

Autism Spectrum and ADHD

In his workshops and his book *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*, Dr Tony Attwood discusses how many children with an ASD also have a dual diagnosis of ADHD. He believes that the hyperactivity seen can actually be a result of anxiety, particularly in social situations making the child have difficulty sitting still and relaxing (pg 16 *The Complete Guide to Asperger's Syndrome*). At the start of the school year with new social groups and classrooms, we often see an increase in anxiety and therefore sustaining attention and impulsivity.

Joanne Steers and Kate Horstmann have put together a fantastic book full of hundreds of ideas to help students with ADHD in school. I believe these strategies are great for a range of children, including those with ASD. The book is full of ideas for every day school situations, and provides easy strategies to implement. Kate has kindly put together some quick tips for helping kids keep cool and calm, which will hopefully help you prevent a child's anxiety!

Quick Tips for Helping Kids Keep Cool and Calm

- 1. Get Organised.** Rushing is nearly always stressful, and so is forgetting things. Having clear systems for everyday tasks is vital, and so is scheduling regular 'chill out' times in between activities.
- 2. Get Active!** Regular exercise is great for releasing tension and creates a natural 'happy buzz'. Getting active might be playing a sport, walking the dog, dancing to an MP3 or doing some push-ups.
- 3. Have a laugh.** It is almost impossible to feel stressed while you are having a laugh or sharing a joke, so make sure that the young person has plenty of time to have fun each day!
- 4. Break the mood.** You can also use humour and a playful approach when you want to quickly change a mood and create some 'breathing space'. This gives the young person an opportunity to regain control and move away from feelings of blame or shame.
- 5. Check the basics.** Getting enough sleep, eating a healthy diet and drinking enough water are all vital ingredients in ensuring that the brain and body get the sustenance it needs to function effectively.
- 6. Timing is everything.** Remember that specific strategies to help a young person deal with stress should only be used in the early 'rumbling' stages. Once the young person is 'exploding' no strategy will be effective and they could actually create additional problems. Prevention is the key!
- 7. Don't add demands.** Learn to identify the early warning signs of stress that are unique to the young person and make sure you don't add demands or 'remind' them of what they should/need to be doing when they are in this stressed state. Focus on *avoiding* escalation by instead giving them a short break or by actually reducing demands.
- 8. Lead by example.** Show the young person how to cope with stress in a positive way by doing it yourself, even if you have to practice 'faking it' at times! Staying calm yourself when dealing with difficult situations is an invaluable skill for both you *and* them (and it can take *lots* of practice!).
- 9. Get it out in the Open.** Talk about stress on a regular basis – make it an important topic for everyone, discuss examples from TV, talk through your own stressors and swap ideas and strategies.

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Two Great Books on ADHD

Helping Kids & Teens with ADHD in School: By Joanne Steers & Kate Horstmann

This fun and interactive workbook is aimed at actively engaging young people with ADHD and supporting them. Using tried and tested strategies and top tips, this fully-photocopiable workbook will help adults to work collaboratively with young people to learn, test strategies, set goals and develop comprehensive support plans around individual needs.

CODE B23 \$50 (incl P & H)

All Dogs Have ADHD: By Kathy Hoopmann

All Dogs Have ADHD takes an inspiring and affectionate look at Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), using images and ideas from the canine world to explore a variety of traits that will be instantly recognisable to those who are familiar with ADHD. Excellent book for explaining ADHD to classmates.

CODE B14 \$30 (incl P & H)



