



Hampshire Child and Adolescent
Mental Health Services

FAMILY INFORMATION
PACK FOR POST-DIAGNOSIS OF

ADHD

Services provided by
Sussex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

WHAT IS ADHD?

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition that affects 3-5% of school aged children. There are several variations of ADHD, including ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder). This does not include the hyperactivity elements of ADHD, however all other factors are the same.

Medical studies have shown that children who have ADHD have structural and functional differences in their brain. These brain differences mean they may struggle with certain tasks.

ADHD is categorised by **Inattention**, **Hyperactivity** and **Impulsivity**.

Examples of these symptoms include:

- Difficulty giving and/or maintaining attention across contexts
- Difficulty listening and retaining information
- Difficulty following through on instructions and completing tasks
- Forgetfulness in activities of daily living
- Distractibility
- Disorganisation
- Difficulty sustaining mental effort
- Often losing or misplacing things
- Fidgeting and/or restlessness
- Difficulty staying seated
- Constant physical movement, appearing as if they never seem to stop
- Difficulty regulating volume
- Talking excessively or over others
- Interrupting and/or intruding in conversation
- Difficulties with turn-taking and/or waiting in lines

These difficulties are present in both home and school environments, as well as any other contexts, and need to have been present for over six months. ADHD symptom presentations can change over time. There is no cure for ADHD but it can be effectively managed through a variety of methods.

LIVING WITH ADHD:

Living with a young person with ADHD can be challenging for the whole family. Parents often find themselves struggling with their child because they do not respond to typical parenting. This can lead to an increased level of tension in the family, especially for the primary caregiver.

The first step in reducing the tension is often in realising that the young person's problem is not your fault. It is not the young person's fault either. Due to the differences in their brain chemistry, they have difficulties with listening, following instructions, managing their behaviour etc. and are unable, NOT unwilling, to behave appropriately.

Young people with ADHD may also experience difficulties with sleep. This can cause considerable challenges at home and

at school, as lack of sleep also impacts on their ability to sustain attention and regulate behaviours and emotions. You will find a Sleep Hygiene Workbook enclosed with this pack which offers practical advice on sleep. If you have tried all of these suggestions and they have not had a beneficial impact, we advise you to speak to your GP about a referral to the Sleep Clinic.

Medication is only recommended for those young people who are diagnosed with severe or moderate symptoms and if all other interventions have not been helpful. This booklet will provide you with some helpful strategies to try. If necessary, medication options can be discussed with your CAMHS clinician.

The next few pages will provide some practical strategies to support with the management of ADHD at home.



GIVING INSTRUCTIONS:

Use **WHEN-THEN** instructions. For example, when giving the young person instructions state 'When you have put your toys away, then you can have a story'.

Provide the young person with clear, short and consistent instructions given in a positive tone and provide immediate praise if these are followed.

The young person may find listening difficult and may not always give good eye contact. Making good eye contact with the young person before asking them to do something will help them to listen to what they are being told.

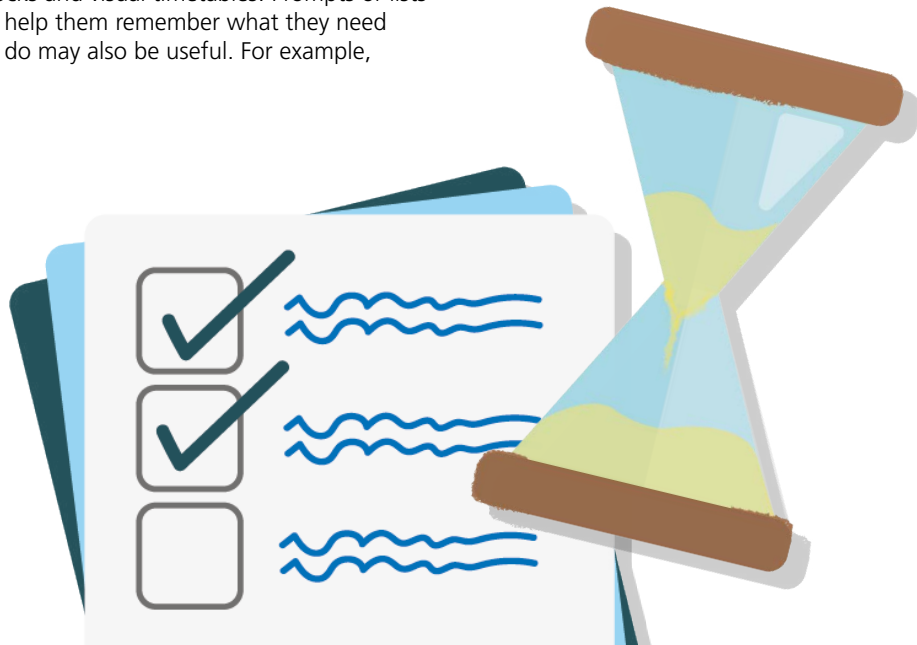
It may be beneficial to provide the young person with visual cues and reminders to help them complete a task. Young people with ADHD have poor short-term memories, for example they may struggle to remember messages. Visual cues can help them to understand and stay on task.

