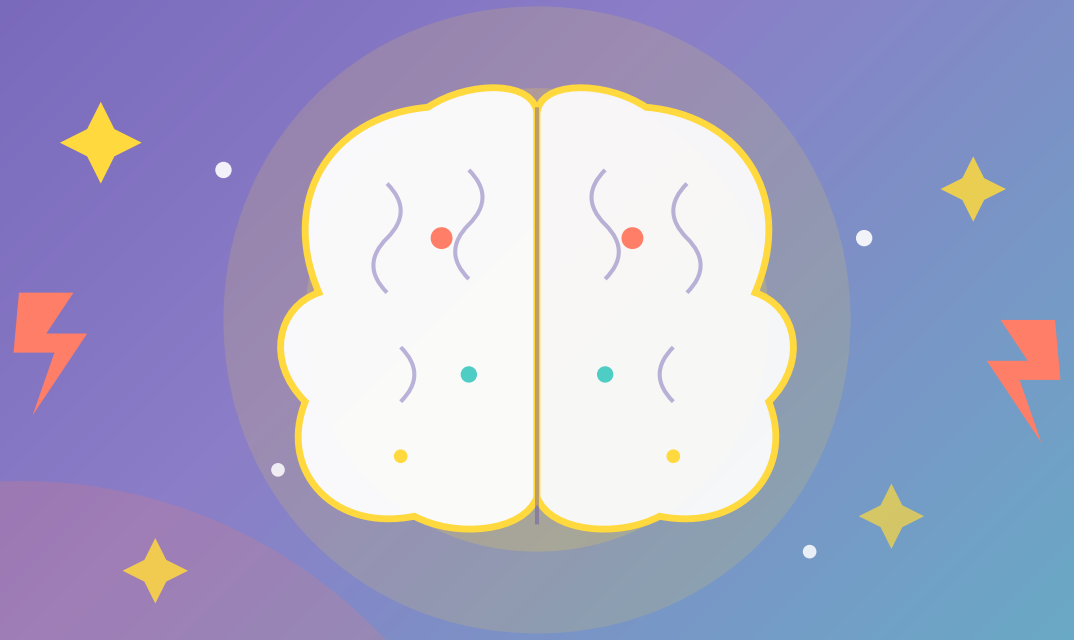
A PARENT'S GUIDE

Understanding *ADHD*

The science behind your child's brain — and the strategies that help them thrive.



FOR

Parents & Caregivers

EDITION

2026

ADELPHOS HEALTHCARE

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WELCOME

Your child is not broken.

ADHD — Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder — is one of the most common neurodevelopmental conditions of childhood. It's not a flaw, a phase, or the result of bad parenting. It's a difference in how the brain develops and processes information. With understanding and support, kids with ADHD can — and do — thrive.

~7%
of children worldwide are estimated to have ADHD

3 yrs
average delay in cortical maturation seen in ADHD brains

70-80%
heritability — ADHD is one of the most genetic conditions

Myth vs. Fact

MYTH
"Kids with ADHD just need more discipline and willpower."

FACT
ADHD involves real differences in brain structure and chemistry — willpower alone can't override neurobiology.

MYTH
"ADHD is overdiagnosed and not a real condition."

FACT
Decades of research — including brain imaging and genetics — confirm ADHD as a well-defined neurodevelopmental disorder.

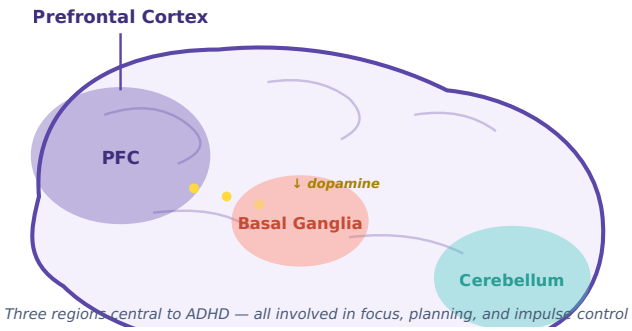
MYTH
"My child can focus on video games for hours, so it can't be ADHD."

FACT
ADHD is a difficulty regulating attention, not a lack of it. Highly stimulating activities are exceptions, not exclusions.

THE SCIENCE

Inside the ADHD brain.

Brain imaging and decades of research have revealed something important: the ADHD brain is wired differently — not worse. Three regions and two key brain chemicals tell most of the story.



