

# CHILDREN WITH ADHD

How to better support your child with ADHD, including executive function support, improving coping strategies for anger, time management and resources for parents!



# WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD (Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) is a disorder that affects a person's ability to pay attention and control impulsive behaviors.

## IN ATTENTION

Has difficulty staying focused on activities  
forgetful of tasks (i.e. homework, chores)  
misses small details / makes careless mistakes, avoids mentally demanding tasks often loses things

## HYPERACTIVITY/IMPULSIVITY

Constantly moving or "on the go"  
has difficulty sitting still excessively talkative often fidgets, taps fingers or squirms has difficulty with quiet tasks often speaks out of turn /interrupts

**Note: Everyone will occasionally experience symptoms similar to those of ADHD. We all forget things and sometimes work is actually boring. That is completely normal. When a professional diagnoses ADHD they are considering intensity, frequency and consequences of the symptoms.**

## WHAT DOES ADHD LOOK LIKE?

During childhood, ADHD can be misinterpreted as intentionally bad behavior. Children with ADHD struggle with paying attention during school and they frequently get in trouble for talking or getting out of their chairs. Often even their peers become frustrated by their behavior which can lead to isolation.

During adulthood, ADHD can damage careers, interrelationships and self esteem. Inattention symptoms can lead to forgotten responsibilities poor organization and difficulty completing tasks. Hyperactivity symptoms often manifests as thrill seeking, a high need for stimulation and impulsive decision making.



# Explaining ADHD to Teachers

Share this infographic, created by Chris A. Zeigler Dendy and Alex Zeigler, with your teacher (artwork adapted by *ADDitude* magazine).

## The Tip of the Iceberg:

The Obvious ADHD Behaviors

### Hyperactivity

- > Can't sit still
- > Fidgets
- > Talks a lot
- > Runs or climbs a lot
- > Always on the go

### Impulsivity

- > Lacks self control
- > Difficulty awaiting turn
- > Blurts out
- > Interrupts
- > Intrudes

- > Talks back
- > Loses temper

### Inattention

- > Disorganized
- > Doesn't follow through

- > Doesn't pay attention
- > Is forgetful
- > Doesn't seem to listen
- > Loses things
- > Late homework

## THE ADHD ICEBERG

Only 1/8 of an iceberg is visible. Most of it is hidden beneath the surface.

## Hidden Beneath the Surface:

The Not-So-Obvious Behaviors (2/3 have at least one other condition)

### Neurotransmitter Deficits Impact Behavior

- > Insufficient levels of neurotransmitters, dopamine and norepinephrine, results in reduced brain activity.

### Weak Executive Functioning

- > Working memory and recall
- > Getting started, effort
- > Internalizing language
- > Controlling emotions
- > Problem solving

### Impaired Sense of Time

- > Doesn't judge passage of time accurately
- > Loses track of time
- > Often late
- > Forgets long-term

- projects or is late
- > Difficulty planning for future
- > Impatient
- > Hates waiting
- > Time creeps
- > Avoids doing homework

### Sleep Disturbance (56%)

- > Impacts memory
- > Doesn't get restful sleep
- > Can't fall asleep
- > Can't wake up
- > Late for school
- > Irritable
- > Morning battles

### 3-Year Delayed Brain Maturation

- > Less mature
- > Less responsible
- > 18-year-old acts like 15

### Not Learning Easily from Rewards and Punishment

- > Repeats misbehavior
- > May be difficult to discipline

- > Less likely to follow rules
- > Difficulty managing his own behavior
- > Doesn't study past behavior
- > Acts without sense of hindsight
- > Must have immediate rewards
- > Long-term rewards don't work
- > Doesn't examine his own behavior
- > Difficulty changing his behavior

### Co-Existing Conditions

- > Anxiety (34%)
- > Depression (29%)

- > Bipolar (12%)
- > Tourette Syndrome (11%)
- > Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (4%)
- > Oppositional Defiant Disorder (54-67%)

