

# ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY (ADHD) INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

## Planning and Organizing

Strategies for addressing problems with ADHD are offered in the sections that follow, beginning with planning and organizing—an executive skill that is essential to setting goals and accomplishing them. This set is followed by strategies designed to improve self-management.

## Getting Started

1. Ask the student to state the purpose and objective of a new learning task.
2. Help the person identify what steps to follow to accomplish the first objective first (tackle other objectives later).
3. Identify the best time to begin Step 1 and prepare a reminder that will get the student's attention.
4. Plan breaks and simple rewards at the end of each step.
5. Identify a learning partner if feasible.
6. Express optimism to increase chances that the student will meet the objective.

## Organization and Memory

1. Identify materials needed at the start of a lesson.
2. Keep records in one place. Assemble them in a binder with dividers for each subject.
3. Identify a single place to store the binder when it is not in use; if it is moved, write a note to leave in the usual place stating where it is.
4. Work with a calendar to identify time commitments. Use a size that will fit in a wallet or purse, or use a cell phone with a calendar.
5. Aim for a consistent schedule of classes and appointments.

## Reducing Procrastination

- Prioritize the tasks required to meet learning goals.
- Start with the most appealing one (easiest, most interesting, one to share with a partner, etc.).
- Use planning and organizing strategies to execute this goal and offer frequent rewards that are meaningful to the student.
- Next, select the least appealing task and use the same strategy to work on it—*alternate most and least attractive tasks*.
- If very discouraged, allow a short break (one week) with a deadline for returning to the task.

## Managing Impulsivity

Another challenge for many students with ADHD is coping with impulsivity. How can the teacher help a student pace themselves and withhold the impulse to act before thinking?

## ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY (ADHD) INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

When the current approach to learning or problem solving is not working, the student can try the following:

1. Stop and identify the strategy currently being used.
2. Identify the idea on which it is based.
3. Identify one or more other ideas that could apply to the situation.
4. Ask for and accept ideas from others.
5. List the good/bad of each alternative, including consequences.
6. Select one to try next.
7. Repeat this process if necessary until an effective approach is found.

### Example

Marley is getting frustrated with a unit on the digestive system in science. She says she is trying to memorize all the new terms and is getting confused. She has made a list of new words and their definitions, and she copies the list over and over trying to remember it. Marley is a hands-on learner with relatively low reading comprehension. Her teacher is applying the following strategy to help her move forward:

1. Find out what study approach she is using, which is described above.
2. Ask Marley why she thinks this approach will work. Marley says that copying helps her focus and remember.
3. Ask Marley to explain one of the terms she has memorized—for example, colon. As Marley struggles to explain it using words she has tried to memorize, the instructor points out that memorizing a definition apparently hasn't helped her understand the concept.
4. Ask Marley what she knows about the digestive process. During the discussion relate colon to the knowledge/experience she reports. Identify which approach seems to work best—memorizing the definition of colon or relating it to what she already knows.
5. If she likes the personalized approach better, help her continue to apply it to terms on her list.

### Increasing Self-Awareness and Managing Frustration

1. Break projects into smaller tasks and objectives.
2. Place assignments in a context meaningful for the student. Use practical applications.
3. Debrief each task at the end—what worked, what didn't, and what to keep/change
4. Offer rewards for each objective met

### Sample Rewards

- Certificates of achievement
- Progress chart—e.g., crossing off completed tasks or moving an arrow toward the goal.
- Telling a friend or family member about the accomplishment.

## **ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY (ADHD) INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

- Working with another student and sharing accomplishments.
- A small reward, such as a candy bar, a break, or a special job in the classroom.

### **Preparing for and Adapting to Change**

1. Forewarn of upcoming schedules and expectations.
2. Explain why change is needed.
3. Identify “what’s in it for them.”
4. Plan with the student how he or she will adapt to new circumstances or new challenges.
5. Ask the student to identify and evaluate results as plans and events unfold.
6. Point out positive consequences as necessary.
7. Discuss what changes to plan may be necessary to ensure a successful outcome.