The young person may benefit from using clocks and visual timetables. Prompts or lists to help them remember what they need to do may also be useful. For example,

lists in the kitchen or bathroom, a checklist regarding what they need to take to school or a list of tasks that need to be completed. Timers could also help the young person to see how much longer they need to do an activity e.g. spelling practice, or how long they have to wait for something e.g. for screen time.

Young people with ADHD may struggle with being asked to do things and their instinctive response will be to say 'no' to doing something because they do not know what to do or are afraid of failure. The young person may benefit from being able to say 'I don't know please help me' rather than putting them in a position where 'no' is their inevitable response.

Young people with ADHD often struggle if given too many choices. They may benefit from being given just two choices to avoid them becoming overwhelmed.



BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT:

Young people with ADHD often have low self-esteem and so respond better to frequent rewards rather than sanctions. Look for any opportunity to praise the young person and offer praise for even the smallest of tasks successfully completed.

It might be helpful to establish some house rules e.g. around meal times and bedtimes. This will help the young person to have a clear understanding of what is and what isn't acceptable behaviour.

It will be important to be consistent with the young person and not to give in as this will encourage them to repeat unwanted behaviours. Where possible praise their good behaviour and ignore unwanted behaviour.

Model the behaviour you want from the young person. For example, if you want them to be polite, act in this way towards them.

When the young person behaves positively, they will benefit from this being recognised and acknowledged. For example, by praise, hugs, a special activity, a small gift (e.g. stickers) or a star or reward chart.

A reward chart can also provide the young person with a visual representation of what they have achieved. They could work towards a reward such as pocket money or working towards a prize, or screen time etc.

The young person's positive behaviour can also be reinforced with words for example:

- I am so pleased with you because...
- I like it when you...
- You did that all by yourself... well done
- Because you were so helpful, we can...



When playing with the young person it may be beneficial to provide them with a running commentary on what they're doing. This may help them to settle and play for longer.

- For example, describing their play: "you're putting the car into the garage"
- Describing their desired behaviour: "you're playing quietly by yourself"
- Describing their likely moods and thoughts: "you're trying really hard to build that model"

Where possible provide the young person with frequent, clear and immediate reinforcement. Where possible ignore negative behaviours as opposed to shouting or entering into an argument with the young person.

Time out may be a useful tool to reinforce positive behaviours for the young person. For example, being removed from a family activity. The young person needs to know what behaviour has led to the time out. Time out gives the parent and child a chance to calm down.

Using the word 'we' may help the young person. This means that the focus is not purely on them e.g. 'we do not do so and so' rather than 'you do not do so and so'. This can prevent the young person from feeling singled out, and can subsequently help their self-esteem.

PROBLEM SOLVING:

Many young people with ADHD find it difficult to pause and problem solve and so will react in a knee jerk or panicky way. They may benefit from being helped to go through a problem solving routine. For example:

1. Slow down, what's the problem?
2. What are my choices?
3. What would happen with this choice? How might I feel?
4. Now how do I carry out the best choice?
5. How did that choice work? Should I make another choice next time?



