

# GUIDED SELF-MANAGEMENT TOOLS FOR ADHD

Children 6-12



# GUIDED SELF-MANAGEMENT

# FOR ADHD



## INTRODUCTION

Children with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, or ADHD, often have difficulty paying attention, sitting still, and/or acting impulsively. They can have trouble learning, getting along with their peers, and behaving appropriately at school or home. These challenges can impact children's self-esteem and increase the likelihood they develop depression, anxiety, and/or disruptive behavior symptoms. Working with your child's primary care team can help you get ADHD symptoms under control.

The most effective interventions for managing ADHD symptoms in children and teens typically involve a combination of medication, behavioral techniques, and educational strategies. For children below age 6, experts usually recommend starting with behavioral interventions. In this guide, we focus on strengthening behavioral and educational skills by: 1) teaching parents how to increase structure at home and help with schoolwork; and 2) improving children's ability to plan, organize, and solve problems, skills that are commonly referred to as executive functions. The worksheets in this guide will explain the skills and help you and your child try them at home. All of the skills included in our guide are evidence-based, meaning they are strategies that have been tested and proven to be effective through rigorous scientific research. Many families have found these strategies to be beneficial; we hope they will work for you, too.

## SKILLS & EXERCISES

Each of the skill handouts includes an explanation of the skill, a description of how it will help your family, instructions for how to use the strategy at home, and a list of common questions and concerns parents and children usually have, along with our answers. The first 3 skills are for parents, and the next 6 skills are for children, with suggestions for ways parents can participate. You can read the scripts to younger children, and let older ones choose if they want to read it themselves or follow along with you. Work through the guide with your child and try out each new skill for about two weeks to see which fit your family best. See what's working and what's still challenging, then adjust as needed. Once you've found a set of skills that works for your family, keep at it until it the routine becomes second nature. It may be challenging at first, but the more you practice, the easier it will get to make these skills and exercises a part of your daily lives. Let us know how things are going and be in touch if you and your child need any additional support for management of ADHD symptoms. Good luck!

## FOR PARENTS



Skill 1

### Household Rules and Structure

These worksheets help you create and apply rules and structure at home and set clear and consistent expectations for your child and family.



Skill 2

### Homework Help

These worksheets provide ideas for helping your child complete homework in an easier and more organized way.



Skill 3

### Daily School Check-In

These worksheets help you link your child's behavior at school with rewards they can earn at home for good behavior.

## FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS



Skill 4

### How to Solve Problems

This skill teaches your child to brainstorm different ways of solving a problem and, before taking action, evaluate which solutions are most likely to lead to success.



Skill 5

### How to Remember What I Need To Do

This technique helps your child keep track of important information, such as deadlines for school assignments.



Skill 6

### How to Get Things Done

This skill teaches your child to plan ahead in order to start and complete tasks without getting sidetracked, such as doing homework assignments or chores.



Skill 7

### How to Organize My Stuff

This strategy helps your child establish organizational systems, such as organizing their bedroom, backpack, or schoolwork.



Skill 8

### How to Manage My Time

These worksheets support your child in creating schedules, staying on task, and meeting deadlines.



Skill 9

### How to Feel Good About Myself

These exercises provide ways to identify your child's strengths and boost their self-esteem.

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOUSEHOLD RULES AND STRUCTURE



ADHD Skill 1

## WHAT ARE HOUSEHOLD RULES AND STRUCTURE?

- ▶ Household Rules and Structure are strategies families use to organize their daily lives, create consistent routines, and set clear expectations at home.
- ▶ Applying rules and structure at home helps children complete everyday tasks, such as sticking to a schedule, following family rules, getting ready for school or bedtime, and completing homework and chores. This helps with children's working memory, organization, and planning skills, which can be especially useful for children with ADHD. This can make life easier and happier for the whole family.
- ▶ Try some of the methods below to increase rules and structure at home and see how they work for your family.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE RULES AND STRUCTURE AT HOME

- 1 Stay Organized.** Help your child organize their physical spaces by creating systems to keep things neat. For example, encourage your child to have an assigned place for every object in their room. Then, have them regularly spend a small amount of time cleaning up so that no one area ever gets too messy. Some ways to do this include spending 5-10 minutes each day straightening up their room or backpack, or going through their belongings every few months to donate or put away things that don't get much use.

Tools such as planners, "to do" lists, and calendars can also help children with ADHD. Encourage your child to use organizational aids like these to keep track of important information, such as homework assignments, due dates, and social activities. Offer a daily reminder for your child to use and check their planner. The more they write down, the less they (and you) have to remember! For ways to use these tools to help with your child's homework, see Homework Help (ADHD Skill 2).

You can also use a family planner and/or calendar to track family activities. Put important information where everyone can see it, such as on the refrigerator or near the front door.

- 2 Set Household Rules.** Decide on a short list of rules (3-5) that you want your child to follow. For example, Jack's family has these rules: "1) We keep our hands to ourselves and respect each other's personal space; 2) We speak to each other using kind and calm words; and 3) We focus on each other during meals and not our screens."

In the beginning, it may help to highlight the rules that matter the most to you (so pick your battles!). As your child demonstrates a stronger ability to follow rules, you can make them more challenging or add new ones to the list.

Review the rules as a family, then write them out and post them somewhere everyone can see them. This provides regular reminders about family expectations. Try giving your child directions, keeping the following tips in mind for maximum effectiveness: 1) give simple and clear instructions for one task at a time, 2) make sure you are giving directions when your child is undistracted, and 3) provide rewards for following the rules, and/or implement consequences if they don't. Talk to your child's primary care provider if you need more assistance with this.

## HOW TO USE RULES AND STRUCTURE AT HOME (cont.)

- 3 Create routines.** Create detailed routines for your child's usual tasks, such as getting ready for school, doing homework, cleaning a bedroom, or getting ready for bed. List the steps you'd like your child to complete, in the order you'd like them done. This helps your child walk through a "checklist" to start and finish a routine. It also supports their working memory and planning skills and makes your expectations clear.

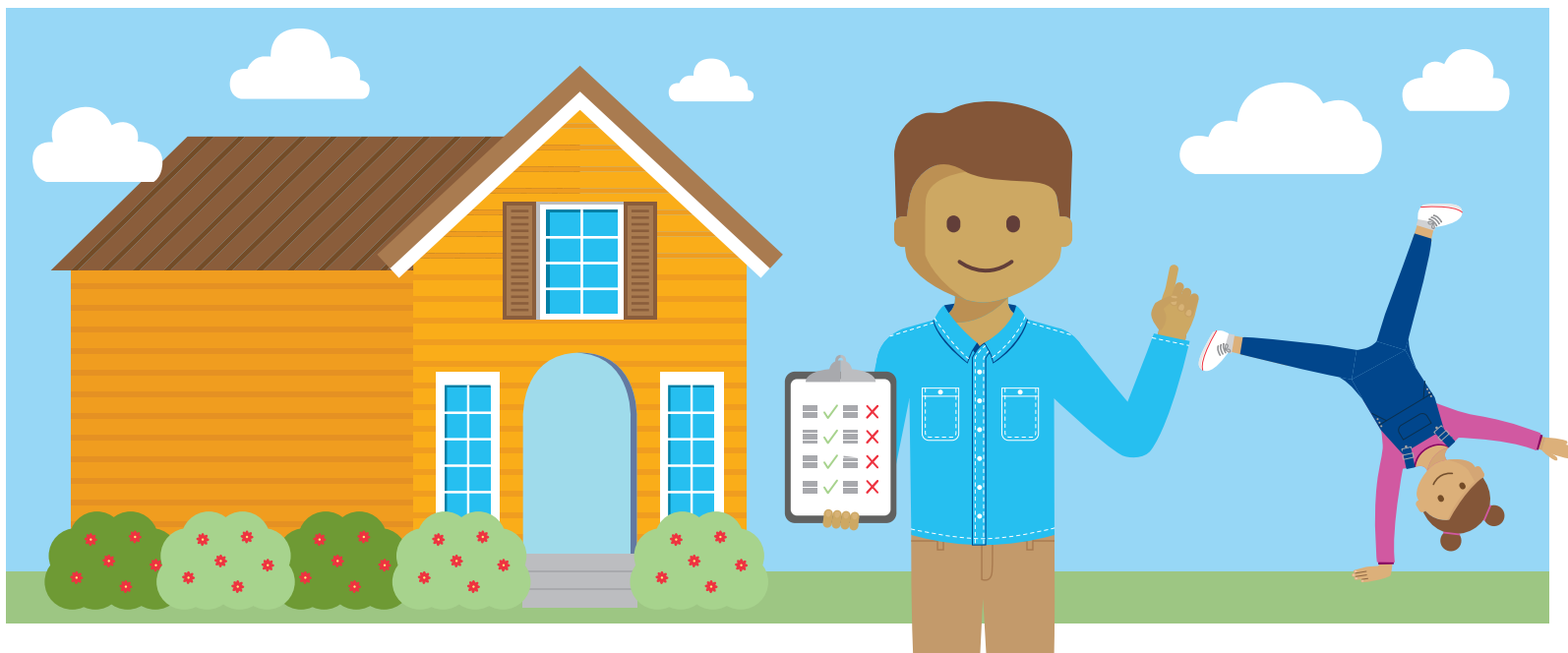
You can also create routines for those tasks your child finds challenging, such as using relaxation skills to control their energy around bedtime or using the skills in this guide. Review our example routines and then create some of your own.

The more consistent a routine is, the easier it is to follow. Once you create a routine that works, encourage your child to practice it and stick with it.

- 4 Discuss with your child.** Be sure to review any new household rules or changes in routines with your child. Go over each one to make sure you're on the same page. The clearer your expectations are, the better your child will be able to meet them.
- 5 Provide positive feedback.** Remember that it can be hard for children with ADHD to follow rules, complete daily routines, and stay organized. As you use the strategies in this packet, be sure to praise your child's efforts. Frequent encouragement will help your child feel good about working hard.

