

# Practical tools for ADHD

## Welcome to Module 17 of your SEN toolkit!

In this module we look at specific tools and resources to use with learners with ADHD.

### Aims

By the end of this module, I will be able to:

- select and prioritise a series of tools and activities to use with ADHD learners
- use and sensitively adapt a series of tools and activities with ADHD learners in my context
- understand that these tools and activities are keys to unlocking the potential of ADHD learners



## Quotes and reflections

By the end of this Module you will be able to use and sensitively adapt a series of tools and activities with ADHD learners in your context. In this section we look at some quotes from ADHD awareness month (October 2020).

Read these quotations, and try to understand the lived experiences of those with ADHD.

### Quote 1

*'For me, anyway, having ADHD is like walking one step in front of a rain cloud, two steps in front of a thunderstorm [and], three steps in front of a tornado. Forgetting things, making careless errors, being confused. ... These things can create havoc! The important thing I've learned is to accept errors as quickly as I can, remedy the situation, issue an apology as needed.... and keep moving forward. Afterall, the sky is clear and the sun is shining up ahead!'* (LJP)

### Quote 2

*'ADHD is real and valid. The sooner we recognize the patterns and learn to work with these kids, the better assured we will be that they as adults will be healthy members of society. Teachers and education administrators need to be the strongest advocates of early intervention and support.'* (Rhonda Van Diest)

### Quote 3

*'I find the lack of understanding and knowledge about ADHD, especially among teachers, to be extremely disturbing. These individuals have the most daily influence in the life of a child and an opportunity to assist and help these children develop the skills needed to work with this disorder. Teachers are sadly behind the times when it comes to dealing with [ADHD] in their classrooms and we as parents find ourselves*

*spending inordinate amounts of time advising and educating the educators on how to partner with us and our child to help ensure his success.'* (Kim, Cortlandt Manor)  
(Source: <https://adhdawarenessmonth.org/survey-quotes/>)

## Reflexive questions

1. Which of these quotes do you agree with the most?

2. What significance can you take from these quotes?

Now, try to sort the quotes considering:

Things to worry about	Things to give hope

## Being a SEN teacher: What's it like?

*In this section, you are going to read a real-world story from a teacher showing the reality of implementing some of the ideas / tools. Read the story and think about the reasons used for becoming a SEN teacher and what worked and did not work.*

Read about “Melody’s Journey”. Can you empathise with Melody?

### Melody’s journey

“I am now a teacher in a Secondary SEN School. The needs of the pupils vary considerably, from specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia, to autism, Attention Deficient Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), speech and language impairments and other associated medical or genetic conditions... I have responsibility over transition from Year 6 to us in Year 7. There is some personal context, which also shaped my decisions to become a teacher. My brother is autistic and has a severe language impairment.

I witnessed my Mum and Dad battling with his school and the local authority, especially when it came to finding him a new place at a school, aged 16. Looking back and now being able to fully understand the journey my brother and mum (she was his advocate) had to go through with his education, and the years of struggle she fought, regarding appropriate provision – both educational and residential, respite support, funding, access to services etc, has spurred me on to be the best teacher I can be.

To be the best supporter for those parents who are struggling, who need support, an understanding or listening ear. To be that teacher you want to be taught by, that teacher that made you feel good about yourself...that teacher who ‘got’ you. So, that’s what a SEN teacher does and how she got to where she is...”

(Source: <https://www.myfamilyyourneeds.co.uk/support-child/sen-teacher-whats-like/>)

## Reflexive questions

1. How much do you relate to the story?

2. What was the impulse that determined you to become a teacher?

3. How can receiving the right impulse at the right time actually make a significant difference?

4. If you were to give a moral to this story, what would it be?

## Classroom Practices

In this section you will learn about some tried-and-tested classroom practices that are beneficial to ADHD students.

### Part 1

Look at these 15 well-known classroom practices. Can you organise them as “more helpful” and “less helpful” for learners with ADHD?

- 1 Talk to the student from the front of the room
- 2 Ask students to write an essay
- 3 Be resourceful and provide opportunities for choice
- 4 Ask students to sit and reading a long text alone
- 5 Not incorporating exercise into the daily routine
- 6 Encourage classroom discussion
- 7 Teach and review expected behaviours and routines
- 8 Enable Inquiry-Based Instruction
- 9 Present material that is appropriately matched to student instructional level
- 10 Increase predictability through clear procedures and routines

- 11 Call on students only when a hand is raised in appropriate manner
- 12 Provide reassurance, encouragement and small group social skills training
- 13 Speak softly in a non-threatening manner if student show nervousness
- 14 Provide brief training in anger control: encourage student to walk away; use calming strategies; tell nearby adult if getting angry
- 15 Assign special responsibilities to student so others observe those students in a positive light

More helpful	Less helpful

**Answers:** Ordered, most to least helpful (suggested)

9, 15, 13, 3, 7, 12, 14, 8, 6, 10, 1, 11, 5, 4, 2.

Given what you know about ADHD, why are these techniques better / worse for your classroom?

Now, look at some techniques for Behaviour Accommodations for ADHD and some techniques for Assignment Accommodations for ADHD:

## Behavior accommodations for ADHD

- 1 If your student:** Is constantly engaging in what appears to be attention-getting behaviour  
**Try:** Ignoring minor inappropriate behaviour and rewarding positive behaviour for all students
- 2 If your student:** Needs positive reinforcement  
**Try:** Sending daily/weekly progress reports home etc.