Three regions central to ADHD — all involved in focus, planning, and impulse control

Prefrontal Cortex

The brain's "CEO" — handles focus, planning, impulse control, and working memory. ADHD brains show weaker activity and slower maturation here.

Basal Ganglia

Filters distractions and regulates motor activity. Differences here help explain hyperactivity and the trouble with "stopping."

Cerebellum

Long thought of as just for movement, it also coordinates timing and attention. Reduced volume is observed in ADHD.

Default Mode Network

The "daydreaming" network. In ADHD, it doesn't quiet down properly when focus is needed — leading to mind-wandering.

The chemistry: dopamine & norepinephrine

These two neurotransmitters help neurons in the prefrontal cortex talk to each other. ADHD brains often have less of these chemicals available — and more "transporter proteins" that vacuum them away too quickly. The result: fewer signals telling the brain "focus here," and more difficulty with motivation, follow-through, and emotional regulation.

THREE PRESENTATIONS

ADHD doesn't look the same in every kid.

Clinicians recognize three presentations of ADHD. A child's profile can also shift over time as they mature. None is "milder" than the others — they just look different.

Predominantly Inattentive

The "daydreamer." Trouble sustaining attention, easily distracted, often forgetful, loses things, struggles to follow multi-step instructions. May appear quiet or "spacey" — and is often missed, especially in girls.

Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive

The "engine that won't stop." Constant motion, fidgeting, talking excessively, blurting out answers, trouble waiting turns, acting without thinking. Often the most visible — and the most disruptive at school.

Combined Presentation

The most common. Significant traits from both inattentive and hyperactive-impulsive categories. Children may be both unfocused *and* in motion — or oscillate between the two depending on the setting.

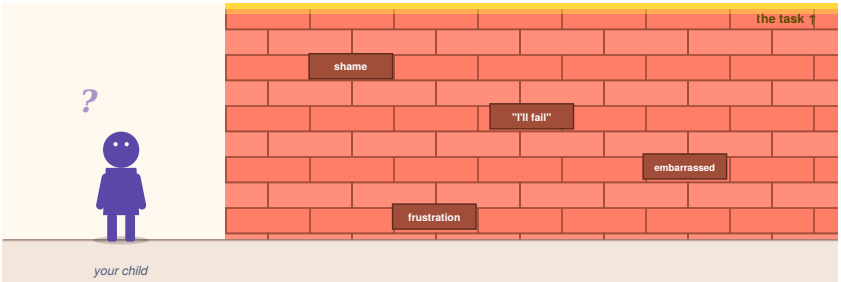
The strengths side of ADHD

ADHD brains are often deeply **creative**, **energetic**, **highly curious**, and capable of intense **hyperfocus** on things they love. Many entrepreneurs, athletes, artists, and inventors share this wiring. The goal isn't to "fix" your child — it's to help them work with their brain, not against it.

A POWERFUL CONCEPT

The "Wall of Awful."

Coined by ADHD coach Brendan Mahan, this is one of the most validating ideas a parent can learn. It explains why "just do it" never works — and why simple tasks can feel utterly impossible to your child.



Bricks that build the wall

- "Last time I tried, I failed"
- "Mom got frustrated with me"
- "My teacher said I wasn't trying"
- "I felt stupid in front of friends"
- "I got punished even though I tried"

Signs your child is at the wall

- ! Meltdowns over "small" tasks
- ! Avoidance and procrastination
- ! Anger when reminded of the task
- ! "I can't" or "I'm stupid"
- ! Stomachaches before certain activities

How to help them over the wall

Don't add bricks.
Frustration and shame make the wall taller — even when unintended.

Validate first.
"I know this feels really hard." Acknowledgment lowers the wall.

Make tasks tiny.
Don't say "do your homework." Say "let's just open the binder."

Climb beside them.
Co-regulation is a ladder — don't shout from the other side.

Concept by Brendan Mahan · ADHD Essentials Podcast

QUICK TIPS

8 strategies you can start today.

Small, consistent changes have the biggest impact. Pick one or two to try this week — and remember: progress over perfection.

Give one instruction at a time 01

"Go upstairs, brush your teeth, and grab pajamas" overloads working memory. Try: "Go brush your teeth," then check in.

Make routines visual 02

Picture-based morning and bedtime checklists outsource memory to the wall — so it's not all on your child (or you).

Catch them being good 03

Aim for a 4:1 ratio of specific praise to correction. "I love how you started your homework without being asked" beats "good job."

Move first, focus later 04

Physical activity boosts dopamine. 10 minutes of movement before homework or school can dramatically improve focus.