Some children benefit from an extra push to follow rules and routines, such as earning rewards or privileges for a job well done. Rewards that are free, easy, and simple are best (e.g., extra time on a fun activity). Many families use a behavior or sticker chart to track their children's progress toward earning a desired reward.

- 6 Evaluate and adjust as needed.** Every few weeks, review your household rules and structure to evaluate what's working well and what needs tweaking. Get your child's feedback and incorporate their ideas for improvement. They can provide valuable insight into how rules are working or suggestions for improving routines.
- 7 Be patient.** Remember it can take time to learn new habits. Your child may not be able to follow a routine or rule correctly every time, especially when it is new or challenging. Offer your child encouraging reminders until new routines and rules become easier. Be patient with your child and yourself, and show your child you are confident they can do it.







## HOW CAN HOUSEHOLD RULES AND STRUCTURE HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Children with ADHD can find it hard to control their attention, energy level, and/or desire to act on their urges. This can make it difficult to behave appropriately or get things done.
- ▶ Children with ADHD often respond more positively to environments that are structured (i.e., organized and predictable). Families who use consistent rules and structure at home often find that their children are better able to follow directions, stick to routines, and get along with others.
- ▶ Caregivers also frequently notice that as their children's skills and independence increase, they all feel less frustrated. When there are clear guidelines for behavior and regular household routines, children are better able to do things on their own. This leads to fewer arguments and can make your home more positive for the entire family.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **We completed the routine worksheet, but my child keeps forgetting to use it.**

Try giving your child gentle reminders to help them remember routines. For instance, you can give verbal reminders, such as prompting your child when it's almost time to start a routine, or visual reminders, like putting notes around the house for them to see. You can also come up with creative ways for them to remember the steps in a routine, such as acronyms or rhymes. As your child makes progress toward memorizing their routines, be sure to offer lots of praise!

### **When my child breaks a family rule or can't complete a routine, they get frustrated or down on themselves.**

Children can feel badly if they have a harder time than their siblings or peers. When your child gets discouraged, cheer them on by praising their effort and highlighting their successes. Go through the How to Feel Good About Myself worksheets (ADHD Skill 9) together, and see if those strategies help your child identify their strengths and feel better about themselves.

Your child may also benefit from practicing coping skills to manage negative thoughts and emotions. For example, they can try to problem solve, use relaxation skills, or challenge overly negative thoughts. Practicing skills like these can help children take active steps to feel better and more in control. Talk to your primary care provider if you would like more guidance in this area.

### **Even with a lot of structure and routine, my child has a hard time staying on task and getting things done.**

Some children find organization and routine more challenging than others. Try some of the other strategies in this guide to improve your child's working memory, organization, planning, and time management. Building these skills may help your child respond better to structure and routine. Your child's teacher may also have suggestions based on what they've seen work well in the classroom.

### **My child doesn't like to follow rules!**

Some children respond to rules by acting out, and this can occur more often when a child has ADHD. Try using some of your parenting "tricks", such as giving your child clear and simple directions and using rewards and/or consequences to motivate them to make better choices in response.

If your child's ADHD symptoms make it difficult for them to do the things they want or need to do, they may need additional support, such as medication and/or therapy. Check in with your child's primary care provider about medication and whether a referral to a behavioral health specialist could be helpful.

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOMEWORK HELP



## WHAT IS HOMEWORK HELP?

- ▶ Many families say that their children do not like doing homework. Homework can be extra challenging for children with ADHD, because they often have difficulty paying attention, sitting still, doing tasks they dislike, and/or managing negative feelings.
- ▶ Homework Help is a set of strategies parents can use to make homework time easier for the whole family. It includes tips for increasing organization, creating homework routines, providing support and supervision, and breaking assignments down into smaller steps. In combination with the other skills in this guide, Homework Help techniques can help you support your child and make homework time less frustrating and more productive.

## HERE'S HOW TO PROVIDE HOMEWORK HELP AT HOME

- 1 Use organizational tools to keep track of assignments, projects, and tests.**
  - a** Help your child stay on top of their schoolwork, due dates, and daily activities by using planners, calendars, and "to do" lists. At the start of each school year, help your child create a simple and clear system to keep track of important information. For example, your child can write down each week's events in a planner, put new homework assignments in a red folder, and store finished assignments in a green folder.
  - b** Give your child daily reminders to update their "to do" list and follow their schedule. For more tips, review the chapters on Remembering Things I Need to Do (ADHD Skill 5) and How to Organize My Stuff (ADHD Skill 7).
- 2 Create detailed homework routines.**
  - a** Tasks are easier to do when they are part of a regular routine. Help your child create a daily homework routine, including where they will do it, what time they will do it, and how they will prioritize their assignments. See our example for ideas.
  - b** Think through the routine details together to make sure that you and your child are on the same page. For example, is your child's homework space quiet and distraction-free? Do they have access to the materials they need there (e.g., pens, pencils, calculator, etc.)? When scheduling homework time, do they need a break between when they get home from school and when they start working? If they get stuck or need help, what should they do?
  - c** Encourage your child to stick to the routine every day. The more consistent the routine is, the easier it will be for them to get in the habit of doing homework every day and not waiting until the last minute.

### 3 Provide support and supervision.

- a The younger your child is, the more homework support they will need. Younger children may do better if you keep them company while they work and walk through their assignments with them. Older children may be fine with having you nearby to answer any questions. Children of all ages benefit from check-ins and encouragement to stay on task.
- b If possible, look over your child's homework to be sure they are doing it correctly and did not skip any of it. This encourages your child to be thorough and decreases the chances they will put the work off until another time.
- c Make sure your child's routine includes turning in completed work. You can create a "Backpack Checklist" of what should go into your child's backpack each night before bed, which you can check as part of your child's bedtime routine. If your child has a hard time turning homework in, you can ask their teacher to monitor their performance and give feedback to you, or use the Daily School Check-In (ADHD Skill 3) to incorporate rewards and give your child an extra push. See our example, and then make your own routine.

### 4 Break bigger assignments or projects down into smaller steps.

- a It can be overwhelming to tackle a difficult or big assignment, such as a school project or studying for a test. First, make sure your child understands the assignment. If they don't, walk through it with them or help them problem solve how to figure out what they need to do.
- b Then, help your child turn a big assignment into smaller, more manageable assignments and accurately estimate how much time they need for each step (see ADHD Skill 6, How to Get Things Done, and ADHD Skill 8, How to Manage My Time, for tips). Encourage your child to take short breaks as needed to stretch or do an in-place exercise (like jumping jacks) or have a small snack before going back to work.

### 5 Inspect and improve your routine

- a Every few weeks, review your child's homework routine to evaluate what's working well and what needs fine-tuning. Work with your child to identify ways to make homework time easier.

### 6 Notice when your child is working hard and offer praise and encouragement.

- a Remember it can take time to build good homework skills and your child may not be able to do their homework independently right away. Your support can make a big difference. Offer encouraging reminders and praise until new strategies become easier to use. Be patient with your child and yourself, and show your child you are confident that they can get their homework done carefully and correctly!

## Sofia's Homework Routine

- ▶ Routine starts when you get home from school around 3:30 pm.
- ▶ Take a 30-minute break for a snack and relaxation.
- ▶ Get your planner and homework materials. Ask dad if you're unsure what you need.
- ▶ Eliminate distractions. Turn off TV and music, put away phone.
- ▶ Sit down at your desk.
- ▶ Do homework until dinner at 5:30. If you need a stretch break, set the timer for 5 minutes, then start your homework again.
- ▶ After dinner, bring homework to dad for him to review.
- ▶ Put your finished homework in your homework folder.
- ▶ Put your planner and homework folder back into your backpack.
- ▶ Put your backpack by the front door.
- ▶ Great job! Do something you enjoy for 30 minutes.



# PARENT HANDOUT: HOMEWORK HELP TIPS



## HOW CAN HOMEWORK HELP STRATEGIES HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Many parents and children find that homework time is a stressful time. Homework is a task that can lead to frustration, annoyance, and even arguments at home. Doing schoolwork can be especially challenging for children with ADHD, as it requires using many different skills at the same time, such as working memory, organization, planning, and time management.
- ▶ By making homework time more structured, predictable, and organized, parents can help their children strengthen their own abilities. As children build skills and independence, they often feel better about school and themselves. This can make your child happier and make homework time easier for the whole family.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **My child refuses to do homework!**

One way to motivate your child to do homework is to allow them to do something they enjoy once they finish, such as talking to a friend or spending individual time with you. You may also want to incorporate consequences into your approach, such as the loss of a privilege for not following homework rules (e.g., if your child does not do their homework, they lose the ability to watch TV that night).

Another approach involves creating a homework contract that you and your child create together. It can include what your child agrees to do (e.g., I will write my homework assignments in my planner before leaving class; If I don't understand what I need to do, I will ask my teacher) and what parents will agree to (e.g., We will provide you with the school supplies you need to do your work; If you are having a hard time, we will check in with your teacher).

### **My child gets too much homework, and they can never finish it all.**

Different schools and teachers approach homework in different ways. Talk to your child's teacher(s) about your child's learning style and homework challenges. You can decide together how much homework is necessary and if there are ways to lower the amount while still reinforcing important concepts (e.g., completing part of a worksheet). You can then review these expectations with your child and problem solve together.

### **My child's homework is complicated, and I'm not sure how to help them with it.**

This is something many parents say! It can be hard to keep up with all of the different topics children learn about in school, especially if they aren't subjects you've thought about lately or studied yourself. Start by seeing what your child's school provides. Many schools offer learning support, like homework club or after school tutoring, and teachers are often willing to spend extra time explaining tricky concepts to students. Your child's friends may also be able to help; many students find that their peers are a great resource for understanding what happened in class and how to tackle a hard assignment!





