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Parenting and Challenging Behaviours

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Fire Poker

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All Kids Learn

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... But sometimes they learn things we'd prefer not



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Learning Objectives

1. Explain why ADHD can make behaviour more challenging
2. Identify some strategies to reduce stress and improve behaviour
3. Locate resources for ongoing support



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(Realistic) Learning Objective

- Real talk – this stuff can be HARD
- What do I really hope you will get from today?
- In that twilight between the kid going to bed and you going to bed, look back on how the day went.
- Prepare **one thing now** to help things go a little better in the future



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Why do they do these things?

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Why do they do these things?

- Children's experiences and situations can set them up to learn some behaviours
- Examples:
 - grocery store check out
 - repeating curse words
 - lying about grades



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And with ADHD...

Learned behavior problems happen with all kids AND ADHD can amplify it in a few ways:

- May appear more driven, persistent, or willful about getting certain rewards
- May be harder to tolerate correction, or a withheld reward
- May take longer to learn some other skills we like to see instead
- Once they learn a good skill, they may still get it wrong a lot



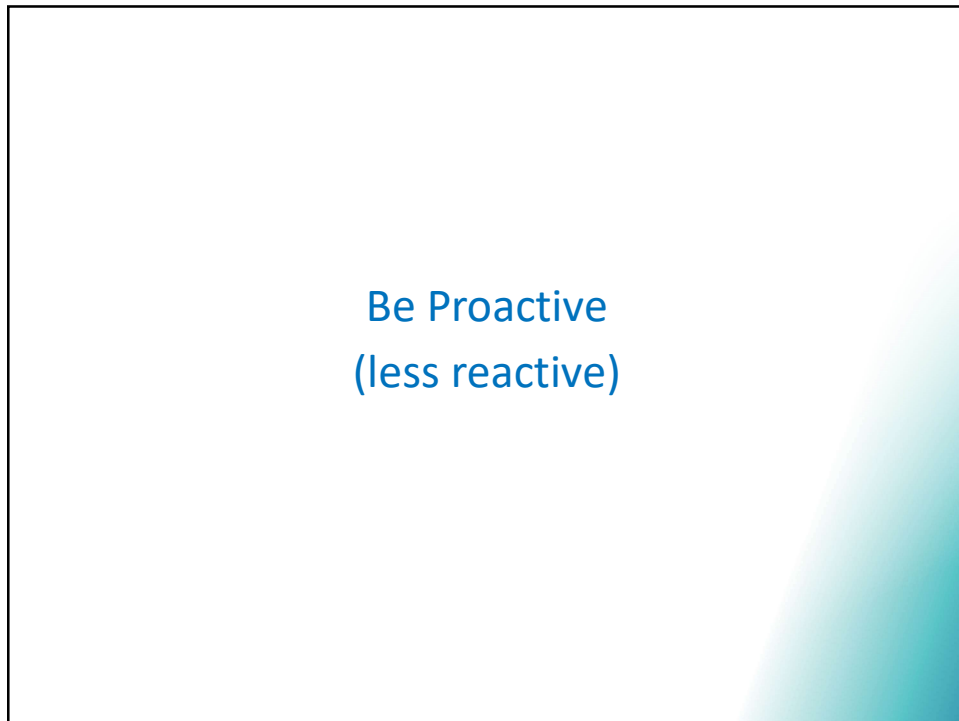
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What can we do?

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Core ADHD Behavioral Strategies

There are MANY evidence based behavioral strategies that work. There have been some changes to recommendations over time, but the core remains very similar to original Behavior Therapy established decades ago.

We could spend weeks talking techniques.

Today I want to focus more on *realistically* putting these things into practice.

Many of these strategies only work if you fully commit to them. (So better to start when you feel really ready).

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Core ADHD Behavioral Strategies

1. Save your breath (get their attention first)
2. Grass is greener where you water it
3. SMART goals

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1. Save Your Breath

Experience: "They only listen when I shout"

What's behind that:

- 1) ADHD might mean they did not hear you
- 2) If you only follow through once you're shouting, children learn they only have to listen once you are shouting

"We have to consciously study how to be tender with each other until it becomes a habit."

-Audre Lorde

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1. Save Your Breath

What to try instead:

1. Before you tell them something, take a breath
2. Go towards them
3. Gently get their attention (ex: by touching their hand or shoulder)
4. Look them in the eyes
5. Now tell them



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1. Save Your Breath

What to try instead:

- Use statements instead of questions when something is mandatory


Example:

- Instead of "Can you get dressed please, we're going to be late for the doctor!?!?!?"
- Try "Time for shoes"

This helps minimize resistance.



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may you
be strong
enough to
be gentle

1. Save Your Breath


- Only set limits you can enforce.
- Let the rest go.
- Example:
- Instead of “STOP MAKING THAT NOISE, YOU’RE GOING TO MAKE ME CRASH THE CAR”
- Try “It’s loud in here. Car drives once it’s quiet. Safety first.”

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2. Grass is greener (where you water it)

Kids with ADHD get a LOT of negative criticism. This has consequences.
Would you keep listening to someone who only complains about you?

You can nudge them towards listening more if you make listening to you rewarding.



