



*Family Matters* is an outreach effort from the ANN JERKINS-HARRIS Academy of Excellence— Department of Special Services --- SPED Program. *Family Matters* will provide parents with information about special education and other resources available to assist them to help their children.

# FAMILY MATTERS

**ANN JERKINS-HARRIS ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE**  
 3891 Martha Avenue, Toledo, Ohio 43612

*A monthly newsletter from the Department of Special Services*

**VOL. 4 Issue 0**  
**WORKING TOGETHER FOR FAMILY SUCCESS**  
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## SPED PROGRAM MISSION STATEMENT

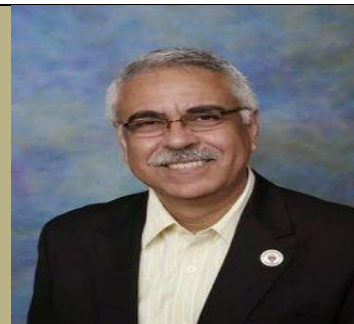
*The mission of the ANN JERKINS- HARRIS Academy of Excellence SPED Program is to create and maintain an effective learning environment by establishing behavioral supports and the social culture needed for all students in our school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success.*



FROM OUR AJHAE FAMILY TO YOURS... MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

**THE DEPUTY SUPERINTENDENT'S CORNER**  
**SPED PROGRAM AND RELATED SERVICES**  
**Editor—Family Matters Newsletter**

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Message from the  
Deputy  
Superintendent:  
SPED PROGRAM  
and Related Services

Dear Parents and General Readers:

As we pinpointed in our last edition, if your child has ADHD, you know that some days are harder than others. Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder is a mental disorder classified into three types, according to the Mayo Clinic: ***predominantly inattentive, predominantly hyperactive/impulsive or a combination of both***. Once a medical diagnosis is established, families can use treatment plans that may or may not include medication.

Some children with ADHD usually struggle with executive function — the ability to focus, organize and meet goals, necessary skills for navigating daily life, according to the Child Mind Institute. They might talk too much, interrupt others, or fidget or squirm in class, among other habits.

There are physical differences in the brains of people with and without ADHD. An ADHD brain is smaller in size and volume in certain areas and the prefrontal cortex, where information is processed and contextualized, can mature slower than a neurotypical brain, sometimes up to three years. What's important to remember is that over time, ADHD brains catch up in their structural development.

Children with ADHD often feel misunderstood, judged, or shamed but with support, they can thrive. Kids with ADHD would like to do well, and they can with the right resources. These children want regulation, empathy, inclusion, predictability, and recognition.

Here are some specific things a child with ADHD wants you to know.

- ***When parents are upset, kids get upset, too.***
- ***When frustrating moments with your child bubble up, parents should manage their own feelings first.***
- ***If you're dysregulated there is little chance your child will regulate themselves. "The problem is parents of children with ADHD experience numerous provocations and triggers throughout the day. Pre-planning for those moments is key.***
- ***Notice the physical signs — maybe your voice gets louder, or you feel hot — those are signs to regulate. I recommend going to the bathroom, something children understand that people do alone. Even if they bang on the door, you can stop, slow down and recover.***

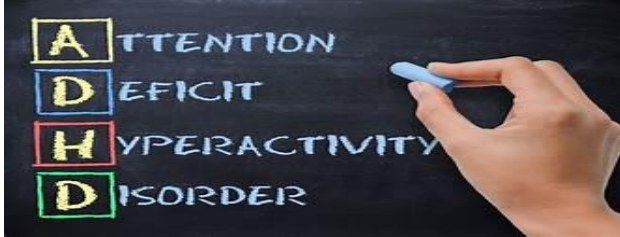
On this edition of *Family Matters* we continue offering some parenting tips to help improve the relations amongst parents with children diagnosed with ADHD. On the other hand, if any parent suspects that their child is going through difficult attention and/or hyperactivity moments, we suggest consulting your child's pediatrician.

