The

Survival Guide
for Kids with
ADD or ADHD

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What Does ADHD Mean?

ADHD stands for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Kids are given the ADHD label when it’s hard for them to stay still, pay attention, and make good decisions. If you’ve been labeled ADHD, you probably have trouble focusing on your work at school. It might also be hard for you to show good behavior because you want to talk or move around a
lot. ADHD affects how you get along with adults and other kids. People might not understand or like what you do or say—even when you don’t think anything is wrong.

The good news is that you can take action to manage ADHD. The first step is to understand how it affects you. You probably have some traits that create challenges for you. Traits are different ways that you think, act, and feel. They affect how you do things and get along with others. If you have been labeled ADHD, you probably have one or more of these four traits:

**Trouble keeping your mouth and body still.** You might find it hard to be still when a parent or teacher wants you to sit quietly. You might move your feet, tap your fingers on a table or desk, talk a lot, or make sounds with your mouth. This trait is called being hyperactive. Sometimes people may say that you are fidgeting or being hyper.

**Kids who are hyperactive say:**

"I can’t control what my hands and feet do."

"I get yelled at a lot for talking in class."

"I squirm in my chair at school and have to stand up sometimes."

**Trouble staying focused on things that are hard or “boring.”** Maybe you have a difficult time taking tests
or doing homework. You might have trouble finishing things that you start. Or you may be easily bothered by noises when trying to study. This trait is called being **inattentive**. People might also say that you are **distracted** or that you have a **short attention span**.

**Kids who are inattentive say:**

“Any sound in class bothers me—like the lights buzzing or other kids coughing.”

“My mind sometimes goes on a road trip.”

“It’s like I have ten TV channels in my head and I don’t know which one to watch.”

**Trouble with making decisions too fast.** You might make up your mind quickly without stopping to figure out the best plan. These decisions may end up getting you in trouble. This extra-fast decision-making is called being **impulsive**. Sometimes people may say that you are **careless**.

**Kids who are impulsive say:**

“It’s like there’s an engine inside me that makes me act before I think.”

“My mouth says things before I can think of what I should say.”

“Sometimes I can’t help what I do.”
Trouble with making decisions too slowly. Maybe you take a long time to make decisions because you’re afraid of making a mistake. This extra-slow decision-making is called being indecisive. People might also say that you are a perfectionist.

Which of these traits do you have? Here’s an activity to help you figure it out.

1. Make a photocopy of the list of ADHD traits and behaviors on pages 11–12.

2. Use a pencil to check the boxes next to the behaviors that you have a hard time with. Ask your parents to look over the list to see if they agree with the things you’ve checked.

3. Add up the number of checkmarks under each trait and write it in the blank.

4. Circle the traits with the most checkmarks. These are your strongest ADHD traits.
What Are My ADHD Traits?

Hyperactive?

- I talk a lot—even when I’m supposed to be quiet.
- I make lots of clicks and sounds with my mouth.
- I squirm in my chair and move my hands and feet when I’m sitting.
- I run ahead of adults or groups of kids.
- I poke, touch, feel, and grab other people or objects.
- I say or do things without thinking about them first.

_____ = TOTAL

Inattentive?

- I’m bothered by noises when I’m trying to do schoolwork.
- I have trouble paying attention to anything that seems boring to me.
- I take longer to finish schoolwork than other students.
- I have a hard time concentrating when I take tests.
- I daydream or zone out a lot at school.
- I forget my teacher’s directions.

_____ = TOTAL
What Are My ADHD Traits? (continued)

**Impulsive?**

☐ I make people angry because I say or do things without thinking of others.

☐ I often forget to plan ahead.

☐ I do or say things that are dangerous or hurt others.

☐ I get into fights with others.

☐ I blurt out in class without raising my hand.

☐ I have trouble waiting for my turn.

______ = TOTAL

**Indecisive?**

☐ I worry a lot when trying to decide things.

☐ I start many new tasks but don’t finish them.

☐ I take a lot longer to do schoolwork or tests than other kids.

☐ I need help from my parents or other adults when making simple decisions.

☐ I give up trying to do things because I can’t do them perfectly.

☐ I get confused when I’m trying to make a decision.

______ = TOTAL