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Health Issues

Behavior Therapy: The Specifics of Parent Training



Research confirms that behavioral parent training programs are valuable tools to help parents guide, support, and live more comfortably with their children with ADHD. They are considered by the American Academy of Pediatrics to be a first-line treatment approach for children with ADHD. Following are brief descriptions of some of the topics and techniques that parent training programs introduce through direct instruction, demonstrations, role playing, readings, discussions, and “homework assignments” that parents can use with their own child.

Setting the Stage for Positive Learning: Learning How to Play or “Hang Out” With Your Child

Behavior therapy is not just about a child’s behavior, but about improving the relationships between a child and his parents (as well as others) and the interactions within the family. As a parent, you can take the first step toward improved relationships by understanding how discouraging your child’s daily experiences can be to him and by countering that negativity with positive messages and support. Your child needs to know that you are not only interested in helping him adjust his behavior, but that you also appreciate him as a person and enjoy just being with him. Feeling that you are there for him, ready to listen, empathize, and help him recover from the many setbacks he encounters will set the stage for the most effective implementation of parent training principles. So before beginning “training” techniques, you must make an effort to befriend your child and show him that you are members of the same team.

Many experts in behavior therapy, including Dr Russell Barkley, suggest that a good way to do this is to make a point of regularly and frequently spending time playing with your younger child, or hanging out with your older one, with no one else present. During this time, your goal is not to teach your child anything or to shape his behavior. It is to let him know that you are interested in him and want to spend time getting to know him better. This can be accomplished by announcing that from now on you will reserve time during several days each week to be with your child (his other parent should do the same) and, during this time, allow him to decide on the activity (any activity that allows the 2 of you to interact is fine—playing with board games or dolls for example, but not watching television or playing organized sports). While you are involved in the activity, allow your child to take the lead. Comment occasionally to show you are paying attention and are involved, and provide positive feedback now and then, but do not try to take over the activity or conversation. The point is to simply be with your child—to let him be the center of your attention and to show you his world. By regularly participating in these activities with your child you are learning to listen and observe while avoiding constantly giving commands or instructions—the first skills necessary to begin reshaping his behavior and changing his relationships within the family. You are also demonstrating in the most effective way possible that your child does not need to engage in negative behaviors to win your attention. Once he learns he has his parents’ interest, he can rely on this in trusting them to help him figure out how to get along better and develop more positive relationships with others.

Responding Effectively to Your Child’s Behavior

Once you and your child have begun to establish a basis of trust and positive support, it is time to look at the ways you hope to improve your interactions with him at home. Parent interactions can be improved, and improved interactions can set the stage for the successful use of parent training tools and techniques. One of the first principles of parent training is to expand the notion of the word discipline. Many parents assume that the term refers to ways to carry out effective punishment. However, teaching discipline to a child really means teaching self-control—and that is the broad goal of parent training. Fortunately, behavior therapy programs take a more positive approach than just constantly devising punishments for breaking rules. As your child’s “teacher-coach-therapist,” you will learn how to choose the most effective response to any given situation. In most cases, you will find that you have 3 choices when confronted with a particular behavior in your child: you can praise the behavior, deliberately ignore it, or punish your child for it. Behavior therapy is about deciding correctly which response to choose, following up on that decision, and being consistent about your choices from one event, and one day, to the next.

Of course, it is not always easy to decide whether a behavior deserves to be ignored or punished, and it is not always obvious when and how to provide praise. These and other topics will be discussed in this article. In the meantime, though, it is important to consider how much more powerful and, in most cases, preferable positive reinforcement and ignoring are to punishment, even though in the heat of the moment this may go against your instincts or intuition. It may help to think about how much more likely you are to work hard when your boss recognizes and praises your efforts, and how poorly motivated and resentful you may feel if he frequently criticizes you. In the same way, your child is more likely to respond positively to your actions if you react positively to his, while a negative comment or response on your part is likely to lead to more negative behavior. This is why in behavioral parent training, parents are encouraged to praise their child's behavior whenever possible, and ignore it when necessary, as a strong way of shaping behavior while minimizing the need for punishment.

Giving Clear Commands

The first step in helping your child learn to follow rules, obey your commands, and otherwise manage her own behavior is to make sure that the commands you are giving her are clear. Adults are often accustomed to couching their commands in a variety of "softening" or ambiguous gestures and phrases. Many of us also tend to react too strongly or impulsively to behavior we consider unacceptable. But children with ADHD need to be told what to do in a clear, straightforward, and non-emotional way if they are to learn to control their actions.

