Tips for parents of children with ADHD

It is estimated that one in 20 children have Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a brain disorder that shows its effects on individuals through short attention spans, hyperactivity and impulsive behavior. Though ADHD has been studied for more than 60 years, it has gained acceptance as a diagnosis in only the last 20 years.

In addition to the challenges faced by young people who have ADHD, researchers have found that the disorder has a profound effect on families. Life with a child who has ADHD can put incredible pressure on parents and siblings. This pressure can start early in the child’s life; many infants with ADHD are fussy, demanding and difficult to comfort. These early and nearly constant difficulties can cause even experienced parents to question their parenting abilities. And as the child gets older, even greater challenges arise.

Parents of children with ADHD often experience feelings of shame, anxiety and even fear that the child’s behavior will result in harm to them or others. These feelings can tear families apart. Many parents of children with ADHD find themselves angry with the child, their partner and school or medical personnel. In struggling to help their child cope with the condition and succeed in school and social interactions, these parents often strain the relationships that mean the most to them.

The symptoms
ADHD is occasionally difficult to recognize because it shares symptoms with other disorders such as chronic depression. There are three main symptoms that generally affect children (and adults) with ADHD. Those with ADHD may exhibit one or all of these symptoms at any given time.

- Hyperactivity – Near constant motion is a telltale sign of ADHD in children. Tendencies to regularly fidget, tap a foot, bounce in a chair or twirl a pencil are common. Inability to refrain from talking, especially in settings like school or church, can be another sign of ADHD.

- Inattentiveness – Paying attention for prolonged periods of time is a challenge for children with ADHD. Those who are easily distracted or bored, daydream frequently or have trouble following directions may do so because of ADHD.

- Impulsivity – Children who are impulsive tend to act before they think. They may put off homework or break rules without thinking about the consequences. Children with ADHD tend to blurt out words and interrupt the conversations of others.

The blame game
Being a parent of a child with ADHD is an incredible challenge, but it is one that thousands of parents have faced. The first step to effectively parenting a child with ADHD is in understanding that parenting practices do not cause ADHD behavior. All too often, parents blame themselves or their partners for their child’s behavior. This can damage the very relationship that must be strong to best help their child and themselves cope with the ADHD condition.
The frustration felt by parents of children with ADHD can cause one partner to turn on the other. This is an unfortunate mistake because facing the challenges brought on by ADHD as a team is much easier than trying to do so individually. Do not play the blame game. A common scenario is one parent blaming the other for being too lenient with the child. The nature of the disorder results in behavior problems – these are not a result of parenting techniques. Instead of criticizing one another, parenting partners are wiser to focus on supporting one another in their parenting duties – nurturing, disciplining, teaching and playing.

Children with ADHD can strain relationships both because of the energy their care requires and the difficulty of getting capable and willing babysitters. Finding the energy to go out and spend time together for parents of children with this condition can be difficult after a week of dealing with the special parenting challenges that come with the child. Speak with school officials, your child’s physician or support groups to learn of individuals and/or organizations in your area that specialize in caring for special needs children. Make time for yourselves; an investment of time and energy into your relationship can pay dividends by strengthening your commitment to one another and renewing your energy level.

**Sibling rivalry**

Special needs children also can put strains on sibling relationships. Other children in the family may feel their brother or sister is receiving special treatment at their expense. This can cause arguments and conflicts. Parents of a child with ADHD should help their other children understand why one child needs special support or doesn’t get disciplined similarly. While it can be easy for these parents to focus primarily on their child who has ADHD, they ought to set aside time especially for their other children and ensure that each child in the family knows they are unique and much loved.

As well, the child with ADHD can become jealous of siblings who they perceive to be labeled as the “good” kids. Their siblings may earn better grades and accolades from teachers, parents or friends. This can cause friction between the child with ADHD and the other children. While most parents know about the dangers of comparing siblings to one another, parents of children who have ADHD need to be particularly wary of doing so even indirectly. They may need to go a step further and actively discourage competition between their children. Children with ADHD have a low tolerance for frustration and usually are poor losers. They get easily frustrated at their inability to concentrate on the task at hand. Cooperative games and lessons on doing things solely for enjoyment are important and useful approaches for parents raising a child with ADHD.
Conclusion
Raising children takes a lot of time, energy, patience and effort. When one of those children is a child with ADHD, that task becomes more challenging, but it can also be more rewarding. Helping children learn to cope with a disorder such as ADHD and excel in life is a wonderful accomplishment. Your child, and the other members of your family, face unique challenges. But with the right tools and support, you also hold the key to unique and special family accomplishments.

By: © liveandworkwell.com.

Recognizing Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder affects three to five percent of children in the United States. According to Dr. Edward M. Hallowell in his book, Driven to Distraction, only one-third of the ADHD population outgrows it; the remaining two-thirds have it throughout adulthood. Having ADHD makes it very difficult to learn in school when younger and to achieve at work when older. People with ADHD often have great trouble living up to their potential. Adults with ADHD are often unemployed or underemployed. Adolescents and young adults often drop out of school before completing high school or college. People with ADHD are more likely to use alcohol and drugs than people without ADHD.

Helpful information
The name of “Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder” can be confusing because not everyone who has it is hyperactive. There are three types of ADHD:

• Inattentive type;
• Hyperactive-impulsive type; and
• Combined type (both of above symptoms prevail).

For all types of ADHD, symptoms or problems must appear in at least two settings, such as home, school or work. Symptoms of ADHD can range from mild to severe. People who have the inattentive type can have a combination of the following symptoms:

• Difficulty paying attention;
• Making careless mistakes;
• Losing things; and
• Being easily distracted by noises.