# PARENT HANDOUT: DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN



ADHD Skill 3

## WHAT IS A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN?

- ▶ Children with ADHD can find the demands of school challenging. For example, they may have a hard sitting still or paying attention, talk when it's not their turn in class, or have difficulty getting along with their peers.
- ▶ A Daily School Check-In is a system parents and teachers use to identify, track, and change your child's problem behaviors at school.
- ▶ It involves:
  - 1) identifying the behaviors you and your child's teacher would like to change at school;
  - 2) working with your child's teacher(s) to monitor these behaviors;
  - 3) the teacher(s) giving you daily feedback on your child; and
  - 4) you providing specific rewards for your child when they engage in good behavior.
- ▶ These rewards increase your child's motivation to behave at school, encourage them to work toward their goals, and make it more likely they will continue behaving in the future.
- ▶ This strategy is effective at addressing a broad range of behavior problems at school. You can partner with one teacher or several to improve your child's behavior.

Daily School Check-In			
Date	Teacher		
Today, Daniel...	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	A Little/None of the Time
Stayed in his seat	😊	😐	😞
Kept his hands to himself	😊	😐	😞
Handed in his homework	😊	😐	😞
Followed directions	😊	😐	😞
Raised hand before talking	😊	😐	😞
Notes: _____			Total 😊
_____			
_____			

## HERE'S HOW TO USE A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN

1

### Create a list of 3-5 problematic school behaviors.

Talk with your child's teacher to identify 3-5 behaviors that cause problems for your child at school (e.g., getting out of their seat, bothering other students, forgetting to turn in homework, breaking classroom rules). The list can include both academic and social behaviors, two areas that can be challenging for children with ADHD.

2

### Create a list of your desired behaviors.

These should be the behaviors you and the teacher would like to see instead, stated in a positive way and focused on behaviors your child's teacher can observe (e.g., staying in seat, keeping hands to self, handing in homework, following classroom rules). Include 1-2 "easier" behaviors that you know your child is able to do in order to boost your child's confidence.

3

### Make a daily report card.

Decide on a way for your child's teacher to track their behavior and share it with you. It should be clear, easy to use, and include the teacher's input. This can be as simple as a daily note home, but parents and teachers usually find that something like our examples work better.

## HERE'S HOW TO USE A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN (cont.)

4

### Decide on check-in frequency.

When you first start using this strategy, it's best if the teacher can do it every day. As your child's behavior improves, you can gradually decrease how often this check-in occurs until you no longer need it. Teachers should make sure the card goes in your child's backpack (or gets sent to you electronically) at the end of the day whenever they complete it.

5

### Create a list of at least 5-10 rewards to give at home.

Think of as many ideas as you can. Include a range of reward types (items, activities, privileges) and sizes/costs (free, small, medium, large). Have rewards you can give every day (e.g., extra screen or story time) and once a week (e.g., going out to eat), as well as some "big ticket" rewards that take longer to earn (e.g., going to a sporting event or movies once a month or less). Use our list of reward ideas to get started. Be sure to only include rewards you are willing and able to give if your child exhibits ideal behavior. If your child's teachers or school use rewards, add their ideas too. Get your child's input to be sure they are motivated to earn the rewards on your list.

6

### Decide what your child needs to do to earn a reward.

Be specific about what your child needs to do to earn a reward (e.g., "5 smiley faces or checkmarks = a small reward"). Easier school behaviors or ones done correctly less of the time should earn smaller rewards and harder tasks, bigger rewards. An example of how to reward behaviors differently based on your child's individual strengths and challenges is the following: If your child is generally able to get along with their classmates, they can earn 5 extra minutes of screen time each day they're able to meet this goal. If they find doing work in class harder than positive social behavior, they can earn 15 extra minutes each day they work without issue. Younger children do best with rewards they earn daily, while older children may prefer to "bank" credit to earn bigger rewards over time.

7

### Review the check-in card each day the teacher completes it.

Follow through and consistency are key here. This will show your child you take this seriously and provide opportunities to highlight progress and troubleshoot obstacles. If they have a harder day, remind your child that they have another chance to do well tomorrow.

8

### Provide rewards as soon as possible.

When your child earns a reward, be sure to give it to them. Try to provide rewards as soon as possible after your child earns them (*but never before!*). This will help them connect their good behavior at school to the positive feeling of earning a reward.

9

### Set realistic goals for improvement.

It's okay to start small to make sure your "bigger" goals are within reach. For example, if your child is running out of the classroom 10 times a day, staying in class all day may be too challenging at first. Work your way up to this by gradually increasing the amount of time your child needs to stay in class (e.g., aiming for a small but consistent improvement each week).

10

### Remember to praise good behavior.

Praise your child whenever their school behavior earns them a reward. The more parents reliably praise and provide promised rewards for good behavior, the better children will feel and the faster behavior will improve.

11

### Adjust the check-in card and rewards list over time.

As your child's school behavior improves or certain rewards lose their value, you can adjust your Daily School Check-In card and/or rewards chart to maintain your child's motivation and progress. For example, after your child is able to consistently speak appropriately to peers 2-3 days/week, you can increase the goal to 4-5 days/week. You can also adapt these if new problems develop.

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# Daily School Check-In



Date

Today, \_\_\_\_\_

Teacher

Most of the Time



Some of the Time



A Little/None of the Time



Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

Total 😊

# PARENT HANDOUT: DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN TIPS



ADHD Skill 3

## HOW CAN A DAILY SCHOOL CHECK-IN HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Having a Daily School Check-in helps parents, teachers, and children set clear goals for improving behavior. It helps you create an organized and fair system to track your child's school behavior and provide rewards. You decide together what your child needs to do to earn rewards, which helps your child focus on behaving.
- ▶ This strategy increases communication and consistency between home and your child's school. When parents and teachers are on the same page, children face predictable consequences and their behavior often improves.
- ▶ When used properly, the Daily School Check-In can be done simply, quickly, and easily. Using a Daily School Check-In and rewards system can give your child the extra nudge they need to do better in school. When rewards are carefully chosen and only given for good behavior, you may be surprised by how well your child will behave to earn what they want!

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **I wasn't raised with rewards and don't like the idea of "bribing" my child.**

All children are different, and yours may need some extra motivation to behave the way you'd like. Your family may already have ways of informally "rewarding" your child, such as promising your child something when they do well in school or follow rules. Here, you're implementing a predetermined, clear, and consistent system to improve your child's school behavior, increasing your influence over your child's behavior and keeping both you and your child accountable.

### **Why should I reward my child for behaving the way they are supposed to at school?**

Just as adults appreciate being rewarded for working hard, children respond well to tangible incentives for good behavior. The Daily School Check-In helps you and your child's teacher shift your attention toward the things your child does right. They provide another way to influence your child's behavior.

### **This seems like it will take a lot of time. I'm too busy!**

A small time investment can lead to big improvements in your child's school behavior. This may take some time to set up at first, but eventually it becomes part of families' and schools' routines. Most parents and teachers actually gain time back, because they spend less time managing children's misbehavior. Over time, families often find children do not need rewards to behave.

### **My child's teacher thinks this will be too hard to do. They're busy!**

We know teachers have very full schedules, so try to keep this system as simple as possible. Discuss what's possible for them and decide together what makes the most sense in the context of their day. Many teachers find that they can complete a simple behavior log in a few seconds! Over time, this will lead to improvement in your child's school behavior, decreasing the amount of time teachers have to respond to problem behaviors during the day. The more feedback the school provides, the better you'll be able to change your child's behavior.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS (CONTINUED)

### My child keeps forgetting to bring their Daily School Check-In sheet home.

Children, especially those with ADHD, can be forgetful! Work with your child's teacher to get the sheet into your child's homework folder or backpack. When you first start using this technique, consider awarding your child some smiley faces or checkmarks on their rewards chart for simply returning their sheet to you. This will give them some extra motivation until this behavior becomes second nature. It also gives them a reason to bring the worksheet home even when they have a hard day at school. If paper sheets seem too challenging for your child or their teacher, emailing the sheet may help.

### I thought rewards worked best when children get them immediately after good behavior. How does this work when their behavior is at school and rewards are at home?

Review your reward system with your child's teacher(s). Some teachers are able to give rewards for good behavior in school (e.g., extra time doing a fun activity, helping the teacher with a task, getting a small toy or prize). This could be done at a set time of the day or week so your child knows when their reward is coming. If you're giving the rewards at home, try to do so as soon after school as possible. You (or another caregiver doing pickup) can talk about it on the way home and then let your child collect rewards as soon as you get there. Or, if you won't be seeing your child directly after school, you can sometimes leave a fun note in their backpack reminding them that you will pick rewards for good behavior as soon as you all get back home.

### My child is having a hard time earning rewards.

Be sure to include a range of goal behaviors on your list, including at least one or two that your child can do some of the time. Once they have some success, they will be even more motivated to earn rewards for all of the behaviors on the list. If you're unsure which behaviors are easier for your child to do, their teacher may be able to help.

If your child's ADHD symptoms make it difficult for them to do the things they want or need to do, they may need additional support, such as medication and/or therapy. Check in with your child's primary care provider about medication and whether a referral to a behavioral health specialist could be helpful.