You can give effective commands by

- **Minimizing distractions.** Turn off the television or computer game before you address your child, or ask her to turn it off. If you are in a noisy setting, try to move to a quieter place before speaking to her. Most children with ADHD find it difficult to pay attention when surrounded by a lot of competing noise or activity.
- **Establishing good eye contact.** You must fully engage your child's attention by making good eye contact if she is going to hear and follow what you say. At first, you may find it helpful to touch a younger child's arm or hold her hand before addressing her.
- **Clearly stating the command.** You can make commands clear to your child by first stating what therapists call a terminating command—a simple, non-emotional statement of what you want your child to do ("You need to stop pushing your brother."). If the behavior does not stop immediately, you can then follow up with a warning that includes the exact limit and the consequences ("If you push your brother one more time, you'll be in time-out. If you stop immediately the two of you can go on playing.") When stating a command, keep your tone of voice firm and neutral. Refrain from yelling, or looking or sounding angry. It is especially important to monitor your body language because these nonverbal messages are so easy to overlook. State the command as an instruction, not as a question (Not, "Would you please stop teasing your brother?" or "Stop teasing him, OK?" but "You need to stop teasing your brother.").

If you are not sure your child heard the terminating command or warning, ask her to repeat it back to you. Then pay attention to how well she carries out your instructions and respond immediately to her behavior. If she responds as you have asked, follow this up with a positive—praise, thanks, a thumbs-up, or other acknowledgment that she has done well. If her response is not exactly what you had hoped for but is in the right direction, offer her immediate praise for the part of your command that she did carry out. If your child does not start to cooperate according to the limits you have set ("one more time" or "within the next two minutes") invoke the consequences, calmly narrating what is happening as you do so. ("You did not stop pushing your brother, so you are having the five-minute time-out that we just talked about.") Keep in mind that because you have given a warning and a terminating command and spelled out the consequences of disobeying, you have not "put her in" the time-out—she has "chosen" the timeout for herself as an alternative to following your command.

If you make a point of following through on the positive or negative consequences of each command, every time, you should soon find that you will not have to repeat your instructions over and over as you probably did before. Your ultimate goal will be to give a command only once for it to be obeyed. The elimination of constant pleading, nagging, or threatening is a great relief to most parents and goes a long way toward improving your interaction with your child. If you are tempted to "let it slide" when she ignores a command (telling yourself, perhaps, that she does have ADHD, after all), consider how hard it will be to make up for this inconsistency in the future and carry out the promised consequences. If you are going to try to follow up on every command you give, you will need to consider beforehand how important the command you are about to give is. Limiting the number of commands you give will make it easier for you to follow up on each and every one, thus increasing your chances of success.

At first, as you practice giving commands according to these guidelines, you will need to keep things simple. Make sure that all your commands are achievable by your child, and wait until your child has completed one step of your instructions before giving another. If necessary, break a complex command down into smaller steps ("Take off your shoes. Good job! Now take off your socks."). While your child is carrying out your instructions, avoid distracting her. Be sure to follow up on each command, avoid giving commands unless you mean for her to follow them (do not tell her to go to bed until it is really time), and stick to commands that you know can be carried out successfully by your child. It is usually best to give a time limit ("by the third time," "by three minutes") for each command as well, to help her focus on accomplishing it and to help you both

define when it has or has not been accomplished. Keep in mind, however, that children with ADHD often have particular problems with time awareness and time limits. You will need to keep such limits simple, and consider using egg timers or other devices to make these time limits more concrete. By doing so, you can turn commands that have previously ended in failure and frustration (“Go upstairs and clean your room.”) to commands that end in success and build on your child’s self-esteem (“Put your video game player away by the time this bell goes off in three minutes.”).

