

Transcript

Building on strengths

[MUSIC PLAYING]

NARRATOR:

Any child can be inattentive, impulsive, or hyperactive at times, but a child who exhibits these behaviours frequently and severely may have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, ADHD. Students with ADHD may struggle with starting and completing tasks following multi-step directions, rushed and messy work, and restlessness.

It's one of the most common childhood neurodevelopmental disorders, but not all ADHD looks the same. Some children only have difficulty with attention and organization, while others experience hyperactivity and impulsivity. And some have challenges with both sets of traits. These symptoms can be frustrating in the classroom.

While it's easy to interpret them as intentional misbehaviour or daydreaming, they're actually the result of brain chemistry that just works differently. Students with ADHD can also be some of the most creative and passionate contributors to your classroom. Reframing the way you look at your student and finding the right strategies to support them will encourage them to shine.

Ask your student how they learn best. Some people are able to focus more when they are standing or moving around. Others find fidgets like pipe cleaners, beaded bracelets, or clay to be helpful. At times, a signal, like a knock on the desk, can help refocus a student's attention. Try a strategy for a few weeks and then debrief. Your student will be more invested in suggesting and trying solutions if they're part of the discussion.

A complex, multi-step assignment without the appropriate scaffolding can be daunting for a child with ADHD. They commonly struggle with executive function skills, like the ability to remember the sequence of steps in order to meet a goal. Start by explaining the big picture, but assign smaller work chunks with shorter deadlines to help students grasp the map of how to reach the end goal.

Helping a student track projects and deadlines using a learning management system simplifies these tasks by having everything in one place. If you can't go digital, showing your student how to organise themselves with tools like agendas and to-do lists can build positive habits. Breaks benefit all students, but they are crucial for those with ADHD. You can actually increase productivity by building movement into your class, especially before asking them to work quietly.

Keep your movement break short and structured, like a game of Simon Says or a set of 10 jumping jacks. After periods of concentration, allow students to stretch, get some water, or talk softly with a friend. Calibrating your teaching strategies to better support a student with ADHD will not only bolster your relationship, it will likely have a lasting impact on their success.

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