## REWARD IDEAS

### Small Rewards

- Play with friends
- Spend time with caregivers without siblings
- Cook meal together
- Play cards
- Go to library
- Play video game
- Have extra treat after dinner
- Play game together
- Skip a chore
- Get screen time
- Pick small prize out at the store

### Medium or Large Rewards

- Have a sleepover
- Go for a hike
- Go swimming, bowling, or biking
- Eat out
- Plan family outing
- Visit a museum
- Go to the movies
- Make craft together
- Take music or dance lessons
- Get a new piece of clothing
- Buy a book or game



## WHAT IS PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADHD?

- ▶ If your child is having a hard time paying attention, staying organized, or controlling their energy, they may experience problems because of these difficulties. A positive problem solving strategy can help them more effectively deal with their daily challenges and concerns.
- ▶ Your child may be frustrated if they are having a hard time dealing with problems, big or small. This can make them feel bad about themselves or cause them to get in trouble with parents, friends or teachers. Problem solving strategies can help them change that!
- ▶ These worksheets teach your child a simple plan for solving problems. They will learn to:
  1. Name the problem
  2. Identify 3 possible solutions
  3. Name one good thing and one bad thing about each solution
  4. Pick one to try
  5. Evaluate how things went after you implement the solution.

## HERE'S HOW TO MAKE A PROBLEM SOLVING PLAN AT HOME

You can introduce the plan by saying, "Everyone can use help solving problems. When our problems make us feel bad about ourselves or get us into trouble, we sometimes need strategies that make it easier to deal with challenges. Here's the Problem Solving Plan we are going to start using." Introduce the 5 parts of the plan to your child by going through them together and reading the explanations below.

- 1 What's the problem?** You may be feeling overwhelmed and not know exactly how to describe the issue you need to handle. Clearly stating the problem as a first step helps you really focus on what it is so you can then figure out exactly what you need to do to solve it. Try to be as specific as possible (e.g., "My friend is being mean at recess and that's making me mad" is better than "My friend makes me mad" or "I'm mad").
- 2 What are 3 possible solutions?** Think of 3 possible solutions to your problem so you have some good options to pick from, but not so many that you are overwhelmed with choices. Don't worry about how good or bad they are yet. You will evaluate them in the next part.
- 3 What's one good thing and one bad thing about each solution?** This step requires you to name one positive outcome and one negative outcome that could occur if you choose each solution. This step will help you consider the benefits and challenges of each choice. This is an essential step because you are gathering important information for your plan!
- 4 Pick one!** This is your chance to take charge as you pick which solution you want to try out first.
- 5 How did it go?** After you follow through with applying a solution, it's time to evaluate it. This will help you learn what the best options for different problems are, and you can refer back to these tested solutions as needed. If your first solution isn't successful in solving the problem, you can try a different one or start a completely new solution brainstorming session. Don't give up!

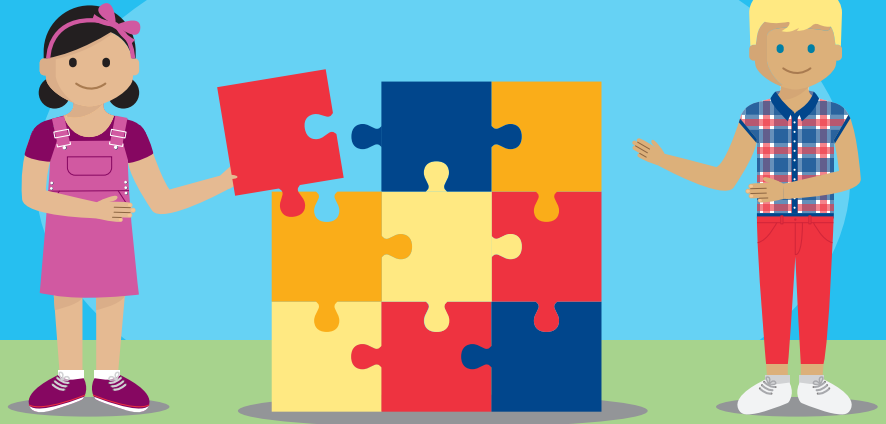
The next worksheet puts the **Problem Solving Plan** into a chart and shows you some examples. Go over the example together and then have your child try to solve the practice problems. Come up with solutions for our example problems and then try it for one of their own.





# CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING

ADHD Skill 4



**Example 1:** I didn't pay attention in math class today because I was bored. Now I don't understand today's homework.

What's the Problem?	I don't understand my math homework assignment.		
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1	Don't do the homework.	I can play videogames earlier because I'll have less to do	I'll get a zero.
Solution 2	Text my friend for help.	She is good at math and can help me	She might not respond.
Solution 3	Talk to my teacher tomorrow and ask for help.	My teacher will explain what I missed.	She might still give me a zero for today's homework.
My Choice	Text my friend for help.		
How'd it go?	My friend texted me back. She called and helped me. I understood and did the homework.		

**Example 2:** My parents wanted me to clean my room before watching a movie. They reminded me about this two times, but I forgot and now they are upset with me again. This keeps happening to me.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

# CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING



**Example 3:** I've known that we had a history project due for a while, but I just couldn't get much done on it because I was so overwhelmed with all of the steps. Now it's due in three days and I don't know what to do.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

**Example 4:** My friends stopped inviting me places because I was always grounded for bad grades. I've been working hard using my skills and my grades are improving. I have permission to hang out with them again, but I don't think they like me anymore.

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Soution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

# CHILD WORKSHEET: PROBLEM SOLVING



**Example 5:** I get so excited when we line up for gym that sometimes I jump to the front of the line or accidentally bump into my classmates. My friends are getting mad and sometimes my teacher says I might lose my gym privileges!"

What's the Problem?

		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

# Blank Problem Solving Plans

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

What's the Problem?			
		One Good Thing	One Bad Thing
Solution 1			
Solution 2			
Solution 3			
My Choice			
How'd it go?			

# PARENT HANDOUT: PROBLEM SOLVING TIPS



ADHD Skill 4

## HOW CAN PROBLEM SOLVING FOR ADHD HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Your child's struggles with skills like attention, organization, memory, and/or energy level may get in the way of them dealing with challenges and solving everyday problems. Many children feel like this sometimes.
- ▶ Problems may feel too big to solve, they may not feel motivated to address them, or they may think that they aren't good at solving problems so they shouldn't even try. You may also notice that they try to solve a problem, but give up easily if they aren't successful right away. The good news is that having a strategy to solve problems can really help!
- ▶ The problem solving technique described here can provide a clear way to help your child think through challenges, brainstorm options, notice what works and what doesn't, and keep trying if their first attempt doesn't work. Using this method can help them solve problems, have more positive outcomes, and feel better about themselves.
- ▶ Making and following a problem solving plan can also reduce frustration for you and your child's teachers by helping them to be more independent. This plan ensures that the adults in their life are not just telling them what to do, but instead supporting and guiding them to overcome challenges on their own. Everyone can benefit from solving problems in their lives; these skills can help the rest of your family as well!

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **My child doesn't think they have problems that need solving.**

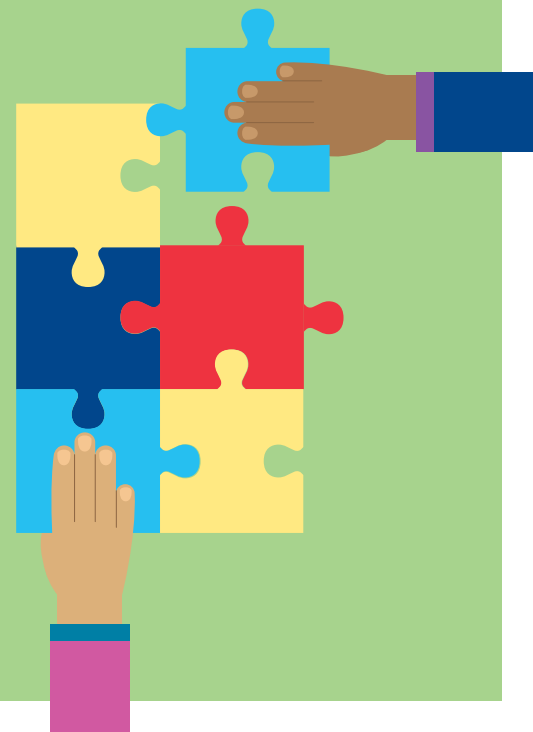
It can be hard to notice which challenges or frustrations can benefit from problem solving skills. Go over past situations with your child that caused them to feel sad, frustrated, stressed, or another negative emotion. These are great opportunities to practice their problem solving. If you notice a situation where your child can use these skills in daily life, gently point it out to them (e.g., "You told me you were frustrated at lunch because you forgot to bring your lunch with you even though you packed it the night before. Do you think we can use the Problem Solving Plan to help plan for tomorrow?").

### **When we try this, my child can't think of any solutions.**

Think about what might be getting in the way. They might be feeling overwhelmed and stuck. Suggest one example solution to get them started. Often, once they hear one idea, they can get creative and come up with solutions of their own. Remind them that they don't need to think of the "perfect" solution because there is no such thing. They can make mistakes and ask you and their teachers for help as needed. Review our practice examples to remind them of some good options for common concerns as well as the fact that they came up with great solutions for the examples!

### **When my child tries to use their problem solving plan, they get really frustrated and upset.**

Sometimes problem solving can feel really overwhelming! Feeling upset is okay. Your child's emotions are giving you both a message that they are having a tough time and need support. Tell them to take a break to do something relaxing or fun, then try again. Remind them that they can ask a you or a teacher for support using the problem solving plan if they need it. If they are still having a hard time using problem solving skills, check in with your child's primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.



# PARENT HANDOUT: REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO



ADHD Skill 5

## WHAT IS REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO?

- ▶ Remembering Things I Need to Do is a skill that helps with your child's memory and planning. It involves making "to do lists" that help them remember what they need to do and when they need to do it.
- ▶ By developing a system for tracking tasks, assignments, and due dates, your child will improve their memory and get things done on time. Follow the instructions below to help your child make lists of what they need to do today, this week, and this weekend.

## HERE'S HOW TO REMEMBER THINGS YOU NEED TO DO

You can introduce this skill by saying, "We are going to try a new way to keep track of the things you need to do and when you need to do them. This will help improve your memory and planning skills. Your goal is to **make checklists** of the things you need to do today, this week, and this weekend. As you make your lists, be specific about each task so you know exactly what you need to do. After you complete a task, be sure to check it off.

