

# ADHD Oxfordshire

Understanding & Support

## Parent Information Pack

To discuss any of the points in this pack more fully  
or for Adult ADHD  
contact ADHD Oxfordshire

[www.adhdoxfordshire.co.uk](http://www.adhdoxfordshire.co.uk)

Phone 01865 731378 Email [enquiries@adhdoxfordshire.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@adhdoxfordshire.co.uk)

Individual phone and email support  
Support Group



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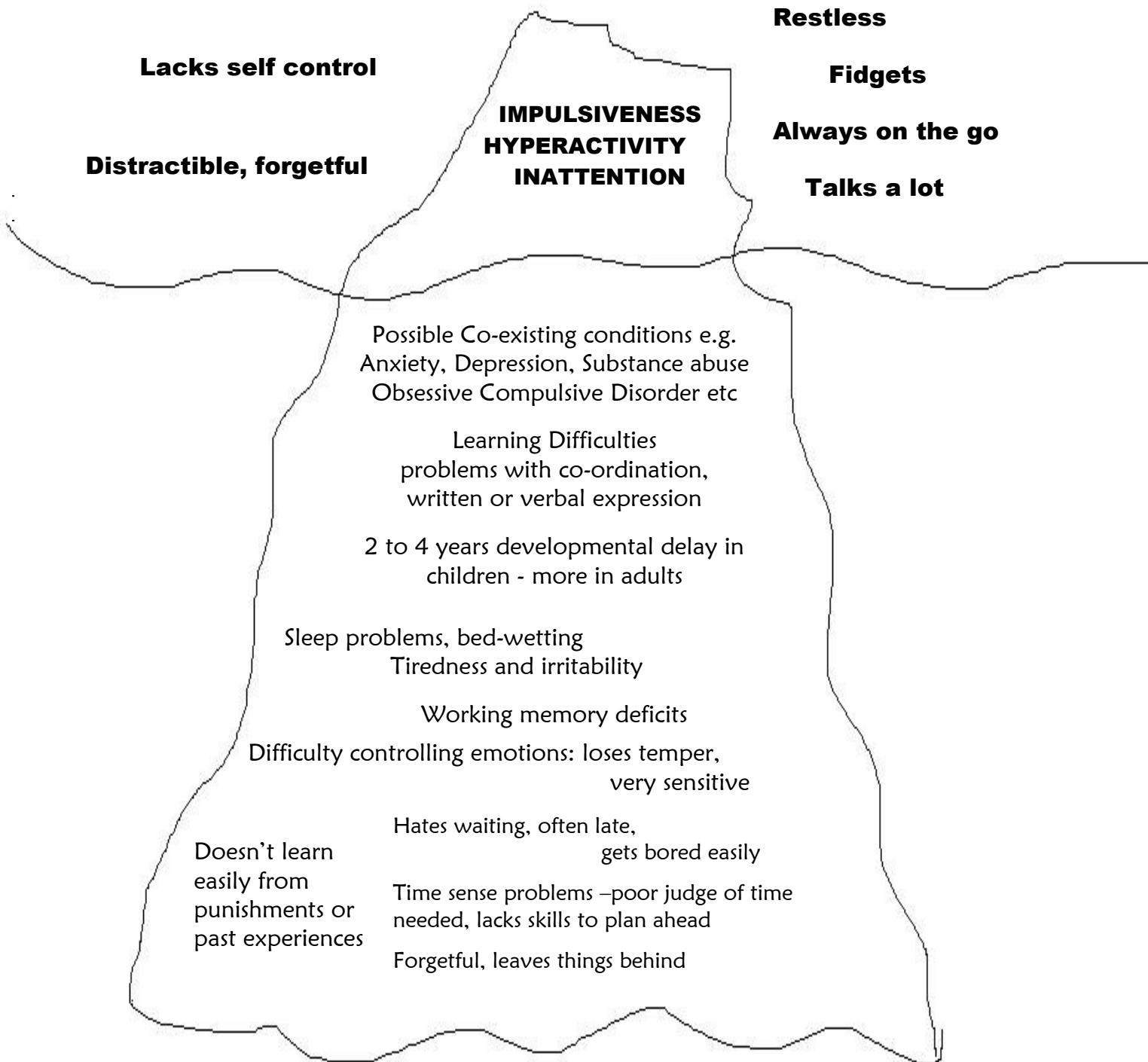
## Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – ADHD

### Some basic facts

This condition affects 3-6% of the general population, so in a school class of about 30 there would be likely to be on average one to two children with ADHD.

