

Behavioral Techniques for Young Children with ADHD

1. Clearly defined rules with visual illustrations. Immediate positive feedback and/or reward
2. for appropriate behavior; clearly defined and consistently applied consequences for inappropriate behavior.
3. One-two step directions with repetition, demonstration/modeling, and reminders as required. Give specific directions (example: “put the socks in the drawer” vs. “clean your room”). Label where things go (example: picture of socks on sock drawer).
4. Stoop to her eye level, state her name, say “Look at me and listen”, and use light touch as required, in order help her shift attention, especially if she is absorbed in a task.
5. Structured daily schedule with visual illustrations (i.e. pictures of actions/activities depicted in order of execution, space to check/star activities as completed).
6. Limit choices to two items in order to facilitate decision making (i.e., pink or blue shirt, jeans or shorts, milk or juice, etc.).
7. Give clear, specific directions. Tell her what she is to do, not what she is not to do (example, “Walk!” not “Don’t run!, etc.), as young children do not have the language facility to process a negating word (don’t) and will process/follow the action command (run).
8. Put out a minimum of toys that can be rotated as needed in order to facilitate decision making, task attention/completion, and clean-up during play time (example, two or three puzzles rather than five or six). Organize play materials (i.e., art bin with paper, pencils, small box of crayons, pair of child proof scissors, glue stick, stickers, etc.).
9. Give verbal warnings to facilitate compliance with transitions (example: “In five minutes, it will be time to eat lunch so you need to finish what you are doing).
10. Mark all dangerous items (stove, cleaning supplies) with a “danger/don’t touch” symbol (red X, skull and crossbones, etc) of your choice. Teach the meaning of the symbol, review it periodically.
11. Short, repeated learning sessions in area with minimal distractions and/or use of blank project display board to block line of vision to environmental objects/distractions. Alternate high interest and low interest learning activities. Ignore wiggling/fidgeting that does not interfere with performance.