### Serious Learning Problems

- > Specific Learning Disability (25-50%)
- > Poor working memory
- > Can't memorize easily
- > Forgets teacher and parent requests
- > Slow math calculation
- > Spelling problems
- > Poor written expression
- > Difficulty writing essays
- > Slow retrieval of information

- > Poor listening and reading comprehension
- > Difficulty describing the world in words
- > Disorganization
- > Slow cognitive processing speed
- > Poor handwriting
- > Inattention
- > Impulsive learning style

### Low Frustration Tolerance

- > Difficulty controlling emotions
- > Short fuse
- > Emotionally reactive
- > Loses temper easily
- > May give up more easily
- > Doesn't stick with things
- > Speaks or acts before thinking
- > Difficulty seeing others' perspective
- > May be self-centered

ADHD is often more complex than most people realize! Like icebergs, many problems related to ADHD are not visible. ADHD may be mild, moderate, or severe, is likely to coexist with other conditions, and may be a disability for some students.

## BIOLOGICAL CONFUSION:

Some people incorrectly believe that ADHD is made up to serve as an excuse for poor behavior. However, we know that ADHD has a very real biological basis. For example, people with ADHD have structural differences in their brain, most notably in an area that's responsible for impulse control.

We also know that genetics play a role: a person is much more likely to develop ADHD if their parents have the disorder. Some environmental factors also play a role, but to a lesser extent than heredity.



## TREATMENT

Although there's no cure for ADHD, both children and adults can learn to manage their symptoms with medication and psychotherapy. Additionally, some children will simply outgrow ADHD with time.

## PSYCHOTHERAPY

Focuses on identifying strengths and weaknesses, skill building, and education about the ways to reduce the intensity of symptoms. It can be invaluable to work with a therapist to learn personalized coping skills.

## MEDICATION

Although medication cannot cure ADHD, an effective treatment can help both children and adults with symptom management. The most common medications for ADHD are stimulants.



# GREAT INTERVENTIONS FOR PARENTS

## CREATE A SIMPLE LIST OF RULES

Focus on the most important behaviors by creating a short and straight forward list of rules. Let the small stuff slide. If your child completes their homework and chores but forgets a dirty dish, focus on the accomplishments rather than the mistake. Perfection is an unrealistic expectation.



## USE PRAISE

Praise your child for simple good behaviors that you would like them to continue. A simple "good job" or a smile can go a long way. If you find it hard to praise behavior compliment them for the extended periods of time that they don't get in trouble or their focus.

## CREATE A REWARD SYSTEM

Rewards are more effective than punishments to motivate a child to change their behavior. Reward systems can be as simple as a token for each day of the week a specific good behavior is completed, which can then be exchanged for a reward. Talk with your child to figure out what reward they want and how many tokens it will cost.

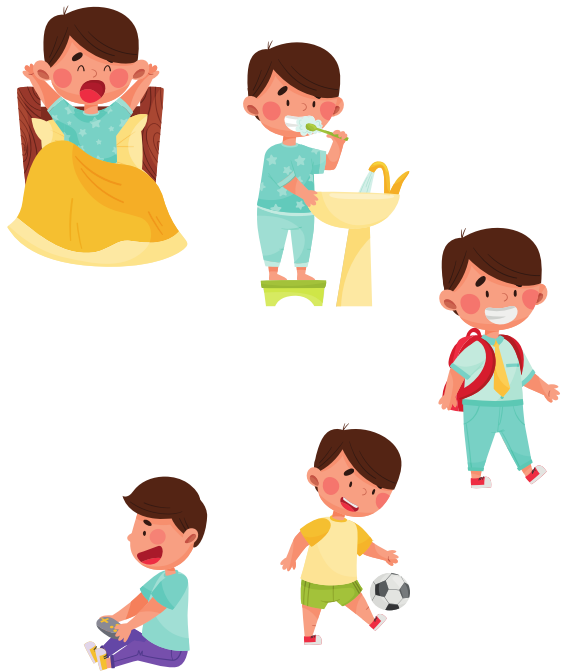




# GREAT INTERVENTIONS FOR PARENTS

## HOMEWORK HOUR

Set aside a time each school day for your child to complete homework. If there are no assignments for that evening. They can still spend th time studying or reading. This routine reduces the chance that your child will forget or avoid doing their homework. Also, homework hour reduces the reinforcement rhat children usually receive for completing their homework as quickly as possible.



