

Helpful Lessons for Raising Challenging Kids

by An Anonymous
Educator



Each of my three children was diagnosed with ADHD at different ages, with my middle child being diagnosed first, then my oldest and finally my youngest. I can honestly say that I am still struggling with how to support each of them as they learn to become productive adults. My desire is to help them understand what they need and advocate for themselves as they prepare to be independent individuals. Although I have not yet found all the answers, I have learned some helpful lessons along the way. These lessons show that living with ADHD is like creating a work of “AART.”

ACCCEPT AND ADAPT

Accept that your child has ADHD. Do not try to fix them, but rather adapt your world and theirs to this reality. I end up frustrated when I think that if I just do this or just do that, everything will be okay. It is important to understand that I can't just do one thing to successfully manage ADHD. I have had 504 meetings derailed when the team focused on ways to “fix” my child instead of providing accommodations for them. Advice such as “Why don't you just...”, “She just needs to...”, or “As parents, have you tried...” leaves me feeling inadequate and frustrated. Remember that there is no quick fix to ADHD, and that's okay. Instead of looking for a quick fix, I continually arm myself with knowledge and make informed adjustments as needed.


ACCCEPT SUPPORT

There is no way that I can support my children with ADHD completely on my own. I have learned that the hard way. Recently, a doctor mentioned that she was amazed at all I was handling on my own, and asked me if I was getting support or finding time to unwind. I instinctively replied that I was just doing what any other mom would do. I was surprised when she noted all the areas of life I was managing. To hear it out loud was astonishing! Although I often have to remind myself to reach out, and I am always relieved when I get support from a counselor, ADHD coach, medical professional, trusted friend, family member, or a skilled teacher. These people are here for a reason. If I don't share the load at times, I will most definitely burn out. I almost did.

RELAX

Find time to relax and enjoy life. ADHD is not a condition that comes and goes; it is not temporary like a cold. You and your child will live with ADHD all the time; but, don't make dealing with ADHD a full-time job. Remind yourself to have fun! I am guilty of not making plans to have fun because I'm afraid that I have to be there for my child all the time or because we need time to get caught up on homework. The result is a house full of tension. We all needed time to just relax and be ourselves. After a little relaxation, our minds and bodies could go back to doing the things it should.

TRANSFER POWER

Find ways to transfer the power of living with ADHD to your child rather than constantly making adaptations for them. Involve them in decisions as appropriate based on age. I have a tendency to rescue my children, thinking that if I fix the situation for them this time, they will see the benefits and make the change on their own the next time. How many times have I cleaned a bedroom so that they will enjoy their new neat room and continue to keep it clean themselves—only to find it right back in shambles a week later? I'm not helping myself or my children when I don't help them become responsible for themselves. 

The author of this article is a professional educator with a husband and three wonderful children. She enjoys learning new things, theater, music, and watching movies on TV. She is energized by worship music and connecting with and serving others.