- 1 First, pull out a copy of these **three worksheets**:
  - Things I Need to Do Today
  - Things I Need to Do This Week
  - Things I Need to Do This Weekend
- 2 Start by filling in the "**Things I Need to Do Today**" worksheet. Include tasks that are time-sensitive or must be done today. Look at George's list for an example.
- 3 Next, use the "**Things I Need to Do This Week**" worksheet to make a list of the things you have to do this week. Include tasks you have to complete on a regular basis, such as making your bed or bringing your homework assignments home. Look at Molly's list for an example.
- 4 Now, use the "**Things I Need to Do This Weekend**" worksheet to make a list of the things you need to do over the weekend. It can be harder to remember weekend tasks when you're not in the usual routine of a school day. Making a list for these days can be just as important. Look at Sam's list for an example.
- 5 **Set reminders to check your lists a few times a day.** Set reminders to see what you still need to do. You can set alarms on your phone or watch, ask parents/teachers to remind you, and/or stick a note where you will see it, like in your locker or planner.
- 6 **Keep copies of your lists where you will see them.** For example, having copies in your backpack and on your refrigerator will give you multiple reminders. You can also keep these lists in a planner, notebook, or on your phone. Be sure to put the lists where you can easily access them and look at them throughout the day.
- 7 **If it's hard to remember everything you need to do, ask for help.** If you're not sure what to include on your list or are having a hard time using the worksheets, ask your caregivers, teachers, or friends/classmates for support.
- 8 **Notice when you're doing a good job.** Take a moment to feel proud of your effort to stay on top of what you need to do. Give yourself a pat on the back for getting things done!

The next worksheet shows you some examples of **To Do Lists**. Go over the examples together and then have your child make their own lists.

### Things I Need to Do Today: George

	Done?
Turn in English paper	✓
Give book back to Hannah	✓
Turn in Math homework	✓
Submit field trip permission slip	
Find out where track tryouts are	
Go to band practice	

### Things I Need to Do This Week: Molly

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri
Make my bed	✓	✓			
Eat breakfast	✓	✓			
Put homework in backpack	✓	✓			
Get lunch out of fridge	✓				
Bring homework assignments home	✓				
Eat snack after school	✓				

### Things I Need to Do This Weekend: Sam

	Saturday	Sunday
Make my bed	✓	
Eat breakfast	✓	
Do chores (take out trash, sweep up kitchen)	✓	
Work on History project		
Do Science homework		
Get baseball equipment for practice (Saturday at 11)		
Movies with John and Hector (Saturday at 7)		





### HOW CAN REMEMBERING THINGS I NEED TO DO HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has symptoms of ADHD, it can be harder for them to keep track of important information, such as what they need to do to get ready for school or the due dates for their assignments.
- ▶ This makes it challenging for them to do things when they're supposed to. They may notice that adults are frequently reminding them what they need to do, or asking them if they've completed different tasks. This can feel discouraging and be frustrating for everyone.
- ▶ Remembering Things I Need to Do helps your child make a system to stay on top of their daily and weekly tasks. Over time, they will need fewer reminders from other people, and you will all feel good about them staying more on top of things.

### COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

#### **My child isn't sure what to put on their list.**

If your child is having a hard time remembering what they need to do, aren't sure what to put on their list, or finds it challenging to use the worksheets, review our examples and/or get some extra support. Your child's teachers and friends/classmates may have some good ideas based on what they know your child needs to do. Remind your child that the more they practice, the easier it will get!

#### **My child makes all of their lists, but then forgets to look at them.**

At first it can be challenging for your child to remember they made lists and need to refer back to them! It can help for them to set reminders to look at their lists and see what they still need to do. They can set alarms on their phone or watch, ask parents or teachers to remind them, and/or leave reminder notes for themselves somewhere they will see them, like in their locker or planner.

It also helps if they make copies of their lists and keep them somewhere they tend to go to or look during the day. For instance, they can keep a copy in their backpack, on their phone, and in their notebook.

#### **My child looks at their lists and can't figure out what to do first.**

One method your child can try is to start with the easiest task. Another is to start with the one with the earliest deadline. Remind them that Tasks on the What I Need to Do Today checklist usually have to be completed before those on the What I Need to Do This Week or Weekend checklists.

**My child complains that I'm always bugging them about making lists and checking things off. They say that I'm annoying, but I'm trying to help!** Sometimes family members' eagerness to participate in skill-building can be frustrating to children. See if you can have a calm discussion about the best ways to support their use of this new memory tool. For example, you can see if your child is comfortable with you offering some encouragement in the mornings before the school rush, or checking in with them once or twice during homework time, but not asking them about the lists repeatedly or throughout the day. Decide together what will help your child get the support they need without being overwhelmed. Kindly remind your child that as they successfully make and complete their "to do lists", they will show you they need fewer reminders to do this on their own.

#### **Even after my child makes their lists, it's hard for them to follow through on doing their tasks.**

Many kids with ADHD feel this way. Take a look at the handouts on How to Get Things Done (ADHD Skill 6), How to Organize My Stuff (ADHD Skill 7), and How to Manage My Time (ADHD Skill 8) together, and see if practicing these skills helps your child improve their ability to start and complete tasks, get organized, and meet deadlines. If their difficulty with memory and organization gets in the way at school, home, or with friends, your child may need additional support. Check in with your child's primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO GET THINGS DONE



ADHD Skill 6

## WHAT IS HOW TO GET THINGS DONE?

- ▶ How to Get Things Done is a skill that helps your child plan, start, and finish assignments and tasks. It involves looking over their "to do" list(s), choosing a task, making a schedule, and overcoming obstacles to reach their goals.
- ▶ By making a careful plan to tackle a task, your child can improve their organization, attention, and follow through skills. Use the guide below to help your child make their plan and get things done!
- ▶ This skill is most useful for older children.

## HERE'S HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

You can introduce this skill by saying, "We are going to try a new way to help you get things done. Your goal here is to **make a plan** to complete a task and then **follow your roadmap** to finish it. As you do each of the steps below, fill in the **Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet**. Let's try it together." Go through the steps below to help your child make their own Roadmap, and create your own examples that fit your child's school and social activities.

1

First, look at your "to do" list(s) and **pick a specific task** to complete. If you need help making a "to-do" list, see ADHD Skill 5 (How to Remember What I Need to Do) to make checklists of your daily and weekly tasks.

2

If possible, **break your task up into "mini tasks."** Many goals can feel less difficult or overwhelming if you approach them one step at a time. Think of all the steps you need to take to reach your goal, then split your task up into smaller, more manageable "mini tasks". Be sure to decide what **order** the steps go in.

*Example: Alicia split her math homework up into 5 steps: reading the assignment, reading the textbook chapter, and then doing 5 problems at a time.*

3

Calculate **how long it will take** you to complete each step. Be sure to consider how much time you have. If you have trouble paying attention, it can help to **take short breaks** (5 minutes or less) after you complete each step.

*Example: Between arriving home after school and dinnertime, Lucas had 2 hours to do homework. With homework in 3 subjects, he split his time into 35 minutes/subject. He took a 5-minute stretching break in between the subjects, leaving him 40 minutes per subject. He used any extra time at the end to finish up assignments that needed more time.*

4

Based on this, choose what time you plan to **start and stop** each step. Be sure to leave wiggle room and set realistic deadlines so you don't get discouraged.

*Example: It usually takes Olivia at least 30 minutes to practice the piano, so she schedules 40 minutes to complete the task just in case she needs more time.*

5

Identify what **materials you need**. Use a **timer** to stay on schedule and keep track of time.

*Example: Alex needs her textbook, assignment outline, paper, pencil, and calculator to do her math homework. She also sets up a kitchen timer.*

6

Think of **where** you will do this task. Choose a place where you can think clearly and focus.

*Example: Jordan finds that when he has music or the TV on in the background, it takes him twice as long to finish his homework. He also puts his phone away so texts and social media don't distract him.*

7

Choose **when** you will do your tasks. Think about your schedule and when you'll fit this in. If possible, it helps to do harder tasks during the time of day when you're most alert and clear-headed.

*Example: Lily does her homework as soon as she gets home from school, before she gets too tired or hungry.*

8

Plan **how to get help** if you need it. Identify who can provide extra support if you're not sure what to do or get stuck. The goal is to keep moving until you finish a task, so reach out for help if you're not sure what to do. Family, friends, teachers, and classmates can provide useful advice

*Example: Ben finds homework easiest to do if he does it at his after school program, where there are tutors available.*

9

Pick a **reward** you will get for finishing this task. Choose something that you can get easily; it doesn't have to be big, fancy, or expensive. Something like a tasty treat, spending time outside, or watching a favorite show can feel great after reaching a goal. Ask your parents for ideas if you're not sure what to choose or what is allowed.

10

**Follow your roadmap.** Now that you've made a great plan, be sure to follow it. Keep your Roadmap worksheet where you will see it, then follow it until you've completed your task. **Make notes** on what went well, or any adjustments you want to make so your next task goes even more smoothly.

11

**Pat yourself on the back** for getting something done. Be sure to take a moment to notice how hard you're working!





# NOAH'S ROADMAP TO GETTING THINGS DONE

## ADHD Skill 6



### 1 Choose Task

**Task/Goal** Studying for Friday's spelling test

### 2 Define Steps

### 3 Budget Time

What steps do I have to take? Write them in order.