**IF SPEAKING
KINDLY TO PLANTS
HELPS THEM GROW**

**IMAGINE WHAT
SPEAKING KINDLY
TO HUMANS CAN DO**

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2. Grass is greener (where you water it)

Try:

- Make a tally of how many corrections, reminders, complaints etc. you make compared to positive comments in a morning
- Most of us give way more corrections than praise
- Aim towards 4 positive interactions for every 1 correction regardless of how "good" they are being



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2. Grass is greener (where you water it)

Sometimes it can be HARD to find the good things to praise. Building in more positive activities can help shift things.

Play is a great way to build connection and improve listening!

When was the last time you had genuine fun together? Were silly together? Without distractions? What could you do every day?



5 min Daily Special Playtime



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2. Grass is greener (where you water it)

Sometimes incentives (small rewards) a very powerful way to influence behavior.

Pick one observable behaviour at a time. Check consistently.

Use exciting but doable rewards.
Stop the rewards slowly.

This technique is simple, but there are several common pitfalls.

If this has gone poorly for you in the past, there are work-arounds.

EVERY PLANT HAS THEIR OWN
REQUIREMENTS IN ORDER
TO GROW...



AND SO DO PEOPLE.

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2. Grass is greener (where you water it)

"Every time you think of calling a kid 'attention-seeking' this year, consider changing it to 'connection-seeking' and see how your perspective changes."

- Time banking (deliberately spending more time with a child who is acting out) can also help.

- This is because often when a kid is being difficult, we naturally pull away from them.

- This can lead them to try more and more extreme behaviors to get your attention.

- Spending more (quality) time with them can reverse this cycle.

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3. SMART Goals

Sometimes kids with ADHD aren't following through because the goal is too hard or vague.

Example: "get good grades"

SMART goals are:

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Achievable**
- **Realistic**
- **Time based**

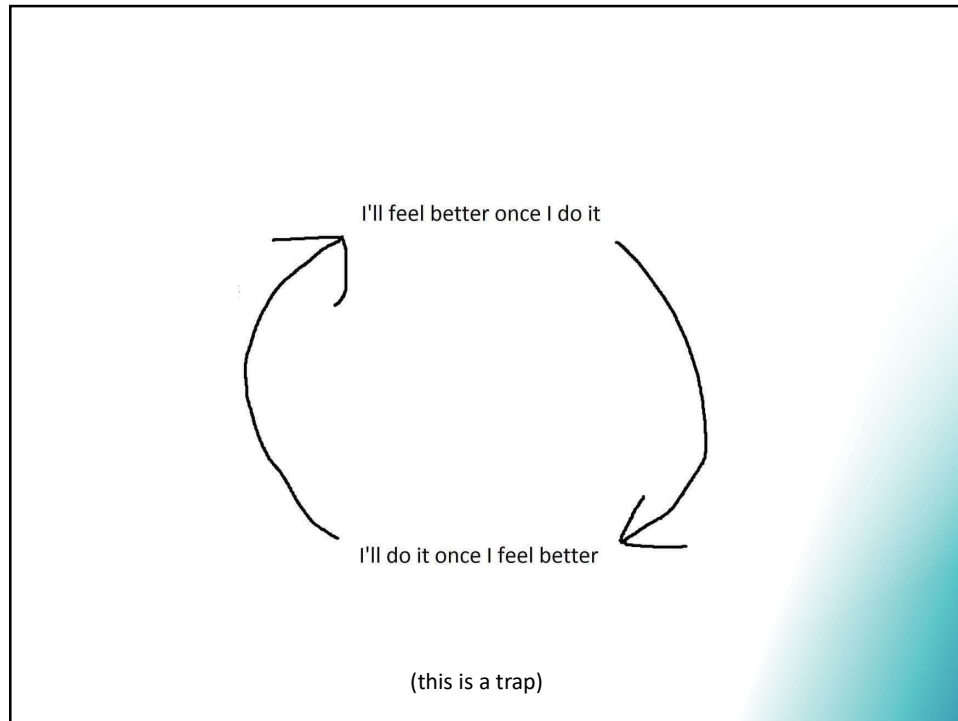
Example:

- **For the next two weeks, I'll empty lunch box before bed**
- each day I do, I'll get a candy added
- and if I make it to two weeks we take a trip out for ice cream Friday night

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Easier said than done

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(Easier said than done)

Two main struggle points:

1. It's hard to plan when you're already exhausted
2. Harder before it gets better

YOU CAN'T POUR FROM AN Empty Cup. TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF FIRST.

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Already Exhausted?

Some tips to consider:

1. Set the bar lower
 - pick your battles
 - If juggling: which balls are rubber versus glass?
2. Do it with more support
 - Bullseye metaphor (balanced helping/asking)
3. Consider whole family wellbeing changes first

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Extinction Burst

When you stop rewarding something you used to reward, the first response is sometimes a burst of much worse behavior



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Extinction Burst Tips

- Before you make a change, ask yourself what you think might happen
- If you think their behavior will be physically dangerous, don't change it yet
- Instead:
 - Work on other things first OR
 - Make the change in a safer environment (safer physical location, more adults to support)



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Summary

There is a reason this is hard.
It can get better, with some strategies and patience.

Get out of the pattern;
try something new (you could always try something else later)

You are not alone in this.
(and if you are, get more support before making changes)



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Whenever I get discouraged and want to quit something, I remember the words of my then 3 year-old after she puked carrots all over the living room floor: "I'm gonna need more carrots."

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Resources

Rolling With ADHD



5 min Special Playtime



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Q and A

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