Cordially,  
Dr. Israel I. Koppisch

# More Parenting Tips

No parent is superhuman. The truth is we all need a bit of help when it comes to the many aspects of parenting.

## WHAT IS ADHD? (From our last edition)



Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

ADHD is a condition that can negatively impact a person's attention and behavior and can interfere with daily activities at school, at work, at home, and with friends. People who have ADHD have higher levels of inattention, impulsivity, and/or hyperactivity than their peers.

ADHD is one of the most common brain-based disorders that affects about 1 in 10 school-aged children.



## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF ADHD?

Some common symptoms of ADHD include trouble paying attention or focusing, impulsive behaviors, and being overly active. Symptoms may range from mild to severe. Children with ADHD may act out without thinking about the results, have learning challenges, make careless mistakes, forget, or lose things, and squirm or fidget when sitting.

## ADHD Parenting Skills: Early Childhood (Ages 2 to 5)

Focus Area	ADHD-Friendly Approach
<b>Parent-child bonding:</b> Bonding experiences help children learn to identify their caregivers as consistent sources of safety and joy.	<b>Schedule play time</b> to bond in a low-risk, low-pressure environment. Stick to a schedule to help you be fully present with your child. Use timers to stay engaged and leave your phone in another room.
<b>Basic needs:</b> From snacks and drinks to an extra set of clothes, parents must anticipate, prepare, and lug around essentials for their child. Basic organizational skills come in handy.	<b>Designate spaces:</b> Group snacks in one area, learning supplies in another area, and so on to eliminate guesswork and overwhelm. Prepare several go-bags with essentials like toys, clothes, and snacks that you can easily grab or even leave in the car.
<b>Structure and routine:</b> Predictability helps children understand and develop conscientiousness and perseverance — important skills for later academic achievement and structuring in their own lives.	<b>Visual schedules</b> help young children see, procedurally, what's going to happen in the day. Use stickers, magnets, and drawings to represent daily activities like waking, brushing teeth, playing, eating, sleeping, etc.
<b>Safety and play:</b> Children need appropriate activities and games to play with others or independently. Monitoring might be difficult due to distractibility.	<b>Create “Yes” spaces:</b> Engineer a fool-proof safe space for play — nothing too high, too sharp, chemical-free, etc. That way, even with distractibility, the risks are low.
<b>Positive reinforcement:</b> It can be difficult to remember to notice and <u>praise good behavior</u> . Praising might also feel unnatural.	<b>Practice play-by-play announcing:</b> Describe your child's actions and pick out the things you like. “I see your fire truck on the carpet. Now your sister is picking it up. It's great of you to share.”
<b>Discipline:</b> At this age, it's best to give simple, short-lived consequences to address negative behaviors.	<b>Plan ahead for simple consequences:</b> Create a list of specific responses, like a time out or less <u>screen time</u> , to have at your disposal for undesired behaviors. Give your child a warning first before doling out the consequence, which should follow quickly.

### ADHD Parenting Skills: Elementary School (Ages 6 to 10)

Focus Area	ADHD-Friendly Approach
<b>Forming relationships:</b> Children start to form bonds independently and engage in parallel play.	<b>Reflective modeling:</b> Children adopt the social skills they see at home — from their parents and siblings or on the TV. Model appropriate interactions for your child and be mindful of what they're watching.
<b>Developing interests and hobbies:</b> Children practice and start to demonstrate skill in certain activities.	<b>Create opportunities for practice.</b> Think: How can I give my child whatever materials they need to independently practice?
<b>Complex schedules:</b> More activities require more planning and materials.	<b>Externalize information.</b> It's common for individuals with ADHD to forget verbal instructions. Use whiteboards, sticky notes, digital calendars, and other visual organizing tools to keep track of schedules and to-dos.
<b>Academic responsibility:</b> Homework, tests, projects, and elevated expectations place extra demand on organizational skills.	<b>Set up "help times;"</b> To manage frustration and frequent interruptions, establish certain times when your child can check in with you. First, make sure that they have a clear workspace free of distractions. (No screens, all supplies in one place, etc.)
<b>Social life:</b> Play dates and parties are still facilitated by parents, which requires clear communication and planning.	<b>Set reminders:</b> Schedule a time every week to verify and prepare for upcoming plans. Create multiple countdown reminders until the day of the event.