Step 1	Review word list
Step 2	Practice with flash cards
Step 3	Take practice test #1
Step 4	Take practice test #2

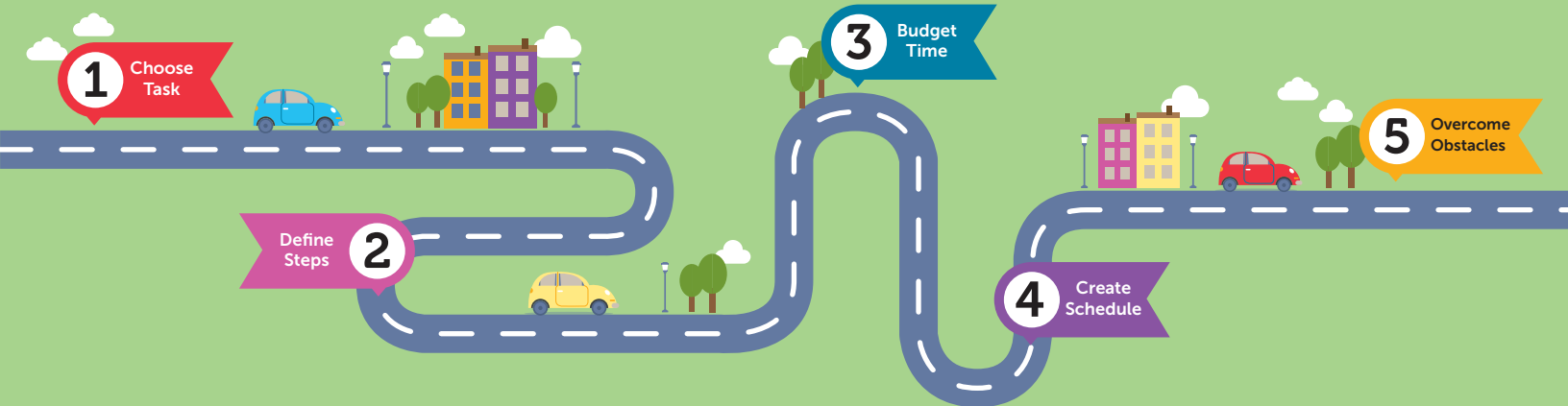
How much time do I have?	2 hrs
How much time to I have per step/task?	2 hrs/4 tasks = ~40 min/task
Time I need for step 1	15 min
Time I need for step 2	25 min
Time I need for step 3	25 min
Time I need for step 4	25 min
<b>Total Time</b>	<b>90 min</b>
<b>Time Left Over</b>	<b>30 min</b>

### 4 Create Schedule

	Day	Start Time	Stop Time	Short Break?
Step 1	Monday	3:00	3:30	10 min if needed
Step 2	Tuesday	3:00	3:30	5 min if needed
Step 3	Wednesday	3:00	3:30	Test without break
Step 4	Thursday	3:00	3:30	Test without break

### 5 Overcome Obstacles

What materials do I need?	Word list, practice tests, pencil, timer
Where will I do it?	Dining room table after school
What distractions can I eliminate?	Put away electronics
What will I do if I need help?	Ask mom or dad, check in with Mrs. Young
What is my reward for working hard?	One episode of TV show on M/W; ice cream sandwich on T; game with family Th
Notes for next time	It was helpful to take more than one practice test



# CHILD ROADMAP TO GETTING THINGS DONE

## ADHD Skill 6



### 1 Choose Task

Task/Goal

### 2 Define Steps

What steps do I have to take? Write them in order.

Step 1	
Step 2	
Step 3	
Step 4	

### 3 Budget Time

How much time do I have?	
How much time to I have per step/task?	
Time I need for step 1	
Time I need for step 2	
Time I need for step 3	
Time I need for step 4	
Total Time	
Time Left Over	

### 4 Create Schedule

	Day	Start Time	Stop Time	Short Break?
Step 1				
Step 2				
Step 3				
Step 4				

### 5 Overcome Obstacles

What materials do I need?	
Where will I do it?	
What distractions can I eliminate?	
What will I do if I need help?	
What is my reward for working hard?	
Notes for next time	

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO GET THINGS DONE TIPS



ADHD Skill 6

## HOW CAN GETTING THINGS DONE HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has ADHD, it can be challenging to get things done. For example, they may have a hard time getting started on a task, figuring out what to focus on, or staying on track once they get going. Your child may notice that they miss important deadlines, or take a long time to complete an assignment, only to do things partway.
- ▶ This makes it difficult to check tasks off their “to do lists”, even when they know what they need to do. This can be frustrating and make it harder for them to enjoy school and feel good about themselves.
- ▶ How to Get Things Done helps your child make a plan to complete a task and then follow that plan. By practicing this skill, they can develop better habits, get things done more easily, and feel proud of reaching their goals.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **My child has a hard time figuring out how to break a task into smaller steps.**

Encourage your child to ask themselves, what do I need to do first? Help them think about what absolutely has to happen so that they can get started. Then ask, what do you need to do next to keep moving toward your goal of completing the task? Your child can also try thinking of all the steps they need to take, then going through and putting them in order. If they're still having a hard time, see if help from you, a teacher, or a friend gets them going.

### **It always takes my child longer than they expect to finish something, so it's hard to stick to their plan.**

Many tasks take longer to complete than we think! It can be challenging at first to know how much time your child needs to do a task, so their time estimates may be inaccurate. If they have multiple tasks to complete, it may help if they split the time evenly between them, then use any extra time to finish any incomplete tasks. Use the tips in How to Manage My Time (ADHD Skill 8) to get a better sense of how much time your child needs to do things. This will help them make a more realistic schedule.

**My child knows what they need to do and made their plan, but then they said they don't have all the materials they need.** Many kids with ADHD have trouble keeping track of their things, especially school assignments and papers. It helps if they can think ahead of time about what they will need to do a task. You can offer to double check that they've thought of everything. Have your child write the required materials down on their Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet. If they need extra help with organization, the worksheets in ADHD Skill 7 (How to Organize My Stuff) can help too.

### **My child gets distracted while trying to get things done.**

Try to limit your child's distractions (e.g., TV, phone, etc.) and help create an environment that maximizes their focus and productivity. You or teachers can offer suggestions based on what you've seen work well for your child at home or school.

### **My child made a plan but then forgot to follow it.**

Be sure to tell your child, “Good job making a plan!”. Remind them to keep a copy of their Roadmap to Getting Things Done worksheet somewhere they'll easily see it. They can try setting a timer or alarm for the start times they chose, or ask you to give them a friendly reminder. Your child can also brush up on their memory skills (ADHD Skill 5, How to Remember What I Need to Do) and time management (ADHD Skill 8, How to Manage My Time) and see if using these skills together helps them reach their goals.

If your child's difficulty with planning and organization gets in their way at school, home, or with friends, they may need additional support. Check in with your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help

## WHAT IS HOW TO ORGANIZE MY STUFF?

- ▶ How to Organize My Stuff is a set of strategies to help your child arrange their belongings and environment in a orderly way. This can help them do everyday things more easily like keep their room clean, organize their backpack or desk, and keep track of their homework assignments and school papers.
- ▶ By practicing this skill, your child will get better at staying organized in their daily life and spend less time looking for things or playing "catch up". Being organized can help your child do better at school and home and feel good about themself.



## HERE'S HOW TO ORGANIZE YOUR STUFF

You can introduce this skill by saying, "We are going to try a new way to help you organize your stuff. Let's read through this list of strategies together and pick a few for you to try." Go through the ideas below to help your child get more organized. Depending on your child's age, some strategies may work better than others.

1

### Give everything a home.

If you find that your room or belongings are usually messy or your things end up in piles, give each item a specific storage spot or "home" (e.g., clothes in closet or dresser, toys on shelf, backpack on hook). Use organizational tools if you can, such as boxes/bins, drawers, files, trays, or shelves. If possible, label your spaces so you remember where things go (e.g., drawer labeled "school supplies"). After you use an object, put it back in its "home" so you don't create clutter.

*Example:* When she gets home from school, Annie puts her shoes and coat in the hallway closet and her lunch bag on the kitchen counter. Before bed, she places her backpack by the front door so she remembers to take it to school.

2

### Use a planner or agenda.

If you forget what homework you have or tend to turn assignments in late, using a planner can help. Keep track of important dates, homework assignments, social events, and extracurricular activities by writing them down in one place.

*Example:* At the end of each class, Jacob writes his homework assignment and its due date down in his planner.

3

### Try color-coding.

If it's hard to distinguish between different groups of belongings, try sorting them by color. You can use different color notebooks and folders for each subject, or write assignments for each subject in a different color pen.

*Example:* Sophia always puts new/unfinished homework assignments in her red folder, completed homework in her blue folder, and papers for her parents in her green folder.

4

### Set a deadline for getting tasks done.

If tasks often feel rushed or “last minute”, set deadlines to reduce your stress. You can use due dates (e.g., school assignment due on Monday), a deadline you or your parents choose (e.g., clean room by dinnertime), or blocks of time (e.g., do task A for 20 minutes, then move on to task B for 10 minutes). Being creative can help: for instance, try putting away as many clothes as you can before 3 songs are over.

*Example:* Jeff set a timer for 15 minutes, then put away as many of his toys as he could before the timer buzzed. He took a 5-minute break, then used the same strategy to sort his art supplies for another 15 minutes.

5

### Schedule “clean up time”.

If your backpack, desk, or locker are often full and it’s hard to find what you need, work with your parents and teachers to set regular times to clean out those spaces so they don’t get too cluttered or

*Example:* Every Friday, Kiera’s teacher spends a few minutes helping her clear out her desk by throwing away unnecessary papers and trash. Every Sunday, her parents help her clean out her backpack to get ready for the next week.