MANAGING IMPULSE CONTROL:

The young person may be able to manage their impulses better when supported with a verbal and visual sequence of "stop-calm-think" that is used both at home and at school.

The young person may be very fidgety and it can be helpful to allow them to manage this in socially appropriate ways by providing them with impulse or fidget toys so their hands and feet can be kept busy. In the classroom they may benefit from having a band around the feet of their chair which allows them to press against, thus managing their need for kinetic and fidgety behaviour.

The young person may show that they "self talk". It may be beneficial to encourage this as it assists them in internalising language for self-regulation. Many impulsive young people struggle to develop an internalised language.

Often impulsive young people need to be taught to think as it does not come naturally to them. Thinking is abstract, so try to make it as concrete as possible. Use facial expressions and body language to demonstrate the thinking model by thinking out loud, for example "I think I need to use the bathroom before I leave the house."

Praise and encourage all "thinking" behaviour, e.g. "I like the way you were thinking just now.", or, "That was good thinking, it helps you keep your body in control."

This is not to make the young person feel terrible about themselves, but to help them build empathy, remorse and encourage their development. It can give them an opportunity to apologise, let go and move on.

MINDFULNESS:

What is Mindfulness?

Mindfulness is based on meditation techniques and helps us to notice what is happening in the present moment and how you are responding to that. It uses short exercises to calm and focus the mind by thinking about what is happening in the here and now.

There is evidence to suggest practicing mindfulness can help young people cope with some of the symptoms of ADHD including inattention, hyperactivity and behaviour regulation.

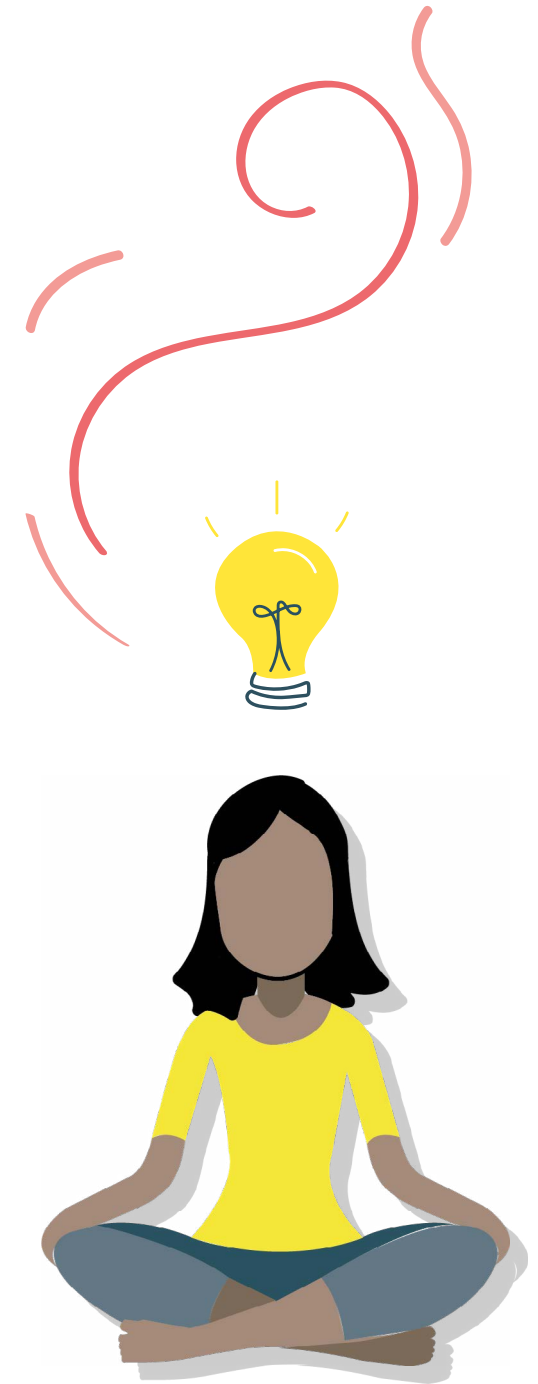
Mindful Parenting

Parenting a young person with ADHD presents unique challenges. It takes focus away from the relationship between parent and child and instead places it on the disruptive behaviour. As a result of this negativity parents can find it very difficult to remain patient and understanding.