### ADHD Parenting Skills: Elementary School (Ages 11 to 13)

Focus Area	ADHD-Friendly Approach
<b>Academic functioning:</b> Independently managing increased workloads.	<b>Facilitate organizational skills:</b> Look for skills training interventions if you and your child need additional support. Glean insights from these programs in managing backpacks, creating folder systems, tracking assignments, etc.
<b>Maintaining positive parent-child interactions</b> as tweens start to pull away from family to friends. A strong bond will make it easier for your child to approach you when they're struggling.	<b>Cultivate attachment rituals:</b> Find an activity you can do routinely with your child that is purely for the sake of bonding (e.g. not agenda-driven, which can push them away). These activities will likely become the setting for big conversations.
<b>Challenges and transitions (e.g. puberty)</b> that come with this developmental phase.	<b>Non-judgmental presence:</b> Plan talking points about awkward subjects ahead of time and deliver them neutrally. Remind your child that you're there for them if they want to talk. (Ideally, during an attachment ritual.)
<b>Fostering responsibility and independence.</b>	<b>Allowances and household trade-offs:</b> How do you want your child to earn spending money? What household responsibilities and chores should they assume?
<b>Screen habits:</b> Screens are everywhere, and the key is to create balance and help children self-regulate later in life.	<b>Set clear boundaries around screen time,</b> especially at night. Charge devices outside bedrooms, and model good screen use for your child.

### ADHD Parenting Skills: Elementary School (Ages 14 to 18)

Focus Area	ADHD-Friendly Approach
<b>Academic functioning:</b> Independently managing increased workloads.	<b>Facilitate organizational skills:</b> Look for skills training interventions if you and your child need additional support. Glean insights from these programs in managing backpacks, creating folder systems, tracking assignments, etc.
<b>Maintaining positive parent-child interactions</b> as tweens start to pull away from family to friends. A strong bond will make it easier for your child to approach you when they're struggling.	<b>Cultivate attachment rituals:</b> Find an activity you can do routinely with your child that is purely for the sake of bonding (e.g. not agenda-driven, which can push them away). These activities will likely become the setting for big conversations.
<b>Challenges and transitions (e.g. puberty)</b> that come with this developmental phase.	<b>Non-judgmental presence:</b> Plan talking points about awkward subjects ahead of time and deliver them neutrally. Remind your child that you're there for them if they want to talk. (Ideally, during an attachment ritual.)
<b>Fostering responsibility and independence.</b>	<b>Allowances and household trade-offs:</b> How do you want your child to earn spending money? What household responsibilities and chores should they assume?
<b>Screen habits:</b> Screens are everywhere, and the key is to create balance and help children self-regulate later in life.	<b>Set clear boundaries around screen time,</b> especially at night. Charge devices outside bedrooms, and model good screen use for your child.

AT AJHAE WE ARE COMMITTED IN:  
Empowering your child's best Advocate: YOU

Parents of a child with special needs must learn to effectively navigate the maze of special education laws and go to bat for their kids. In a nutshell, this means parents must learn to be advocates.

*Family Matters* is a community outreach effort from the  
ANN JERKINS-HARRIS Academy of Excellence  
-Department of Special Services and its SPED Program-.

*Family Matters* is here to provide parents with information about special education and other resources available to assist parents to help their children.

Information is power, and parents need to start with the facts about their child's special needs. Try and keep emotion out of it; as parents you need to have fact-based knowledge from your child's doctors, specialists, special education experts, parents of kids with similar special needs, attorneys, teachers, and anyone else who can provide information.

**ANN JERKINS-HARRIS ACADEMY OF EXCELLENCE**  
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