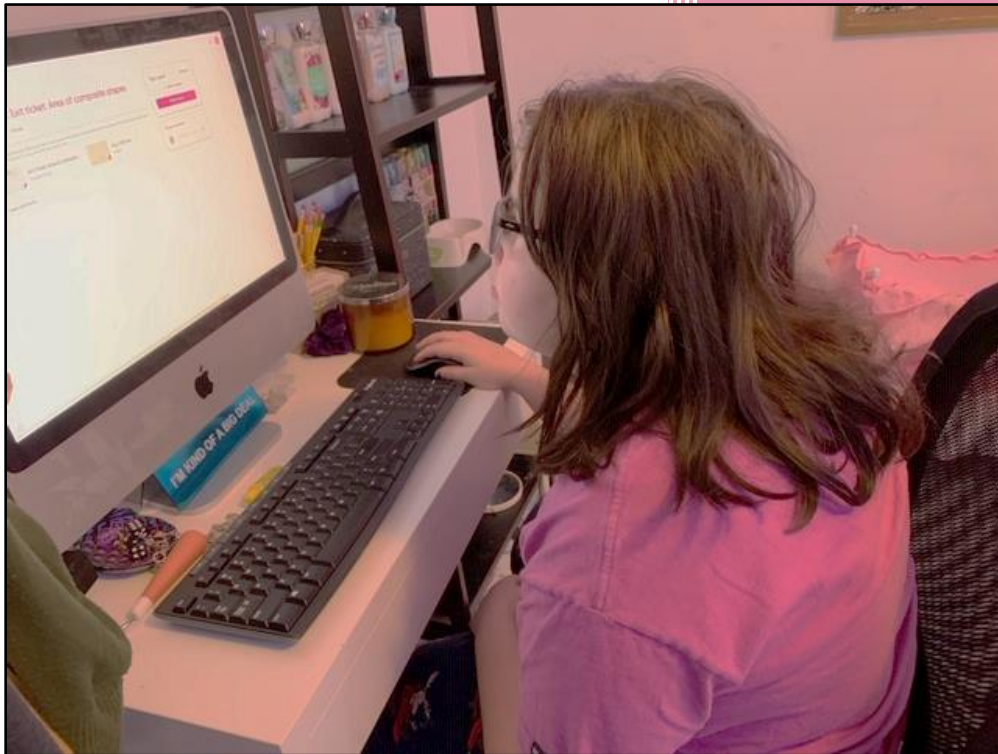# HELPING KIDS WITH ADHD AND THEIR PARENTS SURVIVE ON-LINE LEARNING

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Do you find yourself and your child feeling overwhelmed with on-line learning?

The entire nation as we know it has changed since the silent enemy of the Coronavirus has destroyed life as we know it. In order to stop the spread of the virus and flatten the curve, all but essential businesses are open, parents are unemployed, furloughed or working from home and schools have had to close their doors. Routines, life, and structure of educators and parents are completely upside down and kids are expected to focus and learn from home. Some families and kids have been able to navigate their way through these unprecedented times and others are ready to throw in the towel if they haven't already done so. This article is written to support learning by providing information and resources while keeping in mind that parents' priority is the physical and mental well-being of themselves and their children.

Many adults are finding it difficult to help their child engage in on-line learning especially if their child has ADHD. Similarly, children who have found it difficult to focus and control their impulsivity when physically in school are having even greater difficulty focusing, engaging and completing assignments.

Before throwing in the towel, consider the positives of on-line learning.

Positives:
-Less pressure and demands on children
-Deeper connections between parent and child
-A new appreciation for going to school, seeing friends and participating in activities
-Sense of excitement to use technology at home to learn

FACT: Currently, it's the most popular method of instruction.

ADHD is considered to be a performance disorder that impacts approximately 6.1 Million children ages 4-17. (CDC.gov)

32% of students with ADHD who are hyperactive and inattentive drop out of H.S.
(Breslau et al. 2011)

In this article, you will learn what information and resources Child Behavior Consulting has been using with parents and children.

The visuals that Child Behavior Consulting (CBC) use are Tools Inspiring Action!™ which are designed to develop the cognitive and social-emotional skills necessary in "how to learn." The progress of students using these learning tools has been tested and suggest that the children's auditory and visual attention, memory and processing skills and executive functioning skills improved significantly as a result of utilizing Tools Inspiring Action!™. The purpose of this article is to provide you with easy to use strategies to eliminate frustration and improve attention and overall progress.
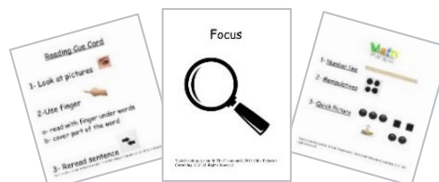
Learning Space:

Not every home is equipped for a separate room to be dedicated to serve as a "classroom." Therefore, we will refer to the learning environment as the "learning space." The learning needs of children with ADHD vary. However, one factor remains somewhat the same. That factor is the reduction of distractions and stimuli. When working with families, we make the following suggestions to help maximize the learning space and your child's ability to stay on-task and learn.