6

### Ask your parents or teachers to support you.

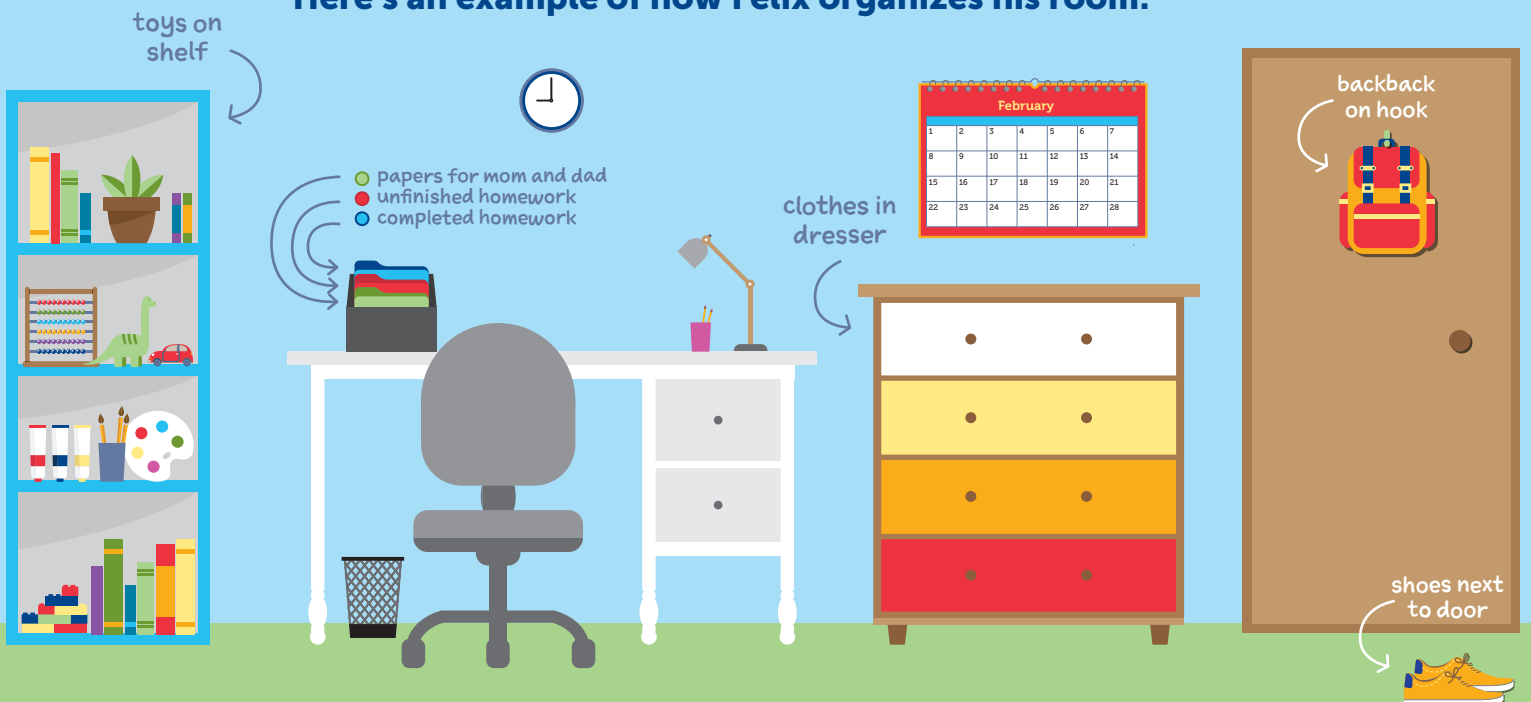
When first trying these strategies, share them with your parent and teacher so they can help you practice. For example, a parent can go through your backpack with you and check that everything you need is in there (and also help you clear out whatever you no longer need!). Similarly, your teacher can remind you to write assignments in your planner, check that you wrote them down correctly, and ensure that you are taking home everything you need that day. Your parents and teachers can also give you suggestions for new strategies, help you improve ones that aren’t working, and support you in becoming more independent.

7

### Reward yourself.

If you’re working hard to stay organized, choose how you will treat yourself. If you’re not sure what is allowed or appropriate, ask your parents. Be sure to give yourself a pat on the back for working hard and doing more on your own!

## Here’s an example of how Felix organizes his room:





# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO ORGANIZE MY STUFF TIPS



ADHD Skill 7

## HOW CAN ORGANIZING MY STUFF HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has ADHD, it can be harder to stay organized. For instance, your child may have a messy bedroom, lose track of assignments or belongings, or forget to bring home important papers. You may find that there are piles of clothes around their room, their backpack is full of papers, or it's hard for them to find a pen or notebook to use in class.
- ▶ This can mean they take a long time to complete easy tasks, or it is challenging to do the things they need to do, like homework or chores. Your child, your family, and/or your child's teachers may find this frustrating or annoying.
- ▶ How to Organize My Stuff gives your child helpful strategies to improve their organization. By practicing this skill, your child can establish better routines and feel successful at home and school.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **Organizing is hard, and everything usually turns out okay in the end. They want to know why they should bother?**

It can take hard work and time to become more organized. Encourage your child to think about their goals and how disorganization may make it harder to achieve them. For example, do they wish they didn't lose as many papers or possessions? Would it feel good to turn things in on time? What would it be like to know where their things are when they need them? Is there any benefit to you nagging them less about their messy room or losing things? See if your child can identify whether there are advantages to trying a new strategy or two. Then see if these new strategies help them to do well and feel better!

### **My child starts to organize their stuff, and then they get distracted. It's hard for them to finish anything.**

Think about when your child will best be able to try new organizational strategies. For example, pick a time of day when they have the most energy or focus. Try to limit their distractions by turning off the TV and putting away their phone. They can start with a smaller task, like cleaning out one drawer, one section of their backpack, or one side of their desk. Check in on them in case they need help, and encourage them to take breaks as needed so they don't get overwhelmed. You and your child's teachers can offer more suggestions based on what you've seen work well for them at home or school.

**When I ask my child to organize their things, they say it's too hard to do a big task like cleaning their room. It's so messy, they don't know where to start!** When tackling a big task, help your child think of ways to break it down so it feels less overwhelming (see ADHD Skill 6 on How to Get Things Done for tips). For example, they can split their bedroom into four sections and clean one at a time. Once their room is clean, have them save a little time each day to straighten up. For example, each day they can spend five minutes putting things away, put away at least five things, or clean off one area, such as their nightstand. Remind them to reward themselves for their hard work!

### **These strategies sound helpful, but it's hard to know which ones my child should use.**

Learning new skills can be challenging for any child! Remember they don't need to do all of these at once. Your child can start by trying one of these strategies and seeing how it goes. If possible, you or your child's teachers can try the new skills out with them the first few times. Kindly offer helpful ideas about which techniques are best for your child and ways to improve their process.

If your child's difficulty with organization gets in the way at school, home, or with friends, they may need additional support. Check in with your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO MANAGE MY TIME



ADHD Skill 8

## WHAT IS HOW TO MANAGE MY TIME?

- ▶ How to Manage My Time helps you make calculate how much time you need to do tasks and do them on time. Practicing this skill can help you stay on schedule, complete your daily routines, and meet your goals.
- ▶ The strategies below help you 1) figure out how long it takes you to complete tasks, and 2) organize your time in order to get them done. Try them out to improve your time management!
- ▶ Depending on your child's age, some strategies may work better than others. Try them out to improve your child's time management!

## HERE'S HOW TO MANAGE YOUR TIME

You can introduce this skill by saying, "It can be hard to know how much time we need to do things. Let's read through this list of strategies together and see if they help you manage your time."

- 1 Understand Your Timing.** To manage your time, you first need to know how long it takes you to do different tasks.
  - a If you're unsure or find that your guesses are usually wrong, play our **Check Your Time game**. Using our list of quick activities, write down how long you think each task will take, time yourself doing each one, and then compare your predicted time with your actual time. Add your own activity ideas to the game, focusing on those tasks where you often need more time than you expect, or where you find yourself running out of time to finish.
  - b As you do tasks in the future, **time yourself** to continue improving your awareness of how long it takes you to do things.
- 2 Plan for Homework.** Before starting your homework, do some **quick calculations** to plan your time.
  - a For example, if you have 3 hours to complete your homework after dinner and 3 classes with homework assignments, you have about 1 hour to spend on each subject. If you finish any assignments ahead of schedule, you can use your extra time to check your work or start the next one.
  - b If you have trouble paying attention or doing a task for a long time, remember to schedule in **short breaks** (e.g., a 5-minute break after completing each homework assignment).
- 3 Make Schedules.** Use a **calendar** to keep track of your homework assignments, extracurricular activities, and social events. You can color code to match each type of activity or use separate calendars.
  - a At the beginning of each school year, **write important dates** in your calendar (e.g., first and last day of school, breaks and vacations, school dance, etc.). Review these with your parents and/or teachers so you're all on the same page.
  - b Make a **weekly schedule** at the beginning of each week. Include the times you have to wake up, leave for school, get home, and go to bed. Add that week's appointments, activities, and social commitments. **Review your schedule** every day to see what's coming next. See our example and fill in the blank one for yourself.

- 4 Increase Your Motivation.** Identify a small way to **reward yourself** for managing your time well. This can be a challenging skill to master, so be sure to acknowledge your hard work.
- a** You can also increase your motivation to stay on schedule by considering the **consequences** of not managing time well. For instance, if you fall behind in the morning, you may end up getting marked tardy, which can lead to getting a detention!
- 5 Anticipate Challenges.** Think about **obstacles** that may keep you from following your schedule or plan. For example, if you tend to forget your planner at home, you may need a reminder to put it in your backpack at night. Or, if you have the hardest time staying on schedule in the morning, you may need to leave extra time to complete your tasks before school. Your parents and teachers may have ideas too, so talk this over with them.
- a** **Set reminders** to help you stick to your schedule. You can set alarms on your phone or watch, ask others to help you, or use a calendar app that sends automatic reminders when something is coming up in your schedule. Some families find that sharing their calendars makes it easier to keep track of everyone's activities.
  - b** At the end of the day, review your schedule and **cross off** everything you were able to do. Notice where you successfully managed your time, and give yourself a pat on the back! For those things you weren't able to do, try to identify why. See if there is anything you can change to get them done next time.
  - c** Don't be shy about **asking for help** when you need it. Everyone can use support with challenging tasks. Your family, teachers, or friends can play an important role in helping you practice the strategies above. Together, you can work hard to improve your time management and reach your goals.