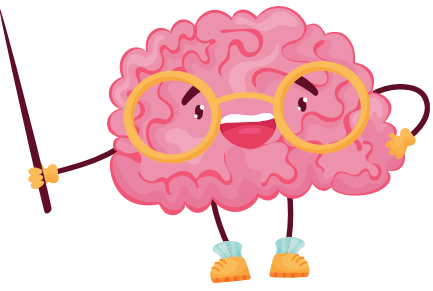
## ESTABLISH STRUCTURE:

Children with ADHD do their best when they know what to expect. Establish a routine for homework, meals, pleaying, bedtime, and preparing for school. For example, your child may learn to brush their teeth at a specifci time, get a glass of water and then lay out their clother for the next day. You can use a reward system to begin establishing these rotuintes.

## USE CONSEQUENCES EFFECTIVELY

Consequences should be explained in advance, they should occur immediatelu after the unwated behavior, and you must always follow through with your stated consequence, Removal of privileges is effective but be careful not to over punish. Your child will not remember why they are grounded after 2 weeks and you have no leverage if your child have nothing.





# MY FOCUS PLAN

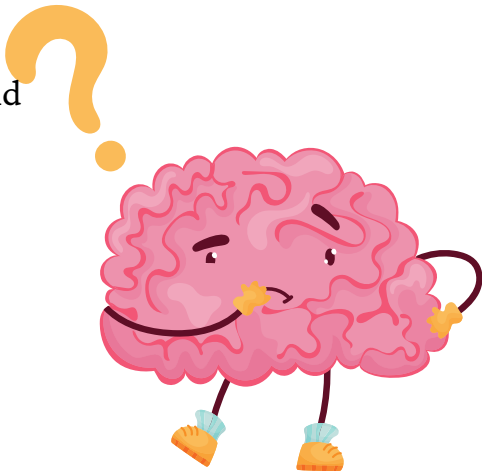
## STEP 1: DEFINE THE TASK

Write one task that needs to be done. For example, "finish my science project."

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## STEP 2. BREAK IT INTO SMALLER PARTS

Breaking a large task into smaller parts makes it more manageable. "Finish my science project" might sound scary, but "do the background research" and "write your hypothesis" are much easier to handle.



**TASK PARTS:**

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**TIME REQUIRED:**

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## STEP 3: CREATE A SCHEDULE

Schedule the task for a specific time or link it to a daily activity and include a plan on how you will remember to work on the task.

**Schedule**

**Reminders**

"Research science project "      "Set a phone reminder for after school"

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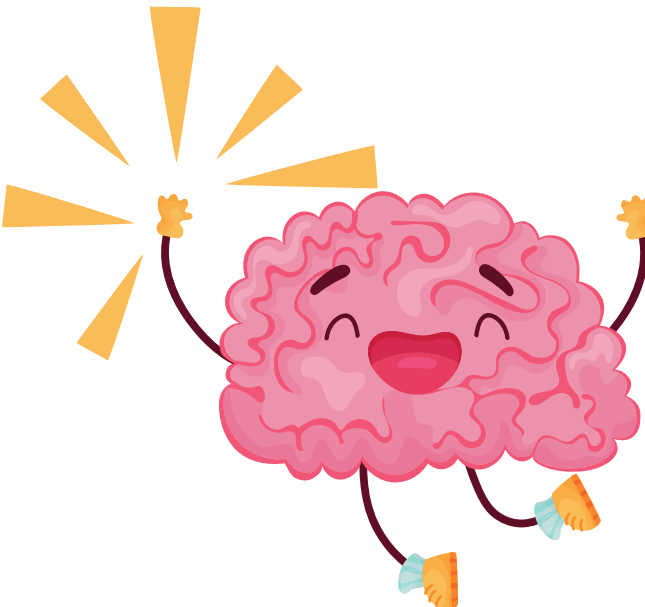
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# Homework Ideas That Work

Check off the strategies you think would work best for your child and discuss with the teacher.

