

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

Organizing The ADHD Family

(NAPSA)—Get to soccer practice...finish homework...run errands...cook dinner...pay the bills.... Our lives are full of “to do” lists. It’s no surprise then that many people have trouble staying organized. When a family is coping with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) too, the disorder can make it harder to keep track of day-to-day activities and priorities.

ADHD affects nearly eight percent of children in the U.S., and is defined by symptoms of inattention, hyperactive and impulsive behavior. People with ADHD have trouble concentrating and sitting still, which may affect their performance in school or at home. It’s probably no surprise to learn that organizational skills may be affected. It might be surprising, however, to find out that not all organizational methods are created equal, and some work better for people with ADHD.

So what should you do if you feel like certain parts of your life, or your home, are disorganized beyond your control? There are some simple steps you can take to manage these areas, get the whole family involved, and make tidying up an easy, five-minute task instead of an all-day affair.

The Kitchen is Not the Playroom

The more stuff we own, the more difficult it is to find places to store it all. When this happens, sometimes the dining room becomes our office, the bedroom turns into storage space, and the kitchen becomes the playroom. One easy fix for when our things enter spaces that they don’t belong is to designate rooms or spaces in the house for each activity.

The first step is to examine your items, tackling only one room



Assigning a place for everything can make it easier for families who cope with ADHD to keep everything in its place.

or project at a time. Don’t overwhelm yourself! Are your kids’ toys everywhere? Gather all the toys, look at the condition they’re in and decide whether they can be kept, donated or thrown away. Get your kids involved in the process so they don’t feel ambushed, but make sure they understand that some of the stuff needs to go. It might help if they feel good about giving some of their unused toys to children who have less.

Next, give your kids a place of their own. Assign a room or space in one room where they can store, access and play with their toys. For ADHD-friendly storage, use shelves and open-faced or clear bins so your kids can easily see the toy they want and take just that one out without dumping out the bin’s entire contents. When they’re done, it’s one step to put that toy away. What could be easier? You may find that the personal space and simple storage keeps kids playing in their spot, and they’ll do their best to keep it clean. Even if you have to remind them, easy access storage makes cleanup quick and easy. You’ll find

you have fewer toys underfoot and invading other family spaces. This approach isn’t limited to toys and can be used to organize office materials and other possessions that can create clutter.

Streamline Chores and Responsibilities

That’s one way to tackle a big job, but there are lots of little steps you can take to help your whole family, including those with ADHD, keep the house a little more organized.

- ADHD or not, does someone in your house leave their clothes everywhere? Put a laundry basket in a visible spot in every bedroom so at the end of each day it’s clear where the dirty clothes should go.

- Is it stressful hunting for your child’s backpack each morning? When he’s done with his homework, put it right in front of the door. If he has to move it out of his way to leave for school, he’ll have a harder time forgetting it.

- A different notebook for every subject could sabotage any child’s best efforts to stay organized, but can be particularly frustrating for a child with ADHD. An ADHD-friendly solution is to have one large notebook with dividers for each subject. One with folders can help keep all school papers in one place.

- Sometimes it seems as if all we get is junk mail. Place a recycling bin where you sort your mail and immediately get rid of all the catalogs and other mail you don’t need.

Tips like these will work for anyone, but these simple, one-step approaches are particularly successful for adults and kids with ADHD. For more of the best organizational tips designed to help families coping with ADHD, visit www.OrganizeADHD.com.