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ADHD Impulsivity — and Its Consequences

Trying to teach a child with ADHD who struggles with impulse control how to think before she acts? The next time you give instructions, instead of focusing on negative outcomes or punishments, try these strategies

When I was a kid, my mom gave me a Choose Your Own Adventure book. As a dyslexic child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), reading was always a struggle. My mom was trying to spark my interest by making it more fun, and I immediately saw the appeal of jumping around in the book, choosing “my adventure,” and possibly not having to read the entire thing. My strategy was to make all the bad choices in hopes that they would lead to the main character’s demise and thus let me be done with the book sooner rather than later. Problem was, the story was unpredictable, and it was impossible to decipher the consequences of any particular choice.

Life is a bit different. On a daily basis, we make choices, the outcome of which we know and understand, especially if we stop to really think about it. Here’s where trouble creeps in for those of us with ADHD. Parents and teachers working with young people with ADHD know that impulsivity and the inability to slow down and think causes kids to make some poor choices. These students are not irresponsible or stupid. It’s just that their brains are moving so

fast that choices are made before consequences are fully considered. The flip side, of course, is that people with ADHD may also have the same trouble considering positive outcomes of their actions.

The other night, my youngest daughter was in one of her disruptive moods, and things were heading towards a major blowout as I got fed up. It’s at this point that I usually take a deep breath and explain what will happen if she continues to misbehave: the timeout chair, early bedtime, or fun-activity privilege suspension. This particular night, I was tired from a long day on the road and did not have the energy to list all the dire things that would befall my mischievous child if she didn’t start toeing the line. Instead, I tried a different approach.

“What do you think will happen if you keep acting this way?” I asked her. I could see the wheels turning. She quickly chirped back.

“I go to timeout?” It was really a no-brainer for her since she and the timeout chair are really close friends.

“That’s right. Now, what do you think will happen if you choose to do what I am asking you to do?” A much longer pause followed. She was having a hard time finding the answer.

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Free Booklet from IFAPA!

Transracial Parenting in Foster Care & Adoption Strengthening Your Bicultural Family

This guidebook was created to help parents and children in transracial homes learn how to thrive in and celebrate their bicultural family; and for children to gain a strong sense of racial identity and cultural connections. This booklet contains information on:

- What it means to be a transracial family
- The history of transracial families
- A transracially-adopted child’s bill of rights
- A transracial parenting pledge
- General parenting tasks for transracial parents
- How to connect your child to their culture
- Personal experiences from adult transracial adoptees
- Racism & discrimination - fostering racial coping skills
- Answering tough questions
- Skin & hair care
- Cultural resources (books, videos, toys and organizations, etc)

To request a free copy (or multiple copies) of this booklet, please e-mail your name and address to ifapa@ifapa.org.



Happy St. Patrick’s Day



Why Are Lifebooks So Important?

What is a lifebook? A lifebook brings together a child's past, present, and future. It is a book to document a child's history, celebrate accomplishments, and allow his or her talents to shine. It is a record of a child's life in his or her own words using photos, artwork, and things picked up along the way. It allows a child to honor life, one day and one event at a time.

Working together on a lifebook can bring a parent and child closer together. It creates a natural opportunity to talk about the circumstances of the foster care and/or adoptive placement. A lifebook is a useful tool in any stage of foster care or adoption. Other benefits include:

- A lifebook is an easy tool to use to get to know a new child in your home. Working with the child to create pages that reflect his or her life will help you get to know the child better and build a relationship in the process.
- A lifebook can help a child prepare to return to their birth family. You can help a child document and celebrate accomplishments while in care, and keep track of the important people in their life.
- A lifebook can help prepare a child for adoption. You can work with the child to build a bridge between the birth family and the adoptive family.

IFAPA has created over seventy **FREE** lifebook pages for families to use. [IFAPA also has the entire lifebook translated into Spanish.](#) All of these pages are available to download and print for free. [VIEW LIFEBOOK PAGES](#)

Sample Pages:

Where of your birth? _____
Name of family members: _____
Address/Phone: _____
My Foster Family
What I like about living here: _____
Date: _____

Look How I've Grown!
I lived with the _____ family from _____ to _____
When I came to live with the _____ family on ____/____/____ I was _____ old, _____ inches tall, and weighed _____ pounds. When it was time for me to leave on ____/____/____ I was _____ old, _____ inches tall, and weighed _____ pounds.
The _____ family's contact information is:
Street Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____
Their phone numbers: _____
Their e-mail addresses: _____
Names of people in their family: _____

My Adoption Day
Photo here: _____
Date: _____
Place: _____
Judge that presided: _____
Important people that attended: _____
How I felt: _____

My Wishes
My Wishes for Myself Right Now
My Wishes for Myself in the Future
My Wishes for the World
My Wishes for my Family

Behavior Management Strategies for Kids with ADD

1. Stop signals. It's not enough just to tell your child not to be impulsive. You've got to show him how to control his impulses. Give him some "think it through first" tools so he knows what the consequences of his actions will be. Plant this sequence in your child's mind: Before you do it:

- Say to yourself, stop!
- Count to ten
- Imagine what will happen if you do it.

2. Do it together. The school-age child with A.D.D. is more likely to cooperate with your request if you do the task together. The three- or four-year-old with A.D.D. is unlikely to complete even small tasks that you assign, since they often can't pay attention to one task for very long. Don't be upset! This is a wonderful opportunity to model "helping each other."

3. Count your messages. Remember what we said about how important it is to frame your child in a positive way. Here's an exercise to help you judge whether you are giving your child predominantly positive or negative messages. Choose a day where you will be spending a lot

of time with your child and count the number of positive and negative messages you give. This can be done mentally, on paper, or by using the green counter / red counter technique. Get two golf-score counters, the kind you can wear on your wrist in two different colors. Put one color, say red, on the left wrist and use it to count every time you give a negative message with words, tone of voice, or your actions. Put another color, say green, on your right wrist and count every time you compliment or praise your child or give him any kind of positive message. You can also use this technique to see what kind of messages you and your spouse are giving each other to see what you are modeling for your child. At the end of the day, you may be shocked to see that you scored 20 to 50 red messages, yet only 5 to 10 were green. Now that you're aware of this, try to change your ways. With thought and effort, you can reverse this! Your child's self-image will improve, and so will your image of him.

SOURCE: ASKDrSears.com