## Assignment accommodations for ADHD

- 1 If your student:** Is unable to complete work within given time  
**Try:** Allowing extra time to complete assigned work
- 2 If your student:** Does well at the beginning of an assignment but quality of work decreases toward the end  
**Try:** Breaking long assignments into smaller parts

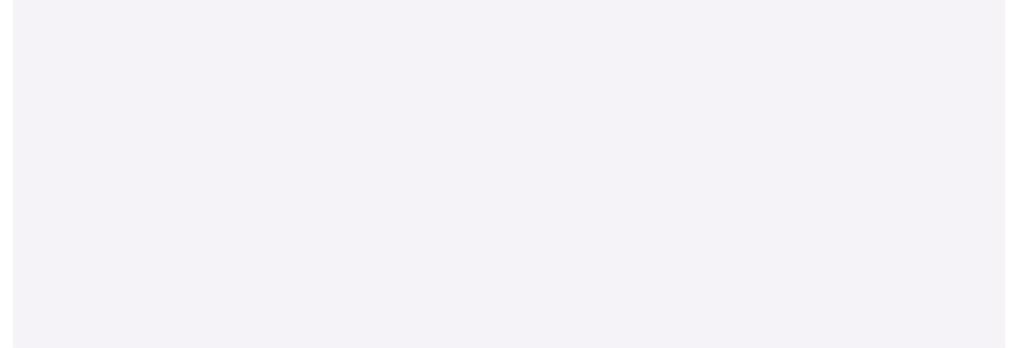
Think about how these techniques impact the different learners in the classroom.

### Part 2

Now, research the internet to come up with more ideas for more techniques. There are many useful resources on the internet for practical tools and activities.

- What are the different pros and cons of each? Will they work for everyone?
- Can you think of any time that you have used these techniques?
- Did they work? Why / Why not?

- How are you able to measure whether they have worked?
- How could you take any of the techniques that didn't work so well, and adjust them so that they can work in the future?



### Part 3

Now, we look at two different statements about different visions on teaching strategies / routines:

#### Statement 1

*“Good teaching strategies / routines are when teachers create a feeling of community in the classroom by modelling and encouraging positive behaviours, by creating opportunities for meaningful peer-to-peer or student-to-teacher interactions, and being aware of students who may need additional support through challenging times in the school day.”*

#### Statement 2

*“Good teaching strategies / routines are when teachers incorporate real-world connections into lesson plans to help students understand why what they're learning is useful beyond the classroom.”*

Which of these statements do you agree or disagree with?

Which of the two statements can you imagine is more relevant in a class with ADHD students?

### Reflexive questions

Of all that you have so far looked at in this module, which of the strategies and routines do you use in your context?

How did you set up these strategies?

What has been the impact of those the strategies?

Which of the strategies you have looked at would you like to use in the future?



## Action Plans

*Now, we look at two different Action Plan Templates. It is time to think about your classroom and start making some small changes that have a big impact.*

Look at the action plan templates. Ask yourself which one, if either, will be most useful to you.

ADHD Action Plan 1

<http://chapmand.com/uploads/ADHD%20Action%20Plan.pdf>

ADHD Action Plan 2

<https://education.wm.edu/centers/ttac/documents/packets/adhd.pdf>

Now you have looked at two action plans, create your own to use in your own teaching context, which you can share with colleagues.

Please remember: It is important to engage with content and connect with your own reality. To better relate with the examples of accommodations and action plans, think about as many strategies as you can to adapt your teaching tools to the needs of students with ADHD - even (and perhaps especially) those who are not identified.

Ask yourself:

How will you measure the success of this initiative over time?

How will you (and your students) know if it is working?





## Five strategies to help ADHD students

*In this section you will recap in a simple and concise manner some of the top tips for accommodating ADHD students into your classroom activities.*

- 1 Talk to the student from the front of the room
- 2 Incorporate exercise into the daily routine
- 3 Teach and review expected behaviours and routines
- 4 Increase predictability through clear procedures and routines
- 5 Break long assignments into smaller parts



## Check your understanding

Take a short quiz to check you've understood the main points of the module.

### 1. Students with ADHD do best with teachers who:

- a) Are flexible
- b) Follow clear routines
- c) All of the above

### 2. SEN teachers are flexible when:

- a) Recognise and support individuality
- b) Create competition to avoid boredom
- c) Create a minor disturbance in the classroom

### 3. The ADHD brain-oriented system is based on carrying at all times:

- a) A personal notebook or journal
- b) A mobile phone
- c) None of the above

### 4. Example of assignment accommodations for ADHD child:

- a) Allow extra time to complete assigned work
- b) Break long assignments into smaller parts
- c) All of the above

### 5. If an ADHD child needs positive reinforcement you can try:

- a) Send daily/weekly progress reports home
- b) Ignore minor inappropriate behaviour
- c) Decrease the quality of work toward the end

## Answers

1.c, 2.a, 3.a, 4.c, 5.a

## Reflect on the module

*In this final section, think about what you've learned this module and how you can use this in your day-to-day working life.*

1. What is your biggest takeaway from this module about prioritising a series of tools and activities to use with ADHD learners?

2. What do you commit to changing in your practice to adapt a series of tools and activities with ADHD learners in your context?

3. What do you understand about how these tools and activities are keys to unlocking the potential of ADHD learners?