The aims of mindful parenting are to:

1. Be deliberately and fully present in the here and now with your child in a non-judgemental way
2. Take care of yourself so you can take care of your child
3. Accepting the difficulties your child may have
4. Answer rather than react to difficult behaviour

Practicing mindfulness with your child gives you the chance to spend quality time together strengthening relationships and promoting positive interactions.



THINGS TO PRACTICE:

MINDFULNESS EXERCISE

- Make sure you are sitting comfortably with your hands in your lap. Your eyes can be open or closed. Focus on your breathing, taking long slow breaths in and out. Think about where you can feel the breath; this could be the tummy, the chest or in your nose and mouth. Notice how it feels without thinking about changing the breath.
- As you breathe in, let your hands float upwards, palms up for the length of the in-breath. As you breathe out, turn your hands over and let them float back down to your lap. Continue doing this, moving the hands in time with your breathing. Breathing in... hands floating up... breathing out... hands floating down.

TEACHABLE MOMENTS

- You can start to practice these skills outside of the home. For example, you can play counting games whilst out on a walk, matching car games, finding items from a list in the supermarket, or memory games on the bus. Implementing these games into your daily life will help the young person to practice and improve their memory and attention skills.

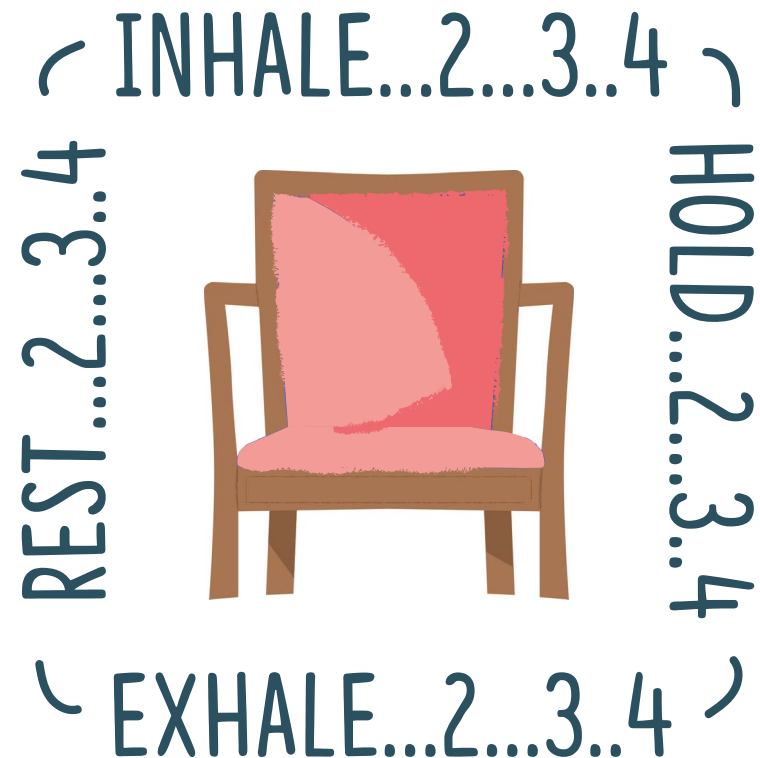
SQUARE BREATHING

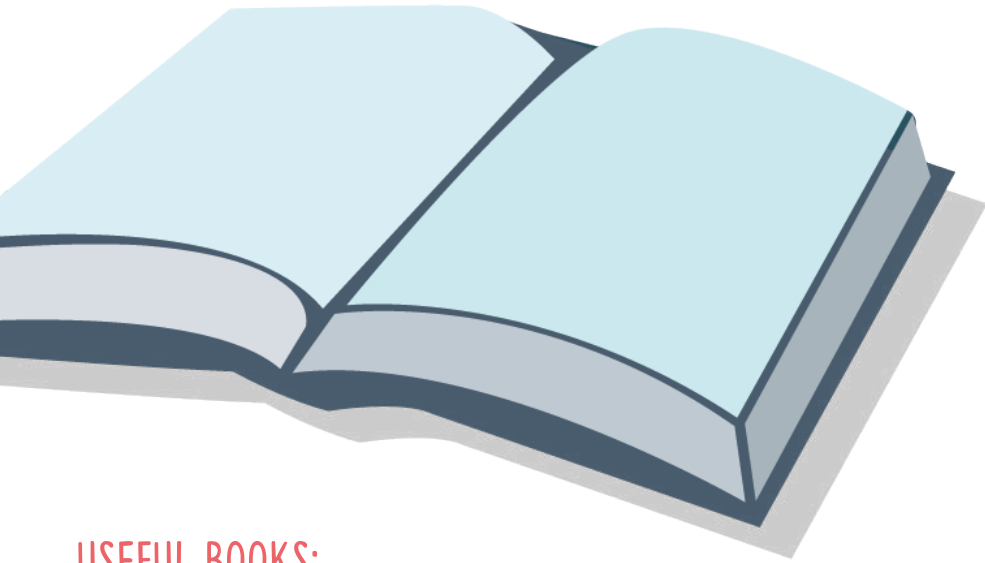
- Slow your breathing down by breathing IN for four seconds, and OUT for four seconds. Use the picture to help you breath in and out. Do this for two-five minutes every day. Do this as soon as you start to feel anxious.

PROGRESSIVE MUSCLE RELAXATION

- Relaxing your muscles helps to reduce tension in your body. To practice calming your body down, read through this muscle relaxation exercise every day, and follow the steps below.
