



Tips for Parents: ADD and the Gifted

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Dr. Paul Beljan offers tips on how to help a gifted child who has ADD. Most importantly, he advocates for a full assessment and a holistic approach to treatment.

Dr. Beljan facilitated an online seminar on ADD and the Gifted for the parents in our Young Scholars program. These tips are a summary of the concepts about gifted children and ADD.

Always begin with a comprehensive pediatric neuropsychological evaluation when attempting to determine what the origin of the child's behavior is.

If medication is used as PART OF a treatment intervention, it should be accompanied with other interventions:

- cognitive rehabilitation
- teaching study techniques
- social skills training
- imposed structure, consistency, and routine at home

Structure, consistency, routine are the key words. Establish clearly defined expectations. Consistent consequences and rewards for meeting expectations. Establishing routines into daily life that reduce the amount of tasks the individual must manage.

Clearly defining expectations means open communication. Having discussions about the rules and what is and is not supposed to take place, so everyone is on the same page. Teach the child about their particular executive functioning deficits and help them gain insight about it. At some point the child is going to have to take responsibility for these issues. Therefore, if they are clear on what the issues are, then in various situations they can plan ahead or have compensatory contingencies in place. Structure also means you (the parent) providing the 'scaffolding' of how much do you help. You must constantly expand and contract the child's boundary space for what they can handle. When they fail, the scaffold contracts to the point the child cannot fail. Continue to work on a particular skill until mastery is attained and then expand the scaffolding again to see how the child responds. Read "The Hyperactive Child Book" by Leif Terdal for more pragmatic structure ideas.

Consistency means you have to stay on top of the issues and be the one to 'preview' what the child can and cannot handle and then design their environment accordingly. For example, some things a child simply cannot control if they have an executive functioning problem (like impulsivity). So the child is not put into situations where they will clearly and absolutely fail. Across the things the child can handle, then, expectations are maintained. Within this paradigm, routine is the means of sustaining what has been imposed and learned.

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