## What Parents Can Do

- ☐ **Structure your child's time after school hours so that homework is completed at the same time each day.** Some children have more focus immediately after school, before they enter "home mode." Others find they need a little down time to have a snack and play before settling down to tackle homework.
- ☐ **Ask your child's teacher how she passes along homework assignments.** She might hand out worksheets, write homework on the board, or assign it orally. If your child forgets the assignments or supplies he will need, discuss different ways to assign homework, such as keeping it posted on the board throughout the day or using an online calendar to allow assignments to be accessed from home.
- ☐ **Create a homework spot away from the family area where there will be fewer distractions.** Stock the area with pencils, pens, paper, and a calculator.
- ☐ **Work with your child at the beginning of homework time to help him break assignments into 15- to 20-minute work periods.** Allow him to take a short break after each period.
- ☐ **Use behavioral charts to motivate your child.** You might award a star each time he continues to work for 15 minutes, and give another star when homework is complete and in a folder to be returned to school.
- ☐ **If returning work to school is a problem, talk to the teacher about your child's scanning the completed assignment** (if it isn't done on a computer) and emailing it.
- ☐ **Create a checklist your child can follow each day**—gather supplies, complete math worksheets, read, etc.

## What Teachers Can Do

- ☐ **Read assignments aloud and post them on the board each morning.**
- ☐ **Allow enough time during class for students to write down the assignments.** Consider keeping assignments posted for the entire day.
- ☐ **Use an online calendar to allow access to homework assignments from home.** Teachers can use Google calendar or Assign-A-Day, a free tool for educators that lets students and parents see homework assignments, upcoming tests, and due dates from their phone, tablet, or computer.
- ☐ **Assign study buddies, but don't put one student in charge of the other.** Team up every student in the class and ask each one to check to make sure their partner has everything he needs to bring home.
- ☐ **Request that each student have a folder designated for completed work only.** Each morning, have students take out their folders and hand in homework.
- ☐ **Be responsive to the length of time homework assignments take.** For some students, an assignment can take hours to complete at home. Consider giving them partial assignments, such as solving the odd-numbered problems. This will allow the child to show progress and understanding in less time and with less frustration.
- ☐ **Work with parents to determine how much time is needed to complete homework.** If a student works on an assignment for an hour, the parent may consider it completed, even if the child didn't finish every problem.



# I CAN CHALLENGE ANGER



Things that make me angry:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## WHEN I FEEL ANGRY:

I feel in my body:

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I have these thoughts:

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I do these things:

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## I CAN FEEL BETTER WHEN I'M ANGRY BY:

Check the ones that might be helpful and try to choose at least 1 from each category.

### RELAXATION SKILLS

- ☐ Take deep breathes
- ☐ Tense and relax your muscles
- ☐ Get a drink of water
- ☐ Take a nap
- ☐ Listen to music



### DISTRACTION SKILLS

- ☐ Count from 1 to 100
- ☐ Watch funny youtube videos
- ☐ Find someone trusted to talk to
- ☐ Do a hobby, write, draw, build
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



### PHYSICAL RELEASE

- ☐ Take a break
- ☐ Exercise / run / jog
- ☐ Jump up and down
- ☐ Take a cold shower
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_



### THINKING SKILLS

- ☐ Use affirmations
- ☐ Go-to problem solving strategies
- ☐ Challenge unhelpful thoughts
- ☐ Know your anger triggers
- ☐ Use encouraging self talk



# Let Me Introduce Myself

Have your child fill out this form and give it to the teacher during the first two weeks of school.