 - » Sit in a comfortable chair (or lie on the floor, or on a bed). Ensure you will not be disturbed by other noises. If you become aware of sounds - just try to ignore them and let them leave your mind just as soon as they enter. Make sure the whole of your body is comfortably supported - including your arms, head and feet. (Rest your arms on the arms of the chair, with your feet flat on the floor - if sitting!)
 - » Close your eyes. Feel the chair supporting your whole body - your legs, your arms, your head. If you can feel any tension, begin to let it go. Take two slow and deep breaths, and let the tension begin to flow out.
 - » Become aware of your head - notice how your forehead feels. Let any tension go and feel your forehead become smooth and wide. Let any tension go from around your eyes, your mouth, your cheeks and your jaw. Let your teeth part slightly and feel the tension go.
 - » Now focus on your neck - let the chair take the weight of your head and feel your neck relax. Now your head is feeling heavy and floppy. Let your shoulders lower gently down. Your shoulders are wider, your neck is longer.
 - » Notice how your body feels as you begin to relax.

- » Be aware of your arms and your hands. Now stretch open your hands. Spread your fingers. Now drop your hands. Let them sink down into the chair. Now they are feeling heavy and limp.
- » Think about your back - from your neck to your hips. Raise your legs up. Then let the tension go and feel yourself sinking down into the chair. Let your hips, your legs and your feet relax and roll outwards. Notice the feeling of relaxation taking over.
- » Think about your breathing - your abdomen gently rising and falling as you breathe. Let your next breath be a little deeper, a little slower.
- » Now, you are feeling completely relaxed and heavy. Lie still and concentrate on slow, rhythmic breathing.
- » When you want to, count back from five to one and open your eyes. Wiggle your fingers and toes, breathe deeply and stretch. Pause before gently rising.