Shaping Behaviors Gradually: Small Steps in the Right Direction Add Up

Children with ADHD, like all of us, will probably have particular difficulty changing a complex or long-standing set of behaviors. Expecting your child to make a major behavioral change all at once will most likely result in frustration and failure for you both. As mentioned previously, you can support your child’s efforts to change a complex set of behaviors by breaking the plan down into smaller, achievable steps, and tackling one at a time. This is called “shaping” your child’s behavior. The idea is to break down tasks to the point at which each step is achievable and ends in success and praise for your child instead of failure and frustration. Parent training will help you learn to do this by having you review the targeted outcomes for your child and ways you can help him achieve them. You as parents (or other primary caregivers) can start by writing down what you see as each step toward completing a task or correcting a complex behavior and follow up by creating a plan for working on each step, one at a time. You can incorporate your child in the development of each plan at the level that he can appropriately participate. Even minor goals can be broken down in this way—writing down the steps involved in completing a chore, for example, you might list the steps that your child needs to take in cleaning up his room as

- Puts dirty clothes in a hamper
- Puts books away
- Puts toys in the drawers under his bed
- Pulls up the covers

Then you can start with a single command—“You need to start cleaning up your room by putting the dirty clothes in the hamper.” When this is done successfully, you can praise him—“Good job!” If you had just said, “You need to clean your room,” and he had put his clothes in the hamper, but not put his books and toys away and pulled up the covers, he would not have been successful and you would have ended up making a negative remark or giving a consequence. At the point that putting his clothes in the hamper when you ask becomes automatic, then, after a few days, you can add the next step—putting the clothes in the hamper and putting his books away, praising him for the successful completion. When this is successful you can add the next task, and so on, until the list is complete. In this way you can “shape his behavior” and at the same time turn what used to be negative interactions into positive ones that build on his self-esteem and competence. You can help your child learn to focus better and accomplish tasks more quickly by timing certain tasks as well and encouraging him to try to break his own speed record again and again. Such small triumphs can mean a great deal to children who have experienced repeated failure or frustration at home or at school. Behavior shaping techniques also heighten your child’s awareness of each successful step, helping him to “own” his behavioral successes.

Choosing What to Praise, Ignore, or Punish

The next step in parent training is learning to recognize behaviors that require positive, ignoring, or punishment-type responses. You will be encouraged to do your best to “catch your child being good” and praise her for it whenever possible because this allows for positive interaction and enhances her relationship with you as it strengthens her positive behaviors. Praise should be simple and straightforward (“I like the way you did that.”), and not spoiled by negative references (“Great job—why can’t you always do it like that?”). In many cases a simple smile, hug, or an arm around your child’s shoulders is even more effective than words. Such immediate positive reinforcement is actually a much stronger (and less risky) way to change behavior than larger, long-term rewards, such as the offer of a video game system for maintaining all B’s or staying on the honor roll all semester. However, you may still decide to offer your child stickers, points in a token reward system, or other prizes for putting in the effort to help change behaviors you are working on.

“Active ignoring” is one of the most powerful behavioral tools available to parents, but one of the hardest to carry out. Once you give a command, you must follow it through to the end if it is going to be effective and meaningful to your child. Many parents are in the habit of giving frequent corrections all through the day, and then either do not follow through on many of them or dole out so many punishments that they become ineffective and set up a negative relationship with their child. Learning how to actively ignore certain situations can lead to many fewer commands and significantly improve this situation.

In fact, you may be surprised at how effective ignoring a negative behavior can be. This is especially true once your child has grown accustomed to the positive attention she enjoys in your special times together and no longer needs to demand your attention in negative ways. A child who interrupts your phone conversations over and over is, in most cases, only doing it to get your attention. If you respond by saying something like, “Sarah, I’m on the phone—wait until I get off!” you may think you are giving a command to stop the behavior but you are actually rewarding her by giving her the attention she wanted in the first place. If, instead, you ignore her behavior (by not looking at her or responding in words), her attempts to distract you while you are on the phone may escalate at first, while she tries even harder to get the attention that she is used to. This is what behavior therapists call an “extinction burst”—the behavior gets worse before it gets better. However, if you consistently ignore her, she will gradually learn more functional ways to have her needs met. In this way, ignoring works as

a powerful tool for behavior change. A good proportion of behavior problems can be addressed with a combination of praising and ignoring techniques.