You can do it! Let's review the 5 simple steps to Managing Your Time:

1. Understand your timing
2. Plan for homework
3. Make schedules
4. Increase your motivation
5. Anticipate challenges

## CHECK YOUR TIME GAME

Predict how long it will take you to do each of these short tasks, then time yourself doing them. To make it more fun, you can also ask others what their predictions are. Add your own activity ideas too!

Task	How long do I think this will take?	How long did it actually take?
Brush your teeth		
Read 2 pages in a textbook		
Choose clothes for tomorrow		
Eat breakfast		
Write your address 5 times		
Take a shower		
Put on your shoes		
Do 10 jumping jacks		
Vacuum a room		
Sing the alphabet		
Pack your lunch		

# JESSICA'S WEEKLY CALENDAR

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wake Up	6:30	6:30	6:30	6:30	6:30	8:30	8:30
Leave for school	7:30	7:30	7:30	7:30	7:30		
Get home	3:00	4:30	3:00	4:30	3:00		
Bedtime	9:30	9:30	9:30	9:30	9:30		
Appointments						dentist at 11:00	
Activities	band tryouts 4th period	softball practice 3-5		softball practice 3-5			dinner at grandma's 6-8
Fun							movies with melissa and Alicia 1-3

# MY WEEKLY CALENDAR

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Wake Up							
Leave for school							
Get home							
Bedtime							
Appointments							
Activities							
Fun							

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO MANAGE MY TIME TIPS



## HOW CAN MANAGING MY TIME HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ When your child has ADHD, it can be challenging for them to pay attention, focus on one task at a time, and keep track of their time. Assignments or chores may take longer than they expect, it may be hard to get things done when they're supposed to, or they may find that they're always behind schedule, even if they wear a watch.
- ▶ This can lead your child to feel frustrated at school, get into arguments at home, or miss out on fun activities. Using the strategies on these worksheets, they can become better at using and controlling their time, which will help them be more independent. Over time, practicing these skills can help your child stress less and succeed more!



## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **My child tries to set aside enough time, but it always takes them longer than they expect to do things.**

This happens to many people with ADHD, so your child is not alone! Have them play the Check Your Time game to learn how much time they need for small tasks, and then have them time themselves completing a task that usually takes them longer than they predict. This will give you both valuable information about how accurate their time estimates are. You can also offer guidance or ask their teachers for ideas based on how much time you've seen your child need to do things. Your child can use this information to improve their future planning.

Some of the other strategies in this packet can also help your child get better at managing time, such as How to Get Things Done (ADHD Skill 6) and How to Organize My Stuff (ADHD Skill 7). If these ideas are new to your family, they may be challenging for your child at first, but with practice children find that these skills become easier and easier to use!

### **My child says they have no idea how long it takes them to do things, and nothing ever feels urgent. But, we are always fighting about them taking too long or not taking things seriously.**

It can be frustrating to have trouble keeping track of time. Many people, even those without ADHD, find this hard to do. See if your child is willing to try some of the strategies we suggest here. Encourage them to notice if changing the way they manage their time helps them understand how long it takes to do things, follow a schedule, and complete tasks.

### **My child now sets up their schedule and plans their time well, but they aren't motivated to get any of it done.**

It can be hard to stay motivated to do hard or boring things! Help your child identify what they'll gain from being better at time management. For example, can it help them get their homework done faster so they have more time for fun? Will it decrease how often they argue with you about your schedule? It can also help to identify the reward they'll earn when they're able to follow their schedule (step 4, reward yourself). Even a short break to do something they enjoy can feel great after working hard!

# PARENT HANDOUT: HOW TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF



ADHD Skill 9

## WHAT IS HOW TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF?

- ▶ The challenges children with ADHD experience can make it easy for them to get down on themselves. How to Feel Good About Myself is a set of strategies to help your child be their own cheerleader, feel better about tackling difficult tasks, and remember that everyone faces challenges. These techniques also help your child notice if they are being hard on themselves and then take steps to feel better.
- ▶ By practicing this skill, your child will remember what makes them wonderful and special, even when they're having a hard time.

## HERE'S HOW TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT YOURSELF

You can introduce this skill by saying, "All kids have times when they feel down on themselves. When that happens, it's important to remember what makes you special. Feeling good about yourself can help you do better at school, home, and with friends! Let's go through this list of strategies together and see if they help you feel better."

- 1 Make a list of your special qualities.** Each person has traits that make them unique. Make a list of 10 talents, skills, or characteristics that make you great. Ask your parents, teachers, and friends for more ideas based on what they like about you. Look at this list when you're feeling down or having a hard time remembering what's great about you.
- 2 Be kind to yourself.** If you find yourself feeling annoyed or frustrated, remember that having a positive attitude can make a big difference. Remind yourself that you can try to solve problems, improve the way you do things, and give your best effort each day. Everyone has things they are good at and things they find challenging. Try to focus on your strengths and treat yourself like you would treat a good friend.
- 3 Remember that your thoughts, feelings, and actions are connected.** How you think about a situation impacts how you feel about it, and how you feel about it effects how you act in that situation. You may not be able to control the way your brain works sometimes or change a challenging situation, but you can decide how you think about it in order to feel better and do better.
- 4 Give yourself a pep talk before starting a hard task.** When preparing to do something challenging, give yourself an encouraging pep talk. Follow the strategies in these worksheets, then remind yourself how hard you're working. Visualize yourself successfully completing your hard task. (E.g., Before Leah studies for her math tests, she tells herself, "I can do it! If I put my mind to it, I can do my best on this test!".)
- 5 If a task feels too challenging, take a break.** Taking a short break from a difficult task can make it feel less frustrating or overwhelming. Take a few minutes to stretch, listen to some music, take some deep breaths, or have a light snack. See if you feel better and are ready to try again.
- 6 If you feel unsure or stuck, ask for help.** Remember you don't have to go it alone. Make a short list of caring people you can talk to when you're feeling down or overwhelmed. This can include parents, teachers, friends, and other supportive people in your life. Turn to them for understanding and encouragement when things feel hard.
- 7 Don't give up!** Sometimes the first strategy we try doesn't work. If that happens, try another one (such as the other skills in this guide). Remind yourself not everyone gets it on the first try!
- 8 Track your progress.** As you work through the skills in this guide, be sure to notice if you are feeling and doing better. If so, give yourself credit for your effort and be proud of your hard work!

# CHILD WORKSHEET: HOW TO FEEL GOOD ABOUT MYSELF



I'm a good older sister

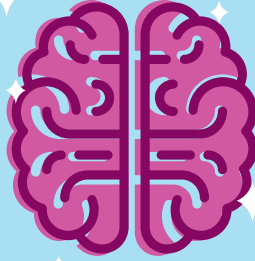
I'm good at science!

I love my family

I'm great at Minecraft

I take care of my dog

I try hard at soccer



## MY SPECIAL QUALITIES

Use this space to make a list of your special qualities. These can be talents, skills, or characteristics that make you great. Ask your caregivers, teachers, and friends for more ideas based on what they like about you!

1

6

2

7

3

8

4

9

5

10

## MY SUPPORTERS

Use this space to brainstorm a list of caring people you can talk to when you're feeling down or overwhelmed.





## HOW CAN FEELING GOOD ABOUT MYSELF HELP MY FAMILY?

- ▶ Sometimes children with ADHD get frustrated with themselves for having a hard time paying attention, sitting still, doing homework, or getting along with others. This can lead them to think negative thoughts about themselves, avoid important tasks, or argue with family, friends, or teachers.
- ▶ Feeling Good About Myself provides strategies to increase your child's self-esteem and help them use coping strategies when they're feeling badly.

## COMMON PARENT CONCERNS

### **When a task is hard, my child gets overwhelmed and wants to give up.**

Completing difficult tasks can be challenging! When a task feels hard, encourage them to give themselves credit for the effort they've made so far. Then, they can take a short break to do something enjoyable, such as doing some light stretching, watching a short video, or getting a snack. They can also practice relaxation skills, which can help them calm both their body and their mind. See if these strategies help your child get back on track and ready to try again. If you find that your child is avoiding their work because it feels too hard, offer more help or talk to their teachers to get extra support.

### **Sometimes when my child thinks negative thoughts about themselves, they get "stuck" feeling badly.**

This happens to almost everyone at some point. Children with ADHD can find it even harder to control their thoughts. Remind them that instead of beating themselves up, they can try to focus on their strengths and reset. Have them to read over their list of 10 special qualities, do something fun or soothing, or talk to someone supportive to get a new perspective. If you notice that they are thinking the same negative thoughts over and over, encourage them to remember that they're working hard and trying their best.

### **My child says they hate having ADHD! Everything feels harder for them.**

Remember that there are many kids and adults with ADHD, so your child is not alone. A lot of people with ADHD are successful at reaching their goals. Using the strategies in this guide can make things easier and more manageable for your child at school and home. The more they practice them, the easier the skills will be to use on a daily basis and the better they will feel!

School can be especially challenging for those with ADHD, but school is not the only thing one can be great at doing. Remind your child that they can take steps to do better in school and that they also have their own special talents and skills.

If your child is feeling badly about needing extra support, remind them that getting help means they are doing everything they can to improve and succeed. This means they are committed to being the best "them" that they can be!

If feeling down about themselves gets in the way at school, home, or with friends, your child may need additional support. Check in with your primary care provider. They can connect you to a behavioral health specialist who can help.