- Many of these children are not diagnosed, simply because their ADHD is not recognised. Others are waiting for an assessment.
- ADHD is difficulty with self control or self-regulation, and is therefore often misunderstood. It is a hidden disability.
- All ADHD children have problems of Inattention, Hyperactivity and Impulsiveness but the severity of each and the balance between them can vary from child to child.
- ADHD can show as mainly hyperactive and impulsive, or mainly inattentive (sometimes called ADD) or a combination.
- ADHD commonly continues into adulthood. Most adults with ADHD were not understood as children which is why so many are looking for assessment now.
- The outcome for an individual young person depends on their balance of symptoms and how these are managed at home, in school and other environments.
- ADHD is often combined with other difficulties such as dyslexia, sleep problems, bedwetting, and co-ordination problems.
- People with ADHD seem to live in the present. They have trouble planning ahead, are not motivated by rewards at a later date, don't learn from past mistakes, and are bad at judging time, so are often late and rushed.

## THE ADHD ICEBERG



## The three diagnostic criteria - Inattention, Hyperactivity and Impulsiveness

### Inattention

Inattention is not so much *lack* of attention as *too much* attention.

With ADHD it is very difficult to focus on one thing and filter out irrelevant sights, sounds, feelings and thoughts.

Paying attention doesn't just mean concentrating.

We have to:

1. focus on the right thing at the right time
2. divide focus between two things when necessary
3. be able to shift focus to move on to the next important task.

These are all common problems with ADHD.

### Some of the results of Attention problems

Poor time-keeping	Difficulty sustaining attention on a task
Easily distracted	Difficulty maintaining a train of thought
Disorganised	Difficulty following instructions
Loses essential things	Leaves things unfinished
Repeatedly forgetful	Makes careless mistakes
Difficulty following and joining in a group conversation	

Because inattentive ADHD people have these problems they can appear rude, uninterested, incompetent, uncaring or lazy.

The mental exertion required for them to complete a mundane task, or even start the task, is much more than for a non-ADHD person.

It is common for them to feel overwhelmed.

### Hyperfocus

When a person with ADHD manages to settle on one thing it can be a relief and some then block everything else out. They forget about the important thing they were going to do next and find it hard to change activity. When struggling to concentrate (on what they are saying as well as doing) they might snap at anyone who interrupts.

Symptoms of inattention cause difficulties at primary school and these difficulties often increase at secondary school.

When the problems of ADHD are not understood by family or teachers, the result for the child will often be under-achievement, failure and criticism, which in turn can result in depression and loss of motivation, or anger and oppositional behaviour.

Girls with ADHD may be undiagnosed because they tend to have mainly inattentive characteristics whereas boys are more likely to be disruptive.

### Hyperactivity

Hyperactivity is described as random, excessive activity when compared with other children of the same age (or other adults)

In children, hyperactivity can be seen as, for example:

- Running and climbing in inappropriate situations
- Unable to play quietly, and always on the go
- Fidgeting and unable to sit still for any length of time
- Chewing (e.g. pencils, fingernails, tv controllers, clothes)
- Impatience

In adolescents and adults, hyperactivity can be:

Talking too much	Talking very fast
Fidgeting	Impatience
General restlessness	Racing thoughts

Obvious physical hyperactivity lessens with age but a typical hyperactive 17 year old might have the activity level of a typical non-ADHD 7 year old.

In spite of their hyperactivity, a person with ADHD may also suffer from inertia, and may be a heavy sleeper, though others may find it hard to fall asleep or have disturbed sleep.

### Impulsiveness (Impulsivity)

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ADHD is often thought of as hyperactivity and distractibility but it is the impulsiveness that is most likely to lead a child or young person into trouble.

