

# disruptive behavior

## the problem:

Children with AD/HD are often labeled unruly or aggressive because of their impulsive physical and social interactions. Even though these children can be caring and sensitive, their good qualities are often overshadowed by their impulsivity.

## the reason:

Children with AD/HD act before they think, often unable to control their initial response to a situation. The ability to “self-regulate” is compromised; they can’t modify their behavior with future consequences in mind. Some studies show that differences in the brain in those with AD/HD are partly responsible for this symptom.

## the obstacles:

Many children with AD/HD seem to spend their lives in time-out, grounded, or in trouble for what they say and do. Lack of impulse control is perhaps the most difficult symptom of AD/HD to modify. It takes years of patience and persistence to successfully turn this around.

## SOLUTIONS

### IN THE CLASSROOM:

**Posting rules and routines lets children know what's expected of them, and is a visual reminder for those who act before they think.**

- + **Some children need “behavior cards” taped to their desks** (“Raise hands before speaking,” etc.). If privacy is an issue, tape the cards to a sheet of paper that remains on the desk during class but can be stored inside the desk.
- + **Write the day's schedule on the blackboard and erase items as they are completed**, to give AD/HD students a sense of control about their day. Alert the class in advance about any revisions to the daily routine.
- + **To avoid meltdowns due to transitions (another stress point), give the class a five-minute warning**, then a two-minute warning of a transition, so that AD/HD kids have adequate time to stop one activity and start another.
- + **Have a plan ready** in case lack of structure or another circumstance sets off an impulsive reaction. Perhaps the AD/HD child can be given a special job, such as “monitor” or “coach,” to help him stay focused on self-control.
- + **Discipline can and should be used in certain situations.** While AD/HD is an explanation for bad

behavior, it is never an excuse. AD/HD may explain why Johnny hit Billy, but AD/HD did not make him do it. Children with AD/HD need to understand their responsibility to control themselves.

- + **Discipline should be immediate, short, and swift.** Delayed consequences, such as detention, don't work for those with difficulty anticipating future outcomes. Consequences must be instantaneous: If he pushes another child on the playground, recess is suspended for 10 minutes.
- + **Provide immediate, positive feedback and attention** when AD/HD kids behave well. Catch them doing something good. Specifically state what they are doing well, such as waiting their turn.
- + **With younger children, establish behaviors you expect** and post them in the classroom (“Respect Others,” “Talk Nicely,” “Use an Indoor Voice”) as visual reminders.
- + **Younger children often respond to a “point system,”** in which they earn pennies or stickers for a positive target behavior. They can redeem their points at the end of the week for a prize.

**AT HOME:** Children with AD/HD have difficulty making inferences about right and wrong, so parents must be specific, stating clear, consistent

**expectations and consequences. Telling your child to “be good” is too vague. Instead, be explicit: “When we go into the store, do not touch, just look with your eyes.” “At the playground, wait in line for the slide, and don't push.”**

- + **Be proactive in your approach to discipline.** Recognize and remark on positive behavior. Respond to positive actions with praise, attention, and rewards.
- + **Holding your child accountable for his actions is imperative** in molding a responsible adult. However, delayed punishment may prevent a child from understanding its relationship to the misbehavior. Punishment must come soon after the misbehavior.
- + **Let the punishment fit the crime.** Hitting calls for an immediate time out. Dinnertime tantrums can mean dismissal from the table without dessert. Keep punishments brief and restrained, but let them communicate to your child that he's responsible for controlling his behavior.
- + **Let minor misbehaviors slide.** If your child spills the milk because he's pouring it carelessly or hurriedly, talk to him about the importance of moving more slowly, help him clean the mess, and move on.