagnosis of ADHD will come with a coexisting, aka, comorbid diagnosis (don't let the name scare you, this is just the official medical term for 'coexisting.')

### TYPICAL COEXISTING CONDITIONS WITH ADHD

This can vary from anxiety or depression, to OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), and ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder). In a 2014 review of studies looking at the co-occurrence of ADHD and ASD, researchers found that between 30 to 50 percent of people with ASD also have symptoms of ADHD.

This is why getting diagnosed accurately can become the bedrock on which an effective treatment plan can be created. Understanding the diagnosis as early as possible will help create the foundation for future success.

# POST DIAGNOSIS

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## SELF-ADVOCACY: KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

Nobody will fight for your child like you will, and this is especially important when facing a new diagnosis. Arming yourself with as much information as possible is how you will ensure the best future for your child. We are very lucky to live in the times that we do, with a wealth of resources available on the internet at the touch of your fingertips, as well as ADHD specialized therapists, coaches, and counselors.

Speaking to adults who have lived successfully with ADHD and thrived, or other parents of children with ADHD can be extremely invaluable sources of hope and practical advice.

Visit this website for the top 80 ADHD websites and influencers to follow >

[https://blog.feedspot.com/adhd\\_blogs](https://blog.feedspot.com/adhd_blogs)



# WHAT CAN I DO TO BEST SUPPORT MY CHILD IMMEDIATELY POST-DIAGNOSIS?

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## TRIAGE COPING STRATEGIES

Receiving news of a diagnosis can inspire a whole host of intense emotions that ripple through the family. It is completely normal to go through these stages:

- **Denial** - noticing the signs but ignoring them in hope that it's 'just a phase'.
- **Guilt** - blaming yourself for your child's 'problems'.
- **Shame** - feeling shameful when people notice, or when teachers call to report ongoing behavioral issues.
- **Anxiety** - along with the outcomes caused by the shame, added stress causing anxiety.
- **Resolve** - an eagerness for answers and support.
- **Hope** - the final realization that you are not a bad parent, and your child is not a bad child. Acceptance of the diagnosis and hope for the future.

Many parents, unfortunately, take a while to get to the final stage. The more you read success stories, the more you connect with other individuals who have "been there, done that", the more you will realize that there is a lot to be hopeful for.

It is important to explain in terms that a child can understand that their brain works a little differently, but reassure them that they are strong, capable, and intelligent leaves them feeling empowered and hopeful.

Equating their ADHD to being the same as needing glasses helps normalize the idea that they may need special help but that there is nothing "wrong" with them. They can gain strength from knowing that they will be given the help they need to modify behaviors that isolate them and form fresh patterns that pave the way to social inclusion and a feeling of connection and understanding within their peer groups.

# PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

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## SEEING PAST THE LABEL, FOCUSING ON THE ABLE

Not defining your child by their diagnosis is a life-changing viewpoint of ADHD.

A diagnosis helps pave the way for a treatment plan, helping to create a bright and positive future. Children who receive the ADHD diagnosis should be coached to think about what an authentic future looks like to them and concretely define the steps they would need to take to make that happen.

## AREAS TO FOCUS ON

Focus on getting them to think about what causes them to feel true joy, to feel "themselves" and then guiding them into defining the steps they could make to create that reality. What are their strengths? What support would they need? What does the first tiny small step towards that goal look like? What plan is in place for when they hit a roadblock?

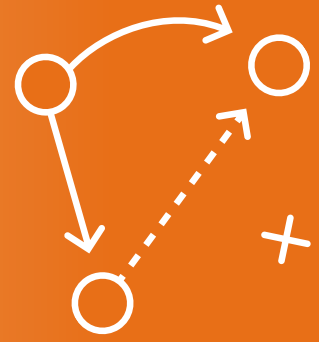
## PUTTING A CARE PLAN IN PLACE

A care plan that allows the child to feel completely supported and accepted by their peers, teachers, parents, and siblings, while they continue to develop their strengths and grow within their treatment program, is the key to a bright future.



# FORMING A TREATMENT PLAN

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## WHERE TO BEGIN...

### IS MEDICATION THE ANSWER?

Medicating those with ADHD can sometimes inspire some controversy as there are camps that are wholly against a prescriptive approach as the first point of action and others who see it as a fundamental step in easing the most distressing ADHD symptoms.

The long-term effects are always something to consider but the most commonly used medications have been proven to provide a huge benefit at a minimal risk. As always, it is important to follow the advice of your medical professional, who should be sensitive to each case, and look for a second opinion if you are still not completely confident.

### BEHAVIORAL THERAPIES

Behavioral therapy is considered to be fundamental on the pathway to success for ADHD. Through therapy, both children and parents alike learn the skills they need to successfully manage difficult behavior and typical stumbling blocks.

Young children are not mature enough to change their behavior without their parents' help. Enforcing positive behavior and spot challenging negative behavior without reducing the child's self-esteem are considered key to enforcing long-lasting change.

## SKILLS TO AIM TO IMPROVE

Those with ADHD tend to have problems with what is called "Executive Functioning". These are the self-regulating skills we all use to accomplish tasks like getting dressed or completing homework. They require planning, organization of resources, decision-making, and learning from our previous mistakes. Those with ADHD are inherently less naturally gifted in these areas, therefore require extra help. This is done by establishing a strict routine with checklists for daily tasks, time limits on getting things done, and rewards for reaching goals.