As part of a typical parent training program, you will identify the few behaviors that you consider so dangerous (running into the street without looking, for example) or intolerable (hitting other children to hurt them) that they must meet with immediate punishment. Your therapist will teach you how to discuss these behaviors with your child, figure out the punishments that will follow, and figure out possible ways to avoid the same situation in the future. He will help you understand how much more effective punishment can be if it is limited to only your child's most dangerous or intolerable behaviors. When punishment occurs too frequently (as it often does for children with ADHD), its effects are diminished and the child may no longer consistently respond to it. In addition, most parents do not realize that negative attention can be reinforcing, and because of this, negative consequences should be reserved for those few instances when parents feel they must do something immediately (and not just ignore). Any punishment should be preceded, whenever possible, by a terminating and a warning signal. That way your child will always have the opportunity to exert self-control and avoid the punishment.

No matter what your response to your child's behavior, it will be most effective if it takes place immediately. Putting off a discussion until later, or offering a reward at the end of the week for general good behavior, will greatly diminish its effect on a child with ADHD. The response you have chosen to a particular behavior should be as consistent as possible as well. If you responded appropriately to your child's pushing her brother down with punishment yesterday, respond in the same way today. Your parent training therapist will help you decide in advance on the best responses to your child's most frequent behavior issues so you can carry out these actions with confidence.

Using Rewards to Motivate Positive Behavior

Praise is a powerful motivator for all children, but many also especially enjoy and respond to additional, tangible motivators such as reward charts and token economies. Reward charts usually consist of daily calendar sheets listing 4 or 5 achievable chores, behaviors, or other goals on which you and your child have agreed. Before instituting the reward chart with your child, you will have observed your child enough to know that he can successfully complete most of the behaviors listed. The description of each behavior needs to be clear, countable, and unambiguous (for example, "is upstairs brushing his teeth within 5 minutes after being told" or "gets out of bed by the third time he's asked"). You might have 5 items on a chart—4 of which are easily achievable by your child with an additional 1 that you are presently working on. Charts can be reviewed daily, and this becomes a time to let your child know how proud of him you are for working on his chores or behavior. If too many of the items are not achievable and do not end up with stars or stickers, your child will get easily frustrated and negative about participating. Each time your child accomplishes the goal he receives a sticker, a star, or other mark of achievement on the chart. Many younger children are happy enough just to receive the stickers or stars themselves, but some older children may want to accumulate numbers of stars or stickers and redeem them for privileges—such as a trip to a baseball game or to the beach, or modest, prearranged material rewards. These rewards do not need to be new privileges. What you are really doing is putting some of his everyday privileges under his behavioral control, knowing in advance that he will experience success.

Another type of reward system, called a token economy, also involves receiving tokens, stars, stickers, or points for behaving appropriately or complying with commands. Token economies are similar to reward charts in that they can often be helpful when praise alone is not enough to motivate a child to complete tasks or stick to routines. The gains from using a token economy approach can often be seen quickly, but can also fade unless this kind of system is kept up for some time. Each targeted behavior is given a value (3 stickers, 4 points) depending on how difficult a challenge it is for your child. You and your child can then create a list of fun activities or treats that he can "buy" with a prearranged number of stickers or points. Response cost—the withdrawing of rewards or privileges in response to unwanted or problem behavior—can be eventually added onto this system if necessary. In that case, your child's failure to accomplish a targeted behavior on his own or after an agreed-on limit results in the same number of stickers or points being deducted from his total. Before response cost is introduced, you need to make sure your child is earning tokens and has "bought into" the token economy plan. Make sure that you see it as motivating and that your child sees it as fun. Otherwise, it will become a frustrating exercise to your child and therefore useless as a strategy.

Reward charts and token economies are good ways to help motivate children to take responsibility for their own behavioral improvement when praise alone has not been effective enough. They also help parents facilitate these gains in structured, positive, consistent, and objective ways. These techniques work especially well when the rewards for compliance are immediate (getting the tokens as soon as possible after complying, and going on the earned and agreed-on trip to the beach within a week). Their effectiveness is also enhanced when your child gets the opportunity to help create the list of goals, assigned value of each behavior, and rewards that follow satisfactory compliance. It is also best to do what you can to keep point deductions to a minimum (by breaking tasks up into reasonable steps and not expecting too much too soon) so that your child does not become too discouraged and give up. Some children do not start to warm up to token economies until they have experienced one or more of the promised "big rewards," so be sure to continue the technique for 1 or more months—as long as your child does not become too frustrated or resistant—before deciding whether it is useful for him. Keeping his goals achievable and the program positive will go a long way toward making this approach successful.