USEFUL BOOKS:

- Step-by-Step help for children with ADHD. A self-help manual for Parents - by Cathy Laver-Bradbury
- ADHD and Me: What I learned from lighting fires at the dinner table - by Blake E. S. Taylor
- Understanding ADD: A Parent's Guide to ADHD in Children - by Dr. Christopher Green
- Smart, but Scattered: The revolutionary "executive skills" approach to helping kids reach their potential - by Peg Dawson and Richard Guare
- 1-2-3 Magic: Effective discipline for children aged 2-12 - by Thomas Phelan
- Mindful Parenting for ADHD: A guide to cultivating calm, reducing stress and helping children thrive - by Dr Mark Bertin
- Mindfulness for Teens with ADHD - by Debra Burdick
- Teenagers with ADHD/ADD: A parent's Guide - by Chris A Zelgler Dandy
- The Hidden Handicap: How to help children who suffer from Dyslexia, Hyperactivity and Learning Difficulties - by Dr Gordon Serfontein
- All Dogs have ADHD - by Kathy Hoopmann
- The Zones of Regulation - by Leah M. Kuypers

USEFUL APPS:



Headspace - This app is for when you find it hard to relax, teaching you the basics of meditation in short 10 minute sessions.

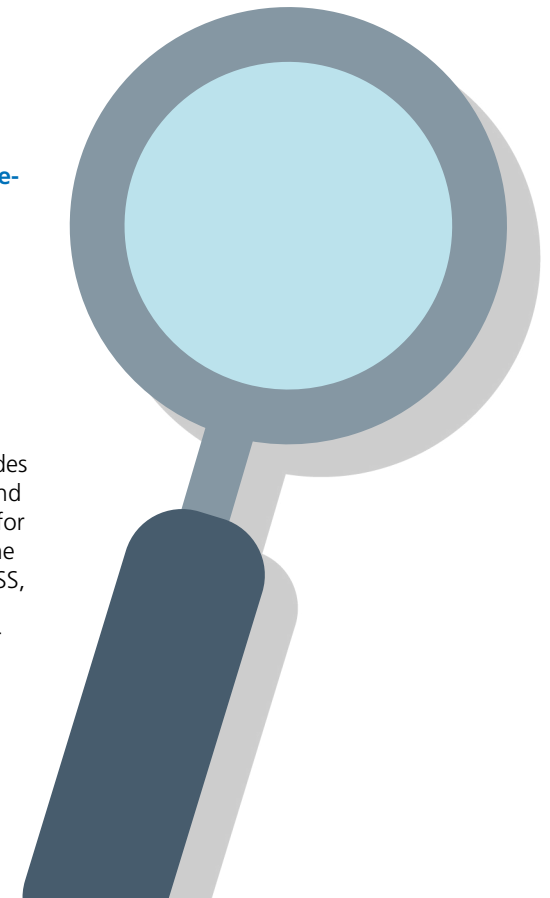


Calm - This app teaches meditation and mindfulness and has exercises to help with concentration, stress and self-esteem.

Please note: Unless stated otherwise, apps are not supplied by the NHS and the NHS is not liable for their use.

USEFUL WEBSITES:

- **Living with ADHD** is a website which supports teenagers who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and provides information for parents, carer and teachers of someone who has the condition. The site provides answers to common questions around challenges and concerns that may arise. Visit: livingwithadhd.co.uk
- **Young Minds** is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional wellbeing and mental health of children and young people. They provide knowledge to parents and young people through their 'Parents' Helpline. They also provide online resources, training and development, outreach work and publications. Visit: youngminds.org.uk/find-help/conditions/adhd-and-mental-health/
- For an ADHD Resource Guide, visit: healthline.com/health/adhd/resource-guide
- For more information on ADHD and to access resources visit: hampshirecamhs.nhs.uk
- **Addiss.co.uk** is a registered charity providing information and resources about ADHD for parents, young people, teachers and health professionals; includes details of their resources, conferences and training. ADDISS also hold conferences for parents and professionals throughout the country they can be contacted at: ADDISS, 10 Station Road, Mill Hill, London NW7 2JE and by phone on **02089 060 354** or by email: conference@addiss.co.uk
- **Healthy Place** promotes awareness to Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and provides information and practical help to both adults and children with ADD/ADHD, and their families in the UK. Visit: healthyplace.com/adhd/articles/addersorg-homepage
- Parents may wish to be aware of **Well at School**, this website provides advice on supporting pupils with ADHD at school. Whilst school are very supportive of students of ADHD, it often falls to parents to ensure that the school is aware of strategies for children with ADHD in school settings. Visit: wellatschool.org



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