# IMPACT ON THE FAMILY

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## CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED

Raising a child with ADHD can prove to be challenging at times. The need to reinforce basic behaviors can feel frustrating, boring, and repetitive. Watching other children reach their developmental milestones with ease can feel disheartening and isolating. Guilt can feel like a big burden on the days that you don't feel able to have the patience required to attend to your child's needs or when they are themselves frustrated with the speed at which they complete tasks.

You must remind yourself, as a parent, to stop comparing your child to others. Each child is different, each parent is different, and you must not allow external negativity to impact your relationship with your child, or your approach to helping them be the best they can be. Staying hopeful and connecting with other like-minded individuals who understand the daily challenges can be game-changing for you and your child.

## SELF-CARE FOR PARENTS

It is important for any couple caring for a child with ADHD to make time for themselves and learn how to communicate their potential frustrations calmly and respectfully.

Likewise reaching out to support groups or other parents of children with ADHD can prove to ease a huge psychological weight for parents, as they learn that their challenges are similar to those faced by other parents and that they are not alone.

Establishing a good relationship with their child's school care team will also help them feel supported when they encounter difficult episodes of behavior.

# MOVING FORWARD AS A COHESIVE FAMILY UNIT

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## NORMALIZING ADHD

It's important that the family together normalize ADHD-related treatment and skills reinforcement at home as normal and positive. It should also be understood by the child that nobody in the family unit will tolerate bad behavior and that they must do their best to use the skills they've learned to find new ways to conduct themselves.

Emerging stronger than ever from an ADHD diagnosis is very possible and by establishing clear boundaries, expectations of behavior and reinforcing the positive the family unit can forge a new future together.

Furthermore, choosing to look past the diagnosis to the strengths and abilities will help set your child up for the future. Seeing past the label and focusing on the able is our motto here - and we have seen many parents take this approach and help their child thrive.



# CHOOSING SCHOOLS

## PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE

Any parent wants the absolute best for their child. They want to see them become educated, and thrive. To accomplish this, which environment is the best? While full of hard-working, dedicated teachers, public schools sometimes are not able to meet the needs of their students due to limited resources.

This could happen due to a lack of extra time on the part of staff to give the one-on-one support required, budget cuts that remove specialist services, or a lack of consistent follow-up by the school to monitor the child's progress.

Here are some questions you can ask yourself if your student is currently attending school.



- Is there a clear educational plan, and is the school implementing strategies to meet my child's most important needs?
- Do the teachers and staff treat my child as a welcome member of the school community, or as a chore for them to address each day?
- Is my child succeeding academically?
- Are efforts being made to proactively address academic challenges?
- Does my child have friends? (Not just people who are polite, but people he/she spends time with outside of school?)
- Am I able to be a strong educational advocate for my child, checking in frequently, assessing progress, and ensuring his/her needs are met? Does the school support my involvement?
- Does my child enjoy going to school?

## PUBLIC VERSUS PRIVATE SCHOOLS, CONTINUED

If you answered no to any of the questions on the previous page, a private school that specializes in exceptionalities like ADHD could be the answer.

### THERE ARE MANY POTENTIAL BENEFITS FROM A PRIVATE SCHOOL PLACEMENT, INCLUDING

- Most are smaller than most public schools and can offer more support in the classroom.
- They can offer more appropriate pedagogical approaches for children with ADHD. Hands-on learning and student-centered education may be more beneficial than verbally-based education. These schools may also offer behavioral support that can help your child improve their attention span and executive functioning skills..
- They are good places for children to find and connect with like-minded peers. This can be tough in public schools where even the most welcoming peers are not as likely to see your child as a potential friend to invite to parties or dances.
- Those that are set up for kids with ADHD are likely to provide adaptive experiences in which your child can thrive.

Through a private program, parents can expect their child to benefit from smaller classroom numbers and enhanced individualized teacher support as well as the opportunity for their child to connect with peers who share similar perspectives. Parents can feel reassured that their child is being guided through the formative years of their life by those who know exactly how best to help them.



# RESOURCES FOR ARIZONA FAMILIES

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## EMPOWERMENT SCHOLARSHIP ACCOUNT (ESA)

The Empowerment Scholarship Account (ESA) is a program administered by the Arizona Department of Education to help cover tuition costs at private schools or home-based programs for students with disabilities. The core purpose of the ESA is to help parents who want to opt-out of the public school system explore alternative educational placements.

Students who are proven to have disabilities and a desire to opt into more specialized education centers are the largest group of recipients of the Scholarships, being eligible from as young as four years old up to twenty-two, and can receive up to 100% of their funding requirements. The primary recipients are those with autism, however students with ADHD may qualify for a portion of funds.

## STUDENT TUITION ORGANIZATIONS (STOs)

STOs are organizations that collect tax donations and distribute them to private schools in the form of scholarships. Usually, for students that have ADHD and no other diagnosis such as autism, STOs are the best option to secure private school funding.

Our relationships with several STOs allow us to secure funding for students more easily than if a parent were to do it themselves.

To learn more about ESA and STOs, get our free guide by visiting here >

[psacademyarizona.com/esa-sto/guide](https://psacademyarizona.com/esa-sto/guide)



# THANK YOU



We hope we have shed some light on ADHD, the diagnostic process, the potential impact on the child, as well as their family unit.

Getting a diagnosis is the first step to an empowered, positive pathway to success while exploring funding options to receive specialized support.

The future is yours!

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