Using Punishment Effectively

No one likes to invoke negative consequences for unacceptable behavior, but doing so calmly and consistently is a necessary part of helping your child learn new ways of functioning. At first it can be difficult to decide when punishment is appropriate because it is easy to attribute much of your child's failure to manage some of her behaviors appropriately to "her ADHD." Refusal to obey, when it does occur along with ADHD, can be greatly reduced with effective parenting techniques.

When parents think about "discipline" and punishment, they often think about spanking (without causing physical injury) as a way to reduce or stop undesirable behavior. Many studies have shown that spanking is, however, a less effective strategy than time-out or removal of privileges for achieving these goals. In addition, spanking models aggressive behavior as a solution to conflict, and can lead to agitated or aggressive behavior, physical injury, or resentment toward parents and deterioration of parent-child relationships. The use of spanking as a strategy for punishment is discouraged by most experts and organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Time-outs and loss of privileges are the 2 forms of punishment that have been proven most effective for children with ADHD. They are appropriate tools for responding to the few behaviors you have identified as intolerable. Time-outs, most often used with younger children, involve sending your child to a specified room (with no entertaining distractions and a door that can be closed) or chair (where you can see her) until the end of a preset time—usually about 1 minute per year of the child's age (usually 5–10 minutes). Before instituting time-outs, you must discuss your intention with your child, explaining that they will be the consequence of violating the family's most important rules. Explain that you will always give a terminating command ("Give your brother's toy back.") and a warning ("If you don't give it back within one minute you'll be in time-out.") before you impose a time-out, so that your child will always be able to choose to avoid it by changing her behavior on the spot. Keeping in mind the difficulty with time perception that some children experience, tell your child that you will use a timer to measure the length of the time-out, and demonstrate to her how the timer works.

Once your child understands how time-outs will work, you can begin to implement them when appropriate. When your child displays an unacceptable behavior

- Warn her that a time-out will occur if she does not respond to your warning in a specific amount of time ("Anna, stop pushing your sister. If you haven't stopped by the time I count to three, you will have a time-out.>").
- If she does not comply in the specified time, firmly but calmly send her to the time-out setting. Do not give her more time to comply or let her engage you in any distracting interaction.
- Tell her how many minutes the time-out will last, set a timer, and leave her alone—do not start negotiating whether she can get out earlier, or avoid going in. Some experts suggest adding another minute to the time-out each time your child leaves the time-out space or is disruptive, then allowing her out at the end of that time if she is quiet and cooperative.
- When she has completed the time-out process, make a point of praising her next positive behavior so that the negative "punishment" experience is fully ended.

Be prepared for a great deal of resistance the first few times when time-outs occur. Soon, however, your child will learn that you are remaining consistent; that resisting, arguing, or negotiating no longer work; and that it is better to change the original behavior and avoid the time-out altogether. Meanwhile, remember that the goal is for your child to focus on staying out of time-outs rather than getting out of them once she has "chosen" to take the time-out rather than complying with your request to stop an unacceptable behavior. Remember also that "time-out" is time out from "time in"—meaning that the only reason your child will care if she gets a time-out is if she is used to loving, positive, and fun family interactions that will be missed during the time-out period. By supporting your child in these positive ways while sticking to the rules you have created, you can help your child learn to control her behavior and respect your fair and consistent authority.

Loss of privileges, a more appropriate negative consequence for older children and teenagers, consists of invoking a "cost" for intolerable behavior. If your child breaks a family rule or ignores a command after a pre-agreed-on number of warnings, privileges are removed for a time appropriate to the seriousness of the transgression. This technique works best if your child has participated in decisions about exactly which behaviors will merit a loss of privileges and agrees in advance to some prenegotiated penalties. It is also a good idea to try to relate the penalty as closely as possible to the transgression. Your child's failure to complete her homework, for example, may cost her television privileges the next day, while a teenager's failure to return home after curfew may cause her to lose car privileges for the weekend.

If you find that your child continues to strongly resist time-outs or loss of privileges while continuing the negative behaviors, consider the way in which you are implementing these techniques. If you have been giving in to her resistance—allowing her out of the time-out area if she yells and kicks long enough, or letting her negotiate you out of a loss-of-privilege punishment—she will have learned that resistance allows her to have her way. If you have been enforcing the rules sometimes, but not every time, she may not be able to resist testing your responses on every occasion to learn what you will do this time. If you have successfully carried out an effective punishment procedure but neglected to add praise afterward and at other times during the day, your child may have decided she will never be able to succeed and give up trying. These are the reasons why it is so important to remain calm, firm, and consistent while invoking a punishment and to follow up as soon as possible with reassuring praise.