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

I've put a check mark next to the things that work best for me in the classroom. But first, let me tell you a little about myself:

**1. I love doing these things in my spare time at home:**

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**2. I am very good at the following activities:**

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**3. My five biggest strengths are:**

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**4. My four biggest weaknesses are:**

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**5. I would love to do the following when I grow up:**

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**6. My favorite subjects are:**

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**7. I make my best grades in these classes:**

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**8. My most difficult subjects are:**

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**9. I can learn best in these situations:**

**When:**

☐ in the morning ☐ other

**With:**

☐ by myself ☐ working with a friend

☐ working with a tutor ☐ other

**Where:**

☐ at my desk ☐ on the floor

☐ at the work table in the back of the room

☐ other

**Conditions:**

☐ sitting at my desk ☐ sitting on the floor

☐ kneeling at my desk ☐ standing behind my desk

☐ listening to music ☐ in a quiet area

☐ wearing noise-blocking headphones

☐ away from the door and distractions

☐ walking around ☐ other

**10. It helps if I have study breaks:**

☐ every 20 minutes ☐ every 30 minutes

☐ after I finish a certain part of the work (one half, one third, or one section)

**11. I like to...**

☐ Sit at the end of a row so I won't disturb others if I stand up

☐ Stand up and walk around briefly

☐ Stand up and stretch

**12. These strategies help me stay organized and complete my homework:**

☐ use an assignment book

☐ write down the assignments

☐ have a friend write assignments down and give me a copy

☐ send my assignments to my phone and/or my parent's phone (**remind.com** software)

☐ have a "row captain" remind me to write down my homework and remind me to turn it in

☐ call a friend at home if I forget assignments

☐ keep an extra textbook at home

☐ ask a friend to help me review and organize my notebook

☐ dictate assignments on a recorder

☐ have someone help me plan the sequence of what I do first, second, and last

☐ estimate how long an assignment will take

☐ put finished work in one place

☐ color-code folders and book covers

☐ break long-term assignments into sections with different due dates

☐ send home a reminder of due dates for the final project via email or a note

☐ other

**13. What helps me learn and remember information:**

☐ write things down

☐ draw a picture

☐ use a mind map

☐ use flash cards

☐ type it into a computer

☐ listen to a recording

☐ read it out loud

☐ talk about the information

☐ make or build something

☐ use associations; mnemonics

☐ use songs or rhymes

☐ other



**I'm excited to give this year my very best!** I appreciate all of your support to help me use my strengths to combat my weaknesses. If there is something I need to do or control better let me know, but *please don't forget to be kind.*

How parents can support

# BETTER TIME MANAGEMENT

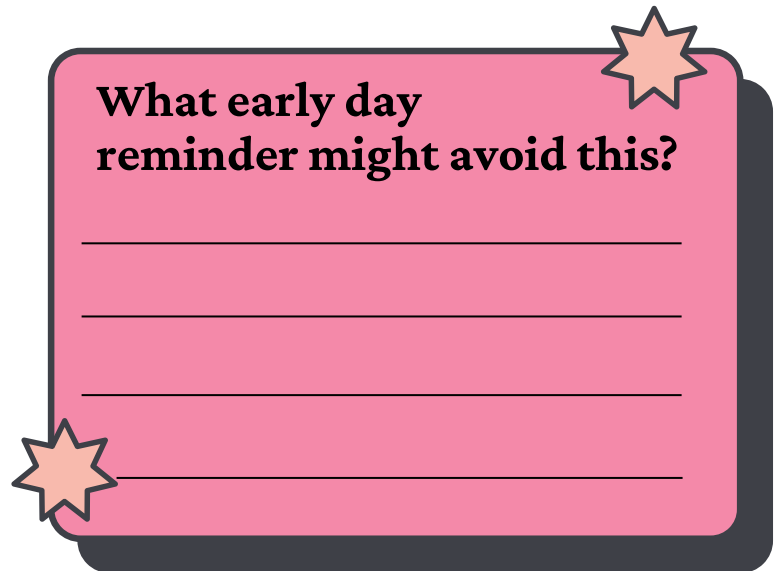
Good habits are strengthened like a muscle. Use this page to work through a behavior you'd like to change by practicing these helpful interventions.

