



Helpful Tips for working with ADHD Scouts

Scouting has made a commitment to making sure that the scouting program is available to all youth. This includes scouts that have been diagnosed with ADHD or scouts that have behaviors that could be considered ADHD without the formal diagnosis. ADHD stands for Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder. This handout is in no way meant to diagnosis any type of disorder or recommend any type of treatments. The goal is to help Scout leaders to identify behaviors that are normally associated with ADHD and offer tips and techniques to make the scouting program more inclusive for those scouts while improving the program for all youth.

The three types of ADHD have their own set of behaviors that scout leaders may encounter.



Inattention type. Youth in this subtype have trouble maintaining focus for long periods of time and are sometime undiagnosed. Symptoms include:

- Trouble paying attention
- Disorganized
- Doesn't seem to listen when spoken to directly
- Cannot stay on task very long



Hyperactive/impulsive subtype. Youth in this group are what most people consider “hyper”. Symptoms include:

- Interrupting others
- Blurting out answer before questions are finished
- Always in motion or “fidgeting”
- Unable to perform tasks quietly

Combined subtype. Youth in this group have symptoms from the lists in the first two types.

Most youth will demonstrate one or more of the above symptoms on any given day. This does not mean that they have ADHD. This means they are youth. ADHD can only be diagnosed by a

trained medical professional. Here are some helpful techniques that are beneficial when dealing with scouts with ADHD. *This list is not all inclusive and not all techniques will work with all scouts.* It is up to the adult leadership to work with the scouts, parents, and youth to find the combination of techniques that work best for the situation. Often it is a combination of techniques that is the most effective.



1. **Transition warnings.**


Changing tasks for youth with ADHD can be difficult. Simple countdowns or reminders like “We have 5 minutes left before we move on to ...” or alert that things will be changing can go a long way to making that transition easier for scouts as you move through your program.







2. **Quick and respectful**

feedback with redirection. When a youth does act out, feedback is best given as soon as possible. The feedback should be as non-public as possible and should also include a redirect. Yelling across a



field “Knock it off” is not an example of this. Walk over to the scout and softly speak to them while directing them back on task will have better long-term results. “I noticed that instead of working on your knots you were trying to play jump rope. That is not what we are working on. Why don’t ask you troop guide for help with that knot and maybe we can get that signed off in your book?” This identifies the incorrect behavior and the desired behavior at the same time.

3.  **Break directions in small chunks** - These take some preplanning. What you may consider a simple direction may be overwhelming to a youth with ADHD. Think of the direction of “set up your tent”. For a youth with ADHD that simple request can spin into a panic. “Where do I set up my tent? Which way should it face? What do I first? There is a ground cover, rain fly, tent stakes, guy lines, tent poles, etc.” Breaking this small task of setting up your tent into multiple directions will make it more manageable for the youth. With

repetition you may get back to “set up your tent” but be prepared to walk through it as a multi-step process several times.

4.  **Brain Breaks** - include short segments of physical movement during prolonged instruction time.
5.  **Routines** – Structure and routines are good. Knowing what is coming and what to expect helps youth prepare for what is next. When you need to break the routing, make sure that you give plenty of warning before it happens.
6.  **Reward good behavior** - Consistent positive feedback for the proper behaviors is key. Don’t just say that they did a good job. Be specific and identify what they did well.
7.  **Have clear rules and consequences** – Be consistent. Write them down and stick to them for all scouts. You can also

develop the contract with the scouts.

8.  **Avoid sit and listen activities** – Younger scouts can sit and listen to a lecture for about 1 minute per year of age before they tune out and seek other stimulation. Break up the teaching with activities that reinforce the topics that you are teaching.
9.  **Communicate with parents** – You are not on an island. Youth that have been officially diagnosed with special needs will have an IEP on file with their school that the parents will have access to. That form was prepared by a professional. If the parents are willing to share it with you, you will find information on the best ways to work with your youth, as well as their strengths and weaknesses. Outside of the IED, open communication includes asking for help and assistance.

This guide created by Todd Lambert as part of his Wood Badge Ticket