Managing Your Child's Behavior in Public

With proper training and practice, behavior therapy techniques can become relatively simple to implement at home, where a time-out area is clearly identified and it is possible to respond immediately to unacceptable behavior. Parents are often most disturbed by intolerable behavior when it occurs in public, however, because they feel that other adults—who do not know that their child has ADHD and have no idea how much progress he has already made—are negatively judging their child and their parenting skills. In any case, children with ADHD need to learn to manage their behavior wherever they are, so it is important to establish methods for implementing disciplinary techniques outside the home.

The most effective behavior management methods for use in public are the same ones you have developed with your child at home. If he is already familiar with the standard costs for certain types of behavior, you may need only remind him privately before you enter the new environment which 2 or 3 behavior rules he most needs to keep in mind, what rewards will result from his following them, and what the cost will be for breaking these rules. To help him maintain his efforts to comply, praise his positive behaviors occasionally during the outing and let him know you appreciate how hard he is trying to follow the rules—"catch him being good." If he manages to control his behavior throughout the entire period, acknowledge the difficulty of this feat and give him special praise. If you have also offered a reward, then provide it as soon as possible.

If your child refuses or fails to behave acceptably, even after a final warning, you will need to invoke the appropriate negative consequence. Do not delay just because you are among other people—delay will probably just lead to increased misbehavior. You can enforce token economy "fines" or removal of privileges practically anywhere (as long as you keep your conversation private), but you may need to talk with your therapist ahead of time about how you might implement them discreetly yet effectively at the supermarket, your friend's house, church, or wherever you expect to be.

Your child needs your competent handling of rewards and limits as he practices new behavioral rules in public, but he also needs your thoughtful planning if he is to successfully maintain his best self-control in these situations. Planning in advance can make all the difference in his ability to control his restlessness and stay focused. Whenever you take him along on errands, to a restaurant or friend's house, or for a trip—even across town—be sure to pack some activities to keep him happily occupied (activity books, handheld computer games, paper and pen). Once you are in public together, involve him in your activity if possible (helping choose items at the store, helping to make a snack at your friend's house).

Maintaining the Gains From Parent Training

After the sessions are finished, before your behavioral parent training program is complete, you should discuss ways in which you can continue to help your child work toward his targeted outcomes in the months and years to come. You will have learned how to recognize when a desired goal has been reasonably achieved and when and how to formulate new targets with your child, his teacher, and the rest of his treatment team. You should also discuss the ways in which you will need to adapt your parenting techniques to your growing child's new stages of development. While behavioral parent training programs do focus in large part on younger children, you will learn how to move from time-outs to response-cost-type techniques as your child grows and to include him more and more in discussions about behavioral goals, rewards and punishments, and treatment decisions.

Making the Most Out of Parenting Techniques

Clearly, parent training and techniques take a great deal of effort on your part. It is always difficult to change old habits, and altering your parenting approach can be especially challenging because it often springs from family tradition and deep-seated childhood experiences. As you read at the beginning, being able to participate in a formal parent training program is an optimal way to learn, practice, and get feedback on the techniques discussed in this article, but, if this is not possible for any number of reasons, you can also work on these principles with your child's pediatrician or psychologist in a less formal way. While reading this material can give you a general idea of how behavior therapy works, actually participating in parent training or working with professionals in other ways allows you to tailor its methods to your own unique situation, try out some of the techniques under expert guidance, and get regular feedback on what is and is not working and on how to adjust your approach. Without this focused support, you might find success more limited.

Keep in mind, too, that behavior therapies, including parent training, have been shown to be effective only while they are being implemented and maintained. (Your child is not likely to keep up his improved behavior if you drop the effective techniques you have learned.) Even during periods when you see little progress, it is important to remain consistent. During those times when you feel exhausted and discouraged, and wonder what the point is of trying (and most parents of children with ADHD do get to that point once in a while), consider how hard your child must also work to continue trying to maintain his best self-control. By focusing as much as possible on the positive, thinking creatively, and asking for expert help when needed, you can maintain the supportive structure you have created for your child and eventually see measurable improvement.

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