Acting and reacting quickly, according to instinct, or governed by emotion, with little thought about the consequences, even when these are obvious, is one of the most difficult aspects of ADHD.

In children impulsiveness shows as:

Lacking self-control

Interrupting

Impatient, finding it difficult to wait their turn

Saying things rashly, may be tactless or rude

Rushing work, making careless errors

Losing temper easily

In adolescents and adults, impulsiveness may show as all the above, plus:

Rushing into decisions and then regretting them

Overspending and impulse buying

Generosity when cannot afford it

Over-commitment of time

Lashing out at people or things

Enthusiastically starting new things without preparation

Jumping into, and giving up on, jobs, relationships, projects, interests

Risky behaviour of various types, e.g. trying drugs, unsafe sex, fast driving.

## ADHD and Executive Function/ Executive Skills

Difficulties in ADHD are often described as weaknesses in executive skills or executive functioning. Executive functions are those workings of our brains that help us to be organised, to plan, make decisions and decide priorities, to use what we have learnt in the past, to keep in mind our goals for the future, and act in our own best interests.

### **WORKING MEMORY**

Holding information and facts in mind while we use them and relate them to other facts or activities.

With ADHD, working memory can be 'blinky', and get easily overloaded.

### **SELF ACTIVATION**

Getting started, paying attention and getting things finished.

More difficult with ADHD, so people leave things to the last minute.

### **SENSE OF TIME**

Monitoring the passage of time and planning accordingly.

With ADHD, people often spend too long on some things and don't allow enough time for other things.

### **REMEMBERING TO REMEMBER**

Remembering the right things at the right time, or returning to something after an interruption.

With ADHD people can sometimes forget altogether or remember when it's too late.

### **CONTROLLING EMOTIONS**

Having feelings without acting on them, being able to tolerate frustration, thinking before acting or speaking.

People with ADHD tend to feel strong emotions and act on them more than other people.

### **HINDSIGHT and FORETHOUGHT**

Remembering and learning lessons from the past, thinking ahead to the likely result of different actions, then using the past and future to guide the present and make good decisions.

People with ADHD tend to react too quickly to be able to make use of the knowledge they have.

Different researchers have created slightly different lists of Executive Functions.

This one is from Ari Tuckman, (Executive Functions Workbook) based on Russell Barkley

### What causes ADHD?

About 80% of ADHD is inherited. Many genes are thought to be involved.

The balance of neuro-transmitters (brain chemicals) is different in the ADHD brain.

The parts of the brain affected are the frontal lobes which govern self-control and 'Executive Functions'.

The ADHD brain probably evolved through the benefits it brings but the demands of school, many types of jobs, and typical modern living, doesn't suit it so well.

### Potential advantages of ADHD characteristics

Originality

Creativity and inventiveness

Ability to focus intensely when interested

High level of energy and exuberance

Entrepreneurial flair

Quick reactions can be good in emergencies

Risk-taking can lead to discoveries and achievements

### What does it all mean for the parent?

ADHD is not caused by poor parenting but ADHD children can make their parents look bad!

Helping your ADHD child is a long term project needing stamina, determination, understanding, planning and support.

He or she cannot just change overnight and may need extra support for years, both in practical ways and to boost their confidence and self-esteem.

Although ADHD can be a disability, each child has many positive qualities and abilities to be discovered and encouraged!

Friends and family need to understand ADHD and support the ways you choose to work on your child's behalf. Schools will need information to help them help your child.

## 'Positive Principles for Parenting an ADHD Child'

We just want a happy household and to get on well with our children but find it's not that easy. Parenting an ADHD child needs extra skills and more stamina!

Why is a different approach needed for children with ADHD?

Because ADHD causes disability:

- Vague sense of time
- Poor self-control
- Emotional ups and downs
- Poor working memory

ADHD Oxfordshire recommends an approach which includes  
the three elements of

## **STRUCTURE, STRATEGIES and SUPPORT**

### **Examples of Structure**

Routines - for mornings, evenings, homework etc.

The routine can be posted on the wall or door using pictures or words.

