

# ♥ Thriving with ADHD

## The 5 C's

**Thriving with ADHD's 5 C's** is a framework parents can use to assist them create and maintain a healthy relationship with their child with ADHD. This is vital as when a child feels heard, valued, understood and appreciated they are more likely to act in a manner that meets parental and societal expectations in order to protect the relationship they have with their loved ones. They are also more likely to be receptive to redirection, as well as open to gaining the awareness and understanding they require to develop in a healthy manner and one day manage their symptoms independently.

**Connection** – focus on your relationship with your child first; spend one-on-one time with them; make them feel safe and valued; have fun together; give them your full attention; let them know you love them; focus on the positive; show respect and appreciation; honour their boundaries; keep them company during tasks that tax their executive function; support them to cope with their emotions.

**Composure** – be patient with your child; manage your own emotions; breath before responding; remind yourself that challenging behaviour is often due to lagging skills not disobedience; give directions in a calm, matter of fact manner; describe don't judge; be a good role model.

**Compassion** – give your child your full attention and listen with empathy; aim to understand their point of view; listen to not only what they are saying but how they are saying it (as well as what they are not saying); acknowledge and validate; reserve judgement and avoid giving advice.  
Note: you can listen and understand without condoning behaviour.

**Collaboration** – provide the scaffolding that will ensure your child's success; access the teachable moments that open up when the first 3 C's are in place; use the coach approach; foster their strengths; identify lagging skills and put in place strategies to help them learn these skills; use diplomacy; give them a choice; involve them in any rule setting or decision making; explore options for resolving problems together; ask them what they think would help them; encourage problem solving; stay open to possibilities; provide motivating praise which qualifies the behaviour you are acknowledging and provide rewards as required.

Remember the aim is to gradually reduce the need for externally imposed discipline by fostering internally imposed discipline or self-regulation.

**Consistency** – set and reflect rules and expectations; make clear requests of your child and keep your word; make sure they understand all the steps required to complete a task successfully; support them to achieve their goals; be flexible in your approach; promote responsibility; focus on outcomes; praise and reward positive behaviour; set clear and fair consequences for negative behaviour and act swiftly should you need to.

*Kids desire to feel loved and appreciated for who they are, and to feel safe and valued. When this need is met, it fosters the motivation required to want to behave in a way that pleases their parents in order to protect their bonded relationships.*

# Executive Functions

**Executive functions** are the mental processes that people rely on to control themselves and get things done, even when they find the required task to be boring or tedious, and the reward for effort is delayed. According to Russell Barkley (2015) there are 6 executive functions (or self-directed actions):

- **Self-awareness** which comes from wilfully directing one's attention inwardly to become aware of one's thoughts, feelings, motivators and behaviour.
- **Inhibition** or self-restraint. This complex process involves:
  - Delaying one's initial reactionary response to a stimulus.
  - Redirecting one's attention inwardly and paying selective attention to the process of recalling information, contemplating the future, and problem solving, all whilst inhibiting intrusive external or internal stimulus.
  - Choosing and actioning an appropriate self-determine response (words and behaviours).
- **Non-Verbal Working Memory** which is the ability to recall visual imagery or pictures, as well as sound, taste, touch, smell, and to use this information to problem solve and sense the hypothetical future.
- **Verbal Working Memory** which is the ability to use internal speech for self-instruction, self-reflection, self-soothing and problem solving, and to invent personal rules that govern one's own behaviour.
- **Self-motivation** or self-directed control which is the ability to weigh-up the outcome benefits of possible options in order to choose one which maximises goal attainment, even when there is no immediate consequence.
- **Planning or problem solving** which is the ability to flexibly manipulate and analyse information, to generate new ideas and to play with these ideas in order to find new approaches or solutions to problems/obstacles, and to plan interventions in order to obtain goals.

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*ADHD medication strengthens self-control capacity. However, pills don't teach skills or bridge the gap between a child's executive function age and their peer age. Therefore, kids with ADHD need us to put in place scaffolding that supports their developmental delay so they can successfully meet the expectations placed upon them, both at school and at home. They also need us to foster in them self-awareness, self-understanding and self-compassion, as well as the knowledge and skills they require to develop in a healthy manner so they can live a full and rewarding life with ADHD.*