Break tasks into chunks 05

"Clean your room" feels impossible. "Put the books on the shelf" feels doable. Use timers — try 10 minutes on, 5 off.

Protect sleep fiercely 06

ADHD symptoms worsen with poor sleep. Consistent bedtime, dim lights, and no screens an hour before bed make a real difference.

Stay calm during meltdowns 07

Emotional regulation is part of ADHD. Your calm becomes their calm. Save consequences and conversations for after the storm.

Connect before you correct 08

Get on their level, make eye contact, touch a shoulder. Connection-first turns power struggles into cooperation.

AT SCHOOL

Helping your child succeed in the classroom.

Traditional classrooms aren't built for ADHD brains — but the right partnerships and accommodations can change everything. Be your child's advocate, ally, and translator.

Open a partnership with the teacher early

Don't wait for problems. Share what works at home, what triggers struggles, and ask about a daily or weekly check-in system. Teachers can't help with what they don't know.

Ask about a 504 Plan or IEP

If ADHD substantially affects learning, your child may qualify for legal accommodations. A 504 Plan provides classroom adjustments; an IEP includes specialized instruction. Both are free and your right to request.

Use a Daily Report Card

One of the most-researched ADHD interventions. Identify 3–5 specific, observable goals (e.g., "completed morning work," "kept hands to self at recess"), track them daily, and tie them to a small home-based reward.

Make homework manageable

Set a consistent time and place with minimal distractions. Use a timer for short work blocks (15–20 minutes) followed by movement breaks. If a worksheet takes 4× longer than peers, talk to the teacher about reducing — not just adding more.

Protect their identity as a learner

Repeated correction shapes self-image. Find your child's strengths and make sure those are visible at school — through a club, a passion project, an art class. Confidence in one area buffers struggles in others.

Common Classroom Accommodations to Request

These are widely supported by research and easy for most teachers to implement:

- ✓ Preferential seating near teacher
- ✓ Extended time on tests and assignments
- ✓ Movement breaks built into the schedule
- ✓ Written instructions in addition to verbal
- ✓ A fidget tool or standing desk option
- ✓ Reduced homework load when appropriate
- ✓ Tests in a quiet, separate room
- ✓ Use of noise-cancelling headphones

AT HOME

Building a life that fits the brain you have.

ADHD families thrive on structure, movement, sleep, and connection. These four pillars are the foundation everything else rests on.

Structure & Routine

- Predictable wake-up, meal, and bedtime
- Visual schedules where the child can see them
- Designated spots for backpacks, shoes, keys
- Prep tomorrow's outfit and lunch tonight
- Use timers to signal transitions

Daily Movement

- At least 60 minutes of active play daily
- Outdoor time — green space helps focus
- "Movement before homework" rule
- Sports, dance, swimming, climbing — anything they love
- Walk or bike to school if possible

Sleep Hygiene

- Same bedtime every night, weekends too
- Wind-down ritual: bath, story, low lights
- No screens 60 minutes before bed
- Cool, dark, quiet bedroom
- Watch for sleep issues — ADHD often co-occurs with them

Emotional Connection

- 15 minutes of one-on-one "special time" daily
- Let them lead the activity sometimes
- Listen more than you advise
- Repair after conflict — every time
- Remind them: you're on the same team

A NOTE FOR YOU, PARENT

Raising an ADHD child is harder than raising a neurotypical one. Period. You will lose your patience. You will second-guess yourself. You will need help. **Take it.** Therapy, support groups, parent training programs, and even just a friend who gets it — these aren't luxuries. They're part of the plan.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

You don't have to figure this out alone.

Talk to your pediatrician or a child psychologist if your child's symptoms are persistent, affecting multiple settings (home, school, friendships), and interfering with their happiness or development. Earlier support means better outcomes.

🩺 Start with your pediatrician

They can rule out other causes (sleep issues, anxiety, vision/hearing problems) and refer you to a specialist for formal evaluation.

🎓 Loop in the school

Request a written evaluation under your school's special education process. This is free and federally protected.

💬 Find your people

Organizations like CHADD (Children and Adults with ADHD) and the ADHD Foundation offer parent support groups, webinars, and evidence-based resources.

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ADHD is not a deficit of attention.
It's a difference in how attention works. Once you see your child's brain clearly, you can finally help them shine.

— A FINAL THOUGHT

This guide is for educational purposes and does not replace medical advice. Always consult a qualified healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment decisions.

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