

CLASSROOM TIPS FOR TEACHERS WITH STUDENTS WHO HAVE ADHD

- Have the kids with ADHD sit toward the front of the room (though not all together). Even better, have a circular seating arrangement. That way, someone is always looking at each student. It is very hard not to pay attention when someone is looking at you.
- Use touch if it is allowed in your school. I shudder to think that Mrs. Eldredge's arm is now illegal in many schools in this country. But if you are allowed to, touching a child on the shoulder, say, is a great way to provide encouragement and also bring his mind back into the room and the task at hand.
- Use eye contact. Your eyes can bring attention back into the room.
- Use kids' names. When you hear your name it is almost impossible not to pay attention.
- Never keep kids in for recess. Exercise is essential for mental focus.
- Consider starting the day with some stretching exercises.
- Consider having the kids sit not in chairs but on exercise balls. That provides constant musculoskeletal stimulation, which is good for the brain, and also involves the cerebellum, which is good for focus.
- Emphasize proper brain care with the kids: eat right, get exercise, get enough sleep, don't overdose on electronics.
- Introduce new topics in terms of old topics already mastered. Kids with ADHD overheat easily. They get frustrated quickly when they sense they won't understand something new. So, for example, when you start fractions explain right away that fractions are simply division written differently, and the kids have already learned division.
- Break down large topics or tasks into small, manageable bits. For example, a book report might be subdivided into eight steps, or a science project outlined in a dozen doable steps. Once again, this helps the child with ADHD not feel overwhelmed. It is also helpful for all the other kids as well.
- Notice and appreciate successful moments. Kids with ADHD often go through an entire day getting multiple reprimands or therapies without one single affirmation. Imagine how you'd feel if you went through your day like that.
- Stay in touch with parents, even if you don't particularly love them. My best advice to teachers is the same advice I give to parents: make friends with each other.
- Don't let the child or the parent use ADHD as an excuse. ADHD is not an excuse to get out of taking responsibility, but an explanation that leads to taking responsibility more effectively.
- Don't fall into the trap of the "moral diagnosis," blaming the child's difficulties on bad character. Look deeper than that. ADHD is a neurological trait, not a moral infirmity.
- Above all else, enjoy these kids. Nothing works better than that—both for the kids and for you.

Adapted from *Superparenting for ADD: An Innovative Approach to Raising Your Distracted Child*, Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and Peter S. Jensen, M.D., Ballantine, 2008.
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