**REPETITIVE PROBLEM:** \_\_\_\_\_

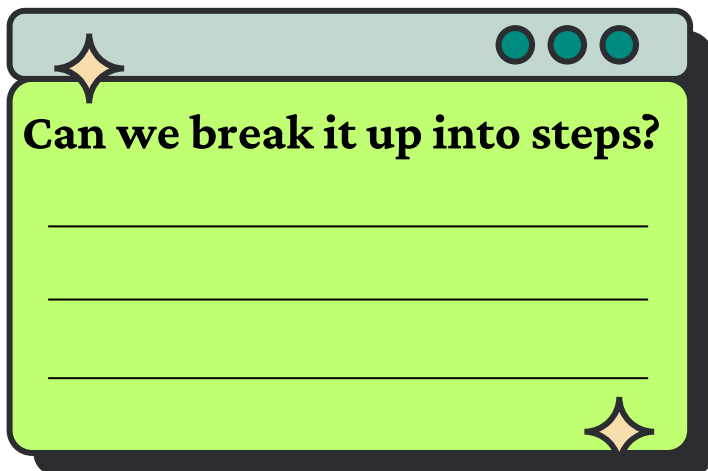
Can we prepare in advance?



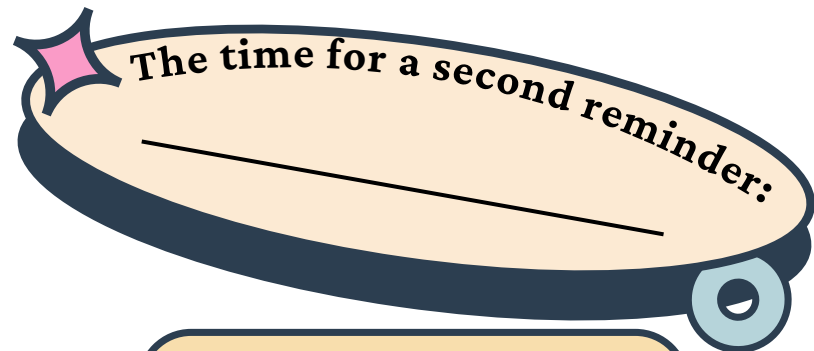
What early day reminder might avoid this?



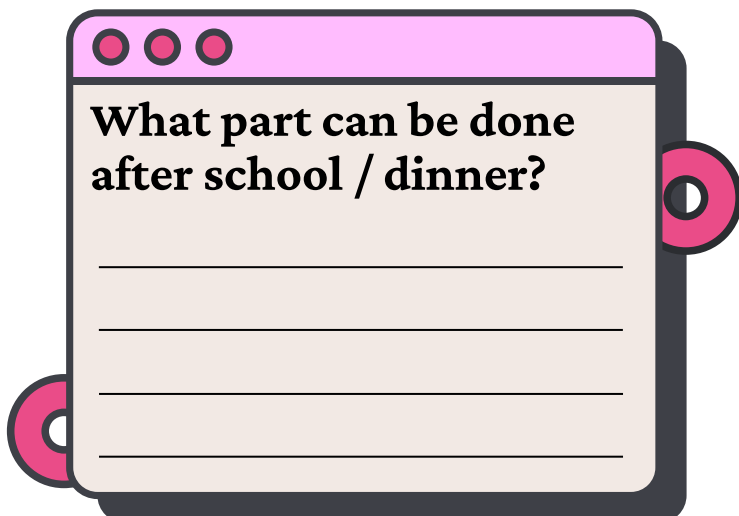
Can we break it up into steps?



