

# Information for parents on managing inattention and hyperactivity in their children

## General advice for parents

- Develop consistent routines at home and school
- Keep rules clear and simple and give reminders calmly
- Remember the child does not intend to be difficult
- Attention-seeking means something
- Try to understand what triggers the behavioural response
- Listen to the child with your full attention
- Check that the child is making eye contact before giving instructions
- Supervise closely; impulsivity can place children in dangerous situations
- Be positive about the child and continually look out for them 'being good' and praise them
- Try to ignore minor irritating behaviour
- Provide clear disciplinary consequences such as time-out

## Additional advice to parents

### Be reasonable

Parents must know a child's capabilities before establishing expectations. Knowledge of child development will help any parent in setting realistic standards.

### Be explicit

Children can listen and still not understand the words or ideas a parent is trying to communicate. When setting limits, parents need to allow children to re-state the requirements using their own words. This 'check for understanding' is critical to later enforcement. "Do you understand?" won't work.

### Be consistent

Set rules that are necessary and important to the family. If a rule is made only because other people think it is important, enforcing the rule will be difficult at best. Parents must set limits they can and are willing to enforce every time no matter how inconvenient.

### **Be fair**

Use set consequences for infractions. Children deserve to know what will happen when their behaviour goes out-of-bounds. Consequences should teach, not punish. Children need practice in learning what is expected of them. They will forget and make mistakes. If consequences make sense, children will remember the next time.

### **Be patient**

Learning takes time for children and parents. Some children will test a limit once and accept it. Other children will test the limits over and over and over before they ever accept the inevitability of the situation. Parents of such children deserve special recognition if they can maintain consistency and sanity through the challenges.

### **Be child-oriented**

Don't destroy a child to enforce a rule. Destroying a child's sense of self-worth through humiliation, embarrassment, or degradation isn't necessary. Limits are set to guide our children, not to prove who is boss.

### **Seeing the behaviours**

1. Recognise how the trait affects the child's behaviour. (Definition)
2. Avoid the incorrect labels that demean the child and pass judgment. (Inappropriate descriptions)
3. Label the true behaviour for the child. Use consistent phrases so the child will understand what is happening and can relate to your expectations. (Say this)
4. Finally, take action. Do what needs to be done in a positive manner. Remember, the child is not doing this "on purpose." (Do this)

### **Hyperactive**

Highly active.

**Definition:** very active; always into things; makes you tired; gets wild or "revved-up", loses control, hates to be confined.

**Inappropriate descriptions:** interrupts, wild, destructive, uncontrolled.

**Say this:**

Examples -- "You're over-excited." "I think you are getting too revved-up."  
"You are beginning to lose control."

**Do this:**

Intervene early. Provide quiet distraction. Provide cooling off time/space. Provide space for blowing off steam.

### **Impulsive**

**Definition:** unpredictable needs; child is never hungry or tired at predictable times; moods change suddenly.

**Inappropriate descriptions:** uncooperative, loner, moody.

**Say this:**

Examples -- "I know you are not hungry now. I'll put your plate in the refrigerator and you can eat your meal when you are hungry." "I know you are not sleepy now, but it is time to be in your bedroom."

**Do this:**

Separate meal time from eating time; bedtime from sleep time. Create routines, even if they are unusual. Be flexible.

### **Distractible**

**Definition:** has trouble concentrating and paying attention, especially if not interested; doesn't "listen".

**Inappropriate descriptions:** forgetful, irresponsible, absent-minded, lazy.

**Say this:**

Examples -- "I know it's hard for you to pay attention." "I need to see your eyes when I'm talking to you."

**Do this:**

Establish eye contact, by touch if necessary. Give short instructions. Reduce distractions.