



Non-Pharmacological strategies to support children with ADHD.

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Children with ADHD can struggle with the expectations of an educational setting.

Children with ADHD can struggle to:

- Stay in their seat
- Concentrate
- Stay on task
- Know what the task even is
- Be distracted easily
- Act without thinking

Lots of children with ADHD are prescribed medication which can aid their ability to:

Focus and concentrate whilst feeling calmer and less restless.

Alongside medication, non-pharmacological strategies should be taught.

It is also important to consider not all children with ADHD are medicated.

Nonpharmacological strategies can help a child with ADHD to:

- Learn ways to manage ADHD symptoms themselves.
- Start to identify triggers and warnings to ADHD symptoms escalating in addition to learning solutions.
- Manage ADHD symptoms in an appropriate way
- Reduce disciplinaries
- Improve their self esteem
- Improve anxieties of what they need to do when they feel a certain way, if clear strategies are in place.
- Improve the level of work completed rather than a long period of time in lesson not learning, distracted, restless or presenting with behaviour difficulties.

Non-pharmacological strategies include:

- Daily sensory circuits – to help regulate prior to lessons especially after lunchtime. (see appendix 1 for an example).
- Movement breaks - to positively channel excess energy. They help a child to leave a task and come back to refocus and concentrate. Examples include – When a child is restless or struggling to focus teachers can advise or the child can request. Having an agreed place, they



can walk to and walk back from or an agreed route, such as down the corridor, downstairs, back up and round. It is important to set a boundary and expectation such as an agreed time and for them to use this appropriate x1 per 30 mins lesson. If this is not utilised appropriately school may need to remove this.

- Movement equipment - can support a child in a lesson to move appropriately (see appendix 2 for examples and photographs).
- Fidgets – to provide an outlet for restless energy. They can help improve concentration by offering a way of using physical energy without getting up and walking away. When a fidget loses its novelty, children may get bored or lose the motivation to use it – switching between fidgets can be useful. It is important to note for some this may not work and become more distracting. (see appendix 3 for more information and examples).

Working memory – difficulties organising and concentrating are common in ADHD, therefore in class this can make small tasks difficult. Consider:

- Using short instructions and keep information brief.
- Don't overload the child with too much information at a time. Split tasks into smaller chunks
- Use visual reminders and checklists for instance, bullet points of what is required or checklists to tick once completed. (See appendix 4)
- Encourage note taking to reduce the load on their memory
- Encourage use of highlighters and indicate key information to highlight to offer as reminder.
- Give children extra time to process information and think about what they see or hear.

Organisation - to support a child with organising themselves consider:

- Listing tasks step by step
- A homework diary
- Start with smaller achievable tasks.
- Consistent routines
- Regular prompts back to tasks – time to check in with the child
- Get bag ready the night before school
- Consider a timer for children to support them with finishing a task within the allocated time frame.

Classroom distractions – consider how you can adapt the environment

- Consider the noise of the environment.
- The lighting
- Where the child is placed in the classroom.
- Are they best placed at the front near the teacher for regular prompts.
- Face their back away from the door or not close to windows they can look out of



- Have a set quiet area away from distractions where the child can complete their schoolwork.

Exam support to consider

- Smaller classroom environment – would this avoid distractions.
- Movement breaks – to be able to positively channel excess energy and return and refocus on the exam.
- Consider if a reader is required to prompt back and read the full question, to aid understanding and concentration.
- Use of laptop – would the child be able to answer questions in more detail and appropriate if able to type rather than write. Is writing difficult to read.
- Use of a timer – some children respond well having a visual timer to prompt them of how long they have left.

Please review our resources and share with school to identify if any of the strategies may be useful to implement for your child.

Parents can also consider these strategies at home for tasks required, homework sessions and general day to day activities.



Appendix 1

Sensory circuit example:

A sensory circuit provides structured sensory input which contributes to the development of: self-regulation, comfort, motor planning and motor skills, increased attention, helps children to be ready to learn.

A sensory circuit has three sections of the circuit

- Alerting - Energy lifting section to prepare the brain for learning and the demands of the day.
- Organising - organise their body, plan their approach and do more than one thing at a time.
- Calming - ensures that as the child leaves the circuit, they are feeling calm, centred and as ready for the day as possible.

Some children may benefit from more than one sensory circuit a day.

Some children do not enjoy sensory circuits, and you may need to find other ways to support them.