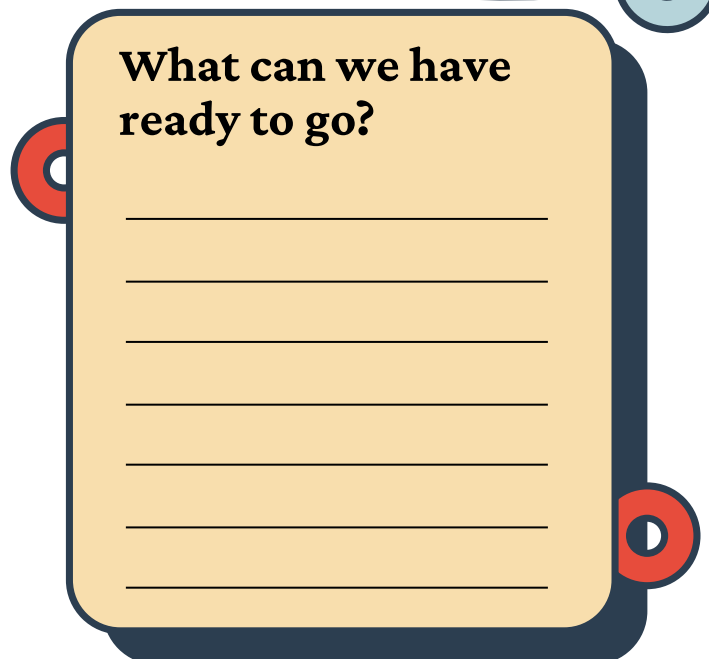
The time for a second reminder:



What part can be done after school / dinner?



What can we have ready to go?



# 7 CONVERSATION STARTERS FOR PARENTS

Adversarial parent-teacher relationships benefit **no one**. The key to cooperation is clear communication *without blame or hostility*. Use these conversation starters to begin developing a healthy relationship with your child's new teacher, while getting your child the support they really need.

WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY	WHY YOU SHOULD SAY IT
<b>“Thank you for...”</b>	Starting a meeting by thanking the teacher sets a positive tone. Think about a time your child told you the teacher helped him or was supportive. Let the teacher know that you appreciate her efforts. If you can't think of a reason to thank the teacher, start with, “Thank you for talking with me today.”
<b>“I am concerned about...”</b>	Frame your concerns around you rather than your child or the teacher. “I am concerned that Matt is falling behind in math,” sounds better than, “Matt isn't doing well in math,” or “You should be doing more to help Matt with his math.” Using “I am concerned...” opens up a conversation about how you can work together to improve areas in which your child is struggling.
<b>“Do you have any suggestions about...”</b>	You know your child best; however, the teacher might have some ideas on how you can help your son or daughter in class. The teacher has the opportunity to observe your child at school. Asking for suggestions lets the teacher know that you respect her opinion.
<b>“What do you see as my child's strengths?”</b>	Conversations with teachers sometimes devolve into negative talks, especially if your child is struggling or misbehaving in school. Focus on your child's positive aspects to release tension and allow both of you to look at the situation from a different perspective.
<b>“I've noticed that my child responds to...”</b>	Share your perspective with teachers and give them information that could be helpful. Wording this as your point of view allows you to give input without being accusatory or making the teacher feel defensive.
<b>“His IEP provides for _____. How do you implement that in the classroom?”</b>	By using this wording, you are saying that you assume the teacher is following the IEP, instead of accusing her of not following it.
<b>“What can I do to help?”</b>	Whether you are asking how you can support your child's learning at home or how you can volunteer at school, the teacher will appreciate your wanting to be involved in your child's education.



**THE BEST WAY TO THINK  
OF ADD IS NOT AS A  
MENTAL DISORDER BUT  
AS A COLLECTION OF  
TRAITS AND TENDENCIES  
THAT DEFINE A WAY OF  
BEING IN THE WORLD.**