For people with the hyperactive-impulsive type of ADHD, symptoms can include a combination of:

• Fidgeting or squirming;
• Talking too much;
• Difficulty waiting turns; and
• Interrupting others.

No one knows the exact causes of ADHD, but results of numerous studies have pointed to genetic and/or nervous system factors as the greatest contributors to developing ADHD. Most people with ADHD will have at least one close relative who also has ADHD. In fact, many adults first realize that they have ADHD when one of their children is diagnosed with the disorder. It’s important to remember that ADHD isn’t anyone’s fault. It is not caused by poor parenting practices, and it has nothing to do with intelligence. People with ADHD can be very smart. ADHD can take a great toll on self-esteem because people with the disorder often get a lot of negative feedback from teachers, families, employers and others. They are often misunderstood and labeled as lazy, defiant, odd or bad. It’s hard to feel good about yourself when you get that kind of feedback regularly.

Helpful strategies
If you think that you or someone you’re close to has ADHD, talk to a mental health professional who has training and experience with diagnosing ADHD. To find
Coping with ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorders (ADHD) affect individuals for life. The success in life attained by people with these disorders is not determined by the fact that they have the condition, but rather by how they cope with the condition. Therefore, it is critical that children are diagnosed and taught coping skills as early as possible.

Studies have found that through proper medication and behavioral treatment, about 95 percent of those affected by ADHD can lead fairly normal lives. This statistic is reason for hope, as is the fact that, according to the ADHD Online Newsletter, Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Einstein, Nelson Rockefeller and President John F. Kennedy were among the successful people are believed to have successfully coped with ADHD. Coping is possible with appropriate remediation.

Education and ADHD

It is believed that many children who grow up with ADHD have a low self-image. This is due to the fact that although these children are usually very bright, they typically have a difficult time in school. Some may know the story of how Albert Einstein failed a high school math class, but later became one of the world’s leading scientists. Finding a school that is academically and socially supportive of individuals with ADHD (and their families) is a key to enabling learning.

Smaller classrooms, one-on-one teaching and the use of special tools or teaching methods are some of the ways schools are starting to assist children affected by ADHD. Students affected by ADHD do best with smaller increments of work in more frequently rotated subjects. This helps keep their attention, and enables them to do about the same amount of work as their peers. Under the Americans with Disabilities Act, students with ADHD can be offered academic accommodations to meet their needs under the Americans with Disabilities Act. The accommodations are made under a designation referred to as “other health impaired.” The accommodation plan is sometimes known as a “504 plan.” Ask your teacher, principal or the school nurse for information on how to document your child’s need for accommodations for ADHD.

A major challenge for educators of students with ADHD is the behavior of those with the disorders. These students, often possessing surplus energy and a narrow focus, can see the educational system as unfair. They’re unable to pay attention to a subject like math for 30 minutes, so they act out. This reaction can lead to discipline if the
teacher is unaware of the student’s disorder. Fidgeting, squirming, tapping, doodling, humming and chewing are all common behaviors in students affected by ADHD. If teachers are unwilling or unable to properly accommodate these behaviors, trouble can ensue.

Nonjudgmental and properly supervised environments are the best educational settings for students with ADHD. Smaller classrooms and social skill focus groups provide bridges by which children with ADHD can learn successful social interaction skills. Another way educational systems are better helping these students is by focusing on their strengths, and then seeking to address their deficiencies.

**Transitioning to adulthood**
By the time they reach adolescence, many children affected by ADHD put in place their own unique ways of viewing and dealing with the world in order to cope with their condition. Many times, these perspectives can eventually transform these children into adolescents or teens who are either domineering or who have low self-esteem. Learning how to live with their condition positively, through an understanding of their illness and proper decision-making, can help them develop into successful adults.

**Dealing with authority**
Because of their childhood difficulties with teachers, principals and other community members, many people with ADHD have problems with authority figures in general. As a result, many of them find greater contentedness by going their own way because they may feel that their own boss carries less risk of failure than does being supervised. One exception to this rule is entry into the military. People with these disorders often do very well in a military setting, where rules are clear and it’s difficult to be “fired.”

**Working to their strengths**
Situations or tasks that are physically or mentally stimulating are natural strengths for the person with ADHD. Abilities in the areas of painting, drawing, sports and physical labor can be developed into well-paying and respected jobs. In fact, numerous people with ADHD have gone on to be very successful writers, athletes and politicians.

**Setting their own schedule**
People affected by ADHD maximize productivity when they set their own work schedules. Working in a piecemeal fashion is usually more acceptable to them than working the standard 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. schedule. Inability to follow a work schedule is often a challenge for people with attention disorders, and these individuals can face scrutiny from coworkers for the inability to stick to a schedule. When persons with ADHD have the freedom to set their own schedule, they strengthen their confidence and self-discipline.

**Dealing with impulsiveness**
Most individuals with ADHD frequently go against their better judgment and act on their impulses. This often results in the individual running from challenging environments or situations. This sometimes can be a valuable coping tool, but more frequently is counterproductive. An individual with ADHD who constantly flees difficult situations can strain family relationships, impair friendships and threaten their employment stability. Assisting these individuals in building support systems and teaching them to take short time-outs are ways to help them cope with their feelings of anxiety or inadequacy, and face difficult situations.

**Conclusion**
Living successfully with ADHD is challenging but possible. If unchecked, ADHD can be a disability, but if the person with the disorder learns to understand and cope with their condition, and they have support from loved ones in doing so, they can make considerable contributions to society. With roughly one in every 20 students dealing with ADHD, becoming able to identify and contend with this condition is paramount for parents and educators alike.

By: © liveandworkwell.com.