-Involve your child in the decision-making process as much as possible.
-Discuss with your child where his/her thinks the best place to learn is.
-Prepare the learning space with daily supplies such as paper and plenty of sharpened pencils.
-Have your child sit on the various chairs in your home to see which is most comfortable and fits the best. If possible, avoid allowing your child to use a chair on wheels. This type of chair can become a distraction very easily.

Perception

Set Appropriate Expectations

ADHD is considered a mental health condition that is an "invisible" condition. It is considered "invisible" because you can't see when a person has ADHD. This can make creating appropriate and realistic expectations for your child a challenge. As parents, we often think we know what our child "should be doing" and what he/she "should know" but ADHD has specific areas in need of remediation and support.

CBC Strategies for setting appropriate expectations:

-In order for you to learn what your child knows about the subject matter and his/her confidence level, ask questions. Questions allow you to assess if they think they can get the assignment done with ease or if they are feeling overwhelmed. The answers will give you the sensitive information you need to consider when discussing and creating expectations. (Realize that children also set expectations for themselves and want

to feel successful in being able to reach them.) This approach will encourage confidence and cooperation rather than resistance. It will also allow you to determine whether or not the work being assigned is on his/her functional level as well as if it can be completed independently or if you need to provide structure and guidance.

-Together, decide if playing music in the background while working is helpful. If so, have the music and headphones readily available at the learning space so they are easily accessible along with the other needed supplies.

-Discover if your child has a sensitivity to smells. You could introduce essential oils such as Peace and Calming, Lavender and/or Vetiver to support attention and reduce feeling anxious.

Is it Important for Parents to be Present During On-Line Instruction?

Yes, be aware of how your child is adjusting at least during the transitional stages and periodically check-in thereafter.

Signs of On-Line Distress

Many children who have ADHD also have difficulty organizing information, their thoughts and remembering what they want to say. Being present allows you to know if your child is becoming frustrated or overwhelmed. For example, compared to your child's peers, it may take longer for them to answer a question and he/she may notice this delay. Additionally, your child may begin to answer a question but forget what he/she was going to say. This could happen in the middle of an answer and will need a prompt or "wait time" to recall what he/she was thinking. Without these supports, this can be very frustrating. Identifying these frustrations will allow you to discuss strategies to use while providing the emotional support that so many children need but don't ask for.

"Launch and don't stop until you're ready to land!"

Support Learning with Visuals

Providing visuals with the action skills in "how to learn" will change their learning experience to a positive one. Many students with ADHD have difficulty engaging in and maintaining their attention to a task. Their lack of performance can be misinterpreted as not being motivated or even lazy. The condition is pervasive and affects all areas of development including academic, behavioral, and social-emotional growth. With a deeper level of understanding, parents (and educators) will be able to support and teach more effectively resulting in improving the ability to remain focused and on-task. With on-line learning, children have fewer social cues to rely on which by the way, many children with ADHD miss these social cues when in the classroom setting. If they do notice the subtleties of social cues, they may not know how to "slow down" fast enough to respond appropriately. This could be a factor as to why 50%-70% of children with ADHD are rejected by a close friend by 2nd grade (age 7). This rejection is due to their emotional reactions to situations.(Dr. R. Barkley, 2014) Therefore, it is imperative that children use visuals with the cognitive skills needed to engage during on-line learning. As a practitioner, I have seen the remarkable transition myself. During this nation's pandemic, I have had to transition my clients from in-person sessions to on-line. The visuals put the pieces together for children as well as make them feel understood and empowered because they are able to reach their desired goals and parents have a system to support this process.

What are Visuals with the Action Skills to Support Cognitive Functioning?

The visuals must be of the "action skills" needed to self-regulate (mange thoughts, feelings, actions) and engage in goal-oriented behaviors. An example would be the use of the Launch and /or positive Self-Talk Tools. The Launch Tool serves as a visual/verbal prompt to help the child begin a task while the use of positive self-talk helps the child resist distractions and overcome challenges. Challenges such as struggling to read a passage or remembering what to do next. Visuals that work succinctly with social-emotional needs allow children to work through the inevitable frustration that can infuse itself during the learning process.

Kids don't
need to struggle
as much as they do.
Teach them the "action skills"
so, they can make positive choices and
feel confident in themselves!

Recommended Educational Resources to Support Learning:

Books: Henry Learns to Launch, Henry's Thoughts, Henry Helps a Friend

Music: Tools Inspiring Action!™ Through Music

Visual learning tools: Tools Inspiring Action!™ in the Classroom¸ Tools Inspiring Action!™ in Preschool,

Tools Inspiring Action!™ at Home, Tools Inspiring Action!™ for Transportation,

For more information in how to support learning and improve performance visit
www.childbehaviorconsulting.com.

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