



ADAPTING POSITIVE BEHAVIOR INTERVENTIONS FOR CHILDREN WITH ADHD

Children with ADHD struggle with attention, motivation, and regulating their behavior and emotions. They may respond differently than typically developing children to behavior management strategies such as using consequences. Understanding the reactions and/or behaviors of children with ADHD to consequences and situational cues can improve the effectiveness of classroom behavior management. Positive behavior strategies support the child and reduce teacher frustration. They can apply to children who have milder ADHD symptoms and ADHD-related challenges without an ADHD diagnosis. They can also be implemented for all children as part of school-wide strategies such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS).

CHILDREN WITH ADHD MAY:

- need rewards more immediately and more consistently to learn new behavior
- act to avoid or reduce delays in receiving rewards
- be more upset or frustrated when expected rewards are not forthcoming
- be more vulnerable to having unwanted behavior reinforced by accidental rewards (such as getting attention for acting out)
- be more sensitive to punishment and give up more easily when tasks are perceived as too difficult or punishing
- have a higher rate of errors and missed learning opportunities when punishment is used
- struggle to understand what is expected of them if rules or expectations are not made explicit

POSITIVE BEHAVIOR STRATEGIES:

- work well for children with ADHD when the strategies take into account the child's reactions to rewards and consequences
- work best when they are tailored to the individual child's abilities and needs

A functional behavior analysis—such as observing when, how, and why the child is using a behavior, including the classroom context and the child's physical and emotional state—can be a good start to planning positive behavior interventions.