Basic sensory circuit example

Alerting (5 minutes max)	Organising (5 minutes max)	Calming (5 minutes max)
Jogging	Walk along a straight line	Time with favourite fidget toy
Use of trampoline	Balance a bean bag on their head and walk	Plank
Skipping with rope	Blow bubbles	Use of weights
Step ups	Rolling over a peanut or gym ball – tummy down on ball walk hands out as far as possible without falling off then back again.	Roll up in a blanket tightly and child wiggle to get out
Run around the hall	A series of actions e.g. hopping on one leg x6, clapping x 5, jumping on spot x3.	Small squeeze of putty or stress ball



Sensory circuit resource

ALERTING stimulate the body's central nervous system ready for learning	ORGANISING demand brain and body to work together.	CALMING awareness of their body in space and increases sensory input
Bouncing on a trampette 1. Beginner – 10 jumps then stop 2. Intermediate – jogging on trampette 3. Advanced – catching a ball whilst bouncing	Balancing on a wobble board 1. Beginner – with adult assistance 2. Balance independently, throw and catch a bean bag 3. Throw bean bags at target	Ball Squash – child lies prone on mat and therapy ball is rolled slowly up and down the child – using and maintaining constant pressure
Bouncing sphere – whilst seated on therapy ball using hoop placed around ball (hips/knees should be at 90 Sit on ball unaided feet on floor Intermediate – bounce all way round ball and back no stopping gradually bouncing higher Bounce whilst throwing/catching	Simon says sequence e.g. hopping 6 times on one leg, clapping 5 times and then jumping 3 times Beginner – just one action to copy Intermediate – increase length of sequence (1 hand on head other on knee) Advanced – combination of sequences	Press-ups 1. Beginner – wall press-ups with arms extended 2. Intermediate - Press-ups on the ground but on all fours 3. Advanced – full press-ups with legs extended
Skipping 1. Beginner – increase turns of rope 2. Intermediate – increase speed 3. Advanced – cross arms over	Rolling Ball – tummy on the ball walking hands forwards without falling off and back to start position 1. Adult to support child while on ball 2. Child now moving independently –controlled actions 3. Advanced – collect beanbag and throw at target whilst fully extended on the ball	Pilates plank exercise – lie prone on mat comes up on forearms and onto toes 1. Beginner – assistance to get correct position with support 2. Intermediate – increase duration of hold 3. Advanced – raise the leg and hold and lower repeat with other leg
Step-ups – stepping up/down from a bench Beginner – assistance alt leg Intermediate – increase speed Advanced – include arm movements	Stepping stones Beginner just couple of step stones Intermediate place further apart Advanced - corporate other obstacles	Using small squeeze/stress ball 1. Squeeze the ball with shoulders and relax 2. Squeeze ball with your knees and relax
Hopscotch 1. Beginner – learn to hop then jump 2. Intermediate – extend length of course 3. Advanced – change size of squares to increase distance of jump	Basket ball – targets 1. Beginner – large ball near target 2. Intermediate – further away from target 3. Advanced – use bean bags	Hand held weights 1. Beginner pick up off floor and back down 2. Intermediate – bring weights to waist height 3. Advanced – hold with arms extend above head

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Appendix 2:

Movement equipment.

WOBBLE CUSHION

- Sitting on a wobble cushion engages the core muscles as it causes **instability** (a wobble).
- **The instability encourages the user to engage their back and core muscles.**
- Children then focus on how they sit, reducing fidgeting and helping to improve focus on the task at hand.
- The cushions can be used on a chair or on the floor.
- (Similar to a therapy ball but smaller and easy to move with the child).
- It is recommended that the cushion is not sat on all day, half an hour at a time and regular intervals throughout the day (child dependant).



Wedge cushion

- An air-filled cushion which tilts the pelvis forward when sat on.
- Enhances the inward curve of the lower back (encouraging the person to sit upright)
- Reduces strain on the body's joints and ligaments aiding body awareness.
- The cushion can aid children to sit and stay focused for longer by improving posture.
- As body awareness is improved, the need to fidget is reduced.
- The raised dimples offer sensory input but can be turned over if not desired.
- Wedge cushions are used on chairs. .



CHAIR BANDS

- Using chair bands for ADHD, Autism and sensory needs can help improve the learning experience in classrooms or at home while sitting.
- Chair Bands are designed to increase focus and attention while letting children move while learning.
- Children can push, pull, kick, and bounce on the band quietly with their feet while sitting at their desks.



High low desk:





Appendix 3:

FIDGETS

- Fidgets provide an outlet for restless energy
- They can help improve concentration by offering a way of using physical energy without getting up and walking away.
- When a fidget loses its novelty, children may get bored or lose the motivation to use it – switching between fidgets can be useful

Consider offering a fidget box available to the child to access easily. It may be useful discussing with the child the items/ types of fidgets they prefer. Consider age-appropriate items, for instance blue tac or an ADHD pen for those in secondary school.

- Ideas of fidgets include items such as:
- Putty
- Poppers
- ADHD pen
- Spinners
- Blue Tac
- A selection of a few different items can be useful for children to swap between rather than get bored and then display behaviours with the current item.
- one item at a time is sufficient.
- A sensory box available to the child would be a good way of storing all the items in an easily accessible place.



Examples of fidgets





Appendix 4:

Breaking down tasks

Example of breaking down a task into small steps

Task	Broken down steps
Make a sandwich	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Take out two slices of bread2. Take one piece3. Spread the butter4. Add fillings5. Put the other piece on top6. Cut the sandwich