Rules - Rules can be set for younger children and negotiated with teenagers. It saves a lot of pointless argument and destructive discussion if you can just say 'You know the rule' or 'I'm sticking to our agreement'.

Clear expectations, rewards and sanctions which have been thought through when not under stress, and explained to the child in a calm way. This makes life more predictable for the child and helps parents to be consistent, remember to reward where appropriate, and not threaten unrealistic punishments,

## Examples of Strategies

### Make goals attainable

Start with a goal you know they can already achieve, before moving on and aiming for the next step.

### Small steps

Divide up tasks - not 'tidy your room' but one thing at a time  
e.g. 'bring down the dirty mugs' or 'put all the books in one corner'.

Divide up time - half an hour's homework, 10 minute jobs

### Visual and auditory reminders

Lists, timetables, diaries,  
Alarms and timers, for time up as well as time to start  
colour coding for school subjects,

### Immediate rewards and sanctions

Try to deal with situations there and then.  
Reward with praise when being good.

### Bigger rewards as incentives

The ADHD brain needs more stimulation for motivation.  
Ignore, or explain to, people who call this bribery!

### Reminders at the immediate point

With impulsiveness and poor memory, we need to remind and describe  
how to behave just before going in that shop,

### Ignore the unimportant

Concentrate on the behaviour or problems you really need to work on.

### Think ahead and plan ahead

Experience tells you where problems might occur, so having a strategy  
planned is a good idea so we don't have to react without time to think.

## Examples of Support

Give practical help for as long as needed

Notice and praise the behaviour wanted. Be specific.

Ignore less serious unwanted behaviour

Keep the reward system meaningful. It will need changing at times.

Listen. Show and express understanding.

Remind them of their successes and strengths.

Make sure family, friends and school know and understand about ADHD and the approaches you are using.

Some useful quotations:

'Act, don't yak. Talking won't change anything.'

'Defuse! Don't inflame!'

'Only positive rewards will change behaviour and improve attitude.'

'We need to be their substitute frontal lobes.'

'Keep it POSITIVE,  
Keep it CALM,  
Keep it ORGANISED  
Keep it GOING!'

And a thought for parents:

How can you set up Structure, Strategies, and Support  
to look after YOURSELF too?

What else can help ADHD children and young people? A very brief summary.

- **Exercise:** Regular hard physical exercise affects the level of brain chemicals.  
It brings a feel good factor and relieves ADHD symptoms.
- **Good diet:** Protein at breakfast then a balanced diet and possibly fish oil (Omega 3) supplements are worth trying.  
Food is not a cause of ADHD but some people find certain foods seem to make symptoms worse.
- **Relaxation/ Meditation techniques** are good to help the ADHD person calm down and improve their focus.
- **Medication when appropriate:** Medication allows the child or adult an opportunity to concentrate and learn and relate better to other people, but does not get rid of the ADHD, and does not teach the skills they have missed developing. Different types of medication are now available.
- **Finding what they are good at and what inspires them.** Encouraging them with appropriate opportunities.
- **Providing the practical help they need for as long as they need it.** They cannot change the way their brains work so we must bridge the gap. Help might be needed right through education including the university years.

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Or cash at our face to face meetings.*

*Thank you very much*

## Recommended resources

### Internet and National

For reliable information, support and training

**ADHDUK** <https://adhdःuk.co.uk/>

**ADDISS** [www.addiss.co.uk](http://www.addiss.co.uk)

For advice and understanding

**Dr Russell Barkley** Essential Ideas for Parents

30 things he wants parents to know

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCAGc-rkIf0>

This is almost 3 hours long but worth watching in sections  
(or listen as if on the radio because it's just him speaking)

**ADDITUDE** <https://www.additudemag.com>

For help with school issues:

**SENDASS** (formerly Parent Partnership) 01865 810516

<https://schools.oxfordshire.gov.uk/special-educational-needs/special-educational-needs-support-service-senss>

### Books

Books: Two we like are:

'ADHD, Living without Brakes' by Martin L Kutscher

'Understanding ADHD, A parent's guide to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity in Children' by Dr Christopher Green and Kit Chee

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