

## The 12 Best Principles for Managing the Child or Teen with ADHD: Summation of a talk By Dr. Russell A. Barkley, PhD (2012)

1. **Parents are Shepherds-Not Engineers** A parent's role is closer to that of a shepherd to a lamb than one of a sculptor to a block of clay. Provide a safe, nurturing place to live and go to school. Create opportunities for success. Encourage pro-social behavior and break up negative peer relationships when detected. Make environmental accommodations for your child's deficits when you can.
2. **Time Escapes Them!** Children with ADHD have problems with using their internal sense of time. Time escapes them. They are much less able to wait consequences or delay gratification: they get impatient! Shorten the length between the event and the outcome. Break down lengthier tasks into smaller ones. Divert attention when there is a need to wait to something else while waiting. Use timers and clocks to show the passage of time.
3. **Poor Working Memory (remembering in order to do)** Make important information physical: externalize it. ADHD makes it hard to remember what one is supposed to be doing. Use sticky notes, white boards, cards or other cues to help guide behavior. Rehearse the "when this happens-then I do that" plans to use in situations that are coming up or may be repeated.
4. **Make Rewards Part of the Task** ADHD creates a deficit in self-motivation. It makes it very difficult to persist at tasks that involve delays in consequences or gratification. (This is why video games can be played for hours: immediate and constant rewards) Add artificial rewards where there are no immediate ones: tokens, points, money, privileges. They need to visualize it: a picture of what they are working for. Have them discuss the goal periodically. The younger the child, the easier the goal needs to be to obtain. Rewards are far more effective than punishments for children with ADHD. Reward the desired behavior and try to ignore the negative behavior whenever possible. Try it!
5. **Make Problem-Solving Physical (Manual)** Break tasks into smaller pieces and think about how to make these tasks physical. Example: use scrabble letters to practice spelling.
6. **Talk Less, Touch More** Put a hand on the child's arm or around the shoulder, look her in the eyes and BRIEFLY say what you need to say. Short, business-like and to the point. Ask him to repeat it back if appropriate (i.e. instructions). ADHD is not an information deficit!
7. **Be Pro-active, Not Reactive: Have a Plan! Think Out Loud, Think Ahead** Think about challenging situations (stores, restaurants, play dates, etc.). Just before entering that setting review with your child a **few** rules and have them repeat them back, write them down if needed. Give frequent feedback, especially positive, explain the reward or punishment in advance and have the child repeat it back.
8. **Plan Transitions** Similar to above. Help the child anticipate the transitions that are coming and make a plan for how to manage this. (i.e. "right after swimming lessons, you will need to get dressed and then we will go to grandma's for supper. You will not be able to stay and swim more

this time.”) The plan/reminder should be reviewed in advance and again just before the event with the child repeating the plan.

9. **Increase Accountability to Others** Break tasks into smaller steps and shorter time periods. Praise, reward what is accomplished and review the next step or how to complete the last one. Remember: 10 minutes of work with 3 minutes of break will likely result in more work completion than work without breaks with less frustration.
10. **Get Your Priorities Straight** Be sure the work a child is being asked to do is important, not trivial. We create more problems and conflict by fighting battles that are not meaningful. For example: taking a shower is more important than making the bed. Focus on the most important things for now and let some other things go.
11. **Remember-It's a Disability** ADHD delays a child's capacity for self-control and independence from others. Remember: your child's "executive age" (the ability to manage oneself) is 30% lower than the actual age. A 10 year old may function as a 7 year old. (This is not referring to intelligence.) Reduce your expectations. This is a neurological/genetic disability: not a choice.
12. **Forgive!** Practice forgiveness, you are going to make mistakes. That's OK, try again. Forgive others when they misjudge your child due to ignorance. Your child will make more mistakes than others. Be sure they know they are forgiven and can try again. Find ways to restore a positive view of your child for yourself and for your child. (Put favorite pictures on the fridge, watch them sleeping)

For more information, check out: <https://www.adhdchildhood.com/>