

# Ten tips to support your teenager with ADHD

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## 1. Support their independence

This might be tricky, especially if you have been used to providing your child with a lot of support when they were younger. But it is essential that you raise your child to no longer need you. Give your child a role or a regular job, reduce the instructions and support and provide the space for your teenager to work out how to do the task for themselves. Whatever the result of this, praise the effort.

## 2. Pick your battles

Take a stand on the important issues, recognise and be alert to the important risks for teenagers, for example, internet use, social media or peer pressure.

## 3. Respect their privacy

Every teenager needs their space and needs to feel that they are becoming more independent. Always be open to your teenager when they want to talk through any concerns that they have. Make the time and create the space. Teenagers with ADHD need to talk through their worries and concerns even more than neurotypical teenagers. Talking is one way in which teenagers with ADHD can begin to understand what they are feeling and why. But don't force it. Talk on the move, whilst driving or shopping. This avoids that face to face direct contact which can be uncomfortable for a teenager trying to articulate their concerns.

#### **4. Making mistakes is a part of life**

If the mistake is safe and won't cause irreparable damage, teenagers have to learn about the consequences of their behaviour, actions and words. This is the beginning of learning adult responsibility. However, accept that this might be a longer, more difficult road to take for a teenager with ADHD and they may make a few more mistakes before the lessons are learned.

#### **5. Be realistic**

Your teenager's ADHD will never be cured because it is not an illness. You know your son or daughter, help them to set goals for themselves which are achievable.

#### **6. Accept the friends**

Unless your teenager's friends place them in danger, then accept them. It is an important part of adolescence. Identifying with a friendship group is a part of the overall rehearsal for being an adult. Your son or daughter might have experienced difficulties making friends in the past, therefore, support them now by encouraging friendships and being interested- but in a low-key way!

#### **7. Change your monitoring approach**

You will, no doubt, still want to keep a close eye on your teenager with ADHD. You will want to support them in these important years in terms of their education in particular. However, too much oversight might lead to resentment or even rebellion. Your son or daughter does not now have to be involved in every conversation that you have with their teachers. Maybe set aside a specific time every few days, keep the discussion focused, for example, on schoolwork, keep it positive and always praise what has been achieved.

## 8. Managing medication

It is very common for teenagers to rebel against their use of ADHD medications - don't panic, it's very natural for this to happen. Suggest a set period of time off the medication then review how it went. In the discussion, focus upon the impact of this on their learning, organisation or relationships.

## 9. Release the guilt

If you can see that your teenager is struggling, don't blame yourself. Parents are not "guilty" of giving their children ADHD. Guilt is a worthless emotion and won't help anyone, least of all your child. Let it go.

## 10. Enjoy your teenager

Create "special time" once a week, just for you and your teenager with ADHD and stick to it as much as you can. Let your teenager take the lead in deciding what you do. Focus upon having fun and relaxation.

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## About ADHD Foundation

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