

ADHD Quick Facts

Behavior Management in ADHD Treatment

Behavior therapy including behavior modification is a critical part of [ADHD treatment](#) for children and teens. Solid scientific evidence shows that behavioral treatment can be effective for many children. The severity and type of ADHD may play a role in treatment decisions, which should be tailored to the unique needs of each child and family.

Why use behavior management?

Parents and teachers can use behavior management skills to support children with ADHD. The children can also use these skills to cope with ADHD symptoms throughout their lives.

Behavioral treatment should be started as soon as the child receives a diagnosis. It can even be used if the child is not yet diagnosed, or if the diagnosis of ADHD is not certain. There are behavioral interventions for every age group. Starting early, before bad habits form, is better than later.



What is behavior management?

A therapist or educator who has been trained in behavior management can teach parents, teachers, and children specific techniques and skills that will help improve the child's behavior. This is often referred to as [parent training](#). Parents and teachers can then target problem areas with behavior modification to improve the child's functioning. Children can use the skills they learn when talking and playing with friends. Parents, teachers, and the child should work together to get the best results.

Parent training programs that are effective:

- help parents develop a positive relationship with their child
- teach parents about how children develop
- help parents manage negative behavior and increase positive behavior

Some other psychotherapeutic treatments have not been proven to work for children with ADHD. Traditional individual therapy, in which a child spends time with a therapist talking about problems or playing with toys, is not the same as behavior therapy. Such "talk" or "play" therapies have not been shown to work for children with ADHD.

Behavior management as first-line treatment for preschoolers

For preschoolers with ADHD, parent training in behavior management is recommended before considering medication. For children age six and older, behavior management in combination with medication treatment is recommended.

You can learn more about treating ADHD in young children in [Preschoolers and ADHD](#).

Learn more on this topic:

- [Behavioral Therapy for Young Children](#)
- [Parent Training in Behavior Management for ADHD](#)
- [12 Behavioral Programs for Managing ADHD](#)



Five points to incorporate into behavior management

1. Start with goals the child can achieve in small steps.
2. Be consistent across different times of the day, different settings, and different people.
3. Provide consequences immediately following behavior.
4. Implement behavioral interventions over the long haul, not just for a few months.
5. Teaching and learning new skills takes time. The child's improvement will be gradual.

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