

ADHD and Homework: It Can Work!

By Christine Vander Wielen, M.S.W., CAPSW

If you are a parent of a child with Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) then you are in good company. Four percent of school age children have this diagnosis. Children with ADHD often struggle in school because the necessary skills of paying attention, controlling impulses, organizing and focusing on homework after a long day at school are particularly challenging. However, ADHD does not need to be a limitation nor a predictor of school performance. Parents can make homework time more productive and less stressful by:

- 1) Providing a back pack that has 2-3 sections. On the inside of the pack label each section with the contents of what should be placed in that section. This will serve as a visual reminder. More than 3 sections can be overwhelming.
- 2) Providing an assignment notebook in which the child can record assignments. This skill can be acquired in the second grade. At a younger age, this could be an unreasonable expectation.
- 3) Staying in contact with the teacher. Some teachers will provide a list of assignments and test dates that the child can record ahead of time.
- 4) Finding out which textbooks are available on line just in case your child forgets to bring necessary books home. If the child is truly trying to bring materials home but is having difficulty; ask the teacher if extra textbooks to keep at home are available. Continue to work with your child to develop the skill of organization. But have a back up plan!
- 5) Having extra school supplies at home such as colored pencils, markers, rulers, compasses, and protractors. Items that are not needed each night are easier to forget.
- 6) Establishing a routine for homework. Some children need a short break after school before they dive into homework. However, the break should be no longer than half an hour. If the break is too long it will be harder for them to resume concentrating. Activities that do not encourage a long attention span such as video games or watching television, should be put on hold until homework is completed and then limited.
- 7) Providing a quiet place to study with minimal distractions. Preferably not a bedroom.
- 8) Consider providing a stability ball for the child to sit on while doing homework. Many children are able to concentrate better on homework if part of their brain is engaged in keeping balance.
- 9) Keeping breaks to less than 10 minutes.
- 10) Observing and consulting with your child's teacher to determine your child's learning style. Knowing if your child is a visual, auditory or kinesthetic learner will help you to better help your child. Visual learners learn best by seeing and watching. Auditory learners learn best by hearing information. Whereas, kinesthetic learners learn best by being

active. Kinesthetic learners are often labeled “hyperactive” although their fidgeting and restlessness help keep their mind engaged. Providing a stress ball for the child to squeeze during school or during homework time can be helpful.

Lastly, and the most important action parents can take is to praise and encourage abundantly! Children with ADHD have a tremendous amount of potential and are not limited when their unique challenges are known and addressed.

References:

<http://add.about.com/od/childrenandteens/a/learningstyles.htm>

<http://add.about.com/od/childrenandteens/a/Homework.htm>

<http://www.greatschools.net/LD/ADHD/strategies-attention-deficit-hyperactivity-disorder.gs?content=672>

<http://www.studygs.net/adhd/index.htm>

Compliments of Practical Family Living, Inc.

P.O. Box 1676, Appleton, WI 54912 (920) 720-8920

You are permitted and encouraged to reproduce and distribute our articles in any format provided that you credit the author, no modifications are made, you do not charge a fee beyond the cost of reproduction, and you include Practical Family Living’s web-site address (<http://www.pfl.org>) on the copied resource. Quotations from any article are also permitted with credit to the author and citing the web-site. Any use of other materials on this web-site, including reproduction, modification, distribution or republication, without the prior written consent of Practical Family Living, Inc., is strictly prohibited.