

Why Scouting Can be Great for Scouts with AD/HD

- Scouting is a well thought-out, highly structured program that provides a step-by-step sequence of skills for Scouts to master.
- Scouting promises Fun, Friendship, and Adventure, presenting new skills in an exciting and motivating way.
- Scouting offers frequent positive recognition, both formally and informally, for accomplishments, advancement, and participation. This is especially important for the AD/HD Scout whose self-esteem may have suffered from an excess of negative feedback.
- The values of Scouting promote an atmosphere where Scouts may feel secure enough to take risks and try new skills without fear of ridicule.
- Scouting fosters the development of leadership skills and social skills through experiences in a supportive environment where Scouts can learn from their successes and failures.
- Scouting provides an extensive variety of activities, experiences, and challenges; the opportunity is there for each Scout to discover his unique strengths and interests.

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Supporting Scouts with Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder



What is AD/HD?

Compared to the average person, someone with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder may be significantly more distractible, active, and impulsive. Some individuals with AD/HD are not as hyperactive and impulsive, but have great difficulty focusing attention. AD/HD Scouts may move from one task to another without finishing what they have started, act without thinking, get frustrated easily, lose their tempers quickly, call out and not waiting for a turn, have difficulty getting organized and following directions, forget easily, fidget a lot or disrupt group activities. Most people do one or more of these things from time to time, but individuals with AD/HD do more of them, more of the time, and it interferes with their abilities.

Most researchers believe that AD/HD is a physiological problem. There are many strategies for helping the AD/HD individual. Treatment often involves a combination of medication, counseling, behavior modification, and parenting. Medication can give the Scout a chance to better focus while learning and developing new skills. Other treatments can provide specific strategies and reinforcements for improving focus and impulse control. With support from parents and Scout Leaders, Scouting offers excellent opportunities for AD/HD Scouts to enhance the skills that will enable them to be successful in school, with peers, and in life.

Tips for Parents and Scout Leaders

Tips for Parents

- If your Scout has AD/HD, let your Scout leader know. Discuss the strategies you have found to work best so that he can provide your son with what he needs to focus on, to benefit from, and to enjoy Scouting. Also let him know what strategies do not work.
- If your Scout takes medication to help him focus at school, it may help him focus better during Scout activities as well. You may want to discuss this issue with your Scout's physician.
- If your Scout is going on a day trip, a weekend camping trip, or a week of summer camp, be sure to let your Scout Leader know what his needs are. There are many things the leader can do to make sure your Scout has an enjoyable and successful experience — if he is informed.
- According to BSA Policy, prescription medication is the responsibility of the Scout taking the medication and/or his parent or guardian. A Scout leader, after obtaining all necessary information, can agree to accept the responsibility of making sure a Scout takes the necessary medication at the appropriate time, but BSA policy does not mandate nor necessarily encourage the Scout leader to do so. Also, if state laws are more limiting, they must be followed.

Tips for Scout Leaders

- Let the Scout know ahead of time what is expected. When activities are long or complicated, it may help to write down a list of smaller steps.
- Repeat directions one-on-one when necessary, or assign a more mature buddy to assist the Scout with directions and organization.
- Provide frequent breaks and opportunities for Scouts to move around actively; however, it is NOT helpful to keep AD/HD Scouts so active that they are exhausted. AD/HD Scouts usually have MORE difficulty focusing and controlling their impulses when they are exhausted, as most of us do.
- When it is necessary to redirect a Scout, do so in private, in a calm voice. Never publicly humiliate any Scout. Whenever possible, "sandwich" the correction between two positive comments.
- Be aware of "early warning signs" that the Scout is beginning to lose impulse control. Fidgety behavior may be a sign that Scouts have been sitting too long and need a more active activity. Proximity control (moving close to them) or private signals can help.
- During active games, be aware when a Scout is becoming too aggressive while playing. It may help to pull the Scout aside, suggest a drink of water, and give a "correction sandwich" to go with it.
- Complement the Scout whenever you find a genuine opportunity.
- Expect the AD/HD Scout to follow the same rules as other Scouts. AD/HD is NOT an excuse for uncontrolled behavior.
- If it has not been possible to intervene pro-actively, and you must impose consequences for out-of-control behavior, use time-out or "cooling off."
- Find out what the medical needs are, and make sure you have what your council requires to enable you to meet those needs. If you realize the Scout has not taken his medication, make sure you present it as something to help him focus, not to help him behave.
- Present correction in a way that is respectful and that allows the Scout to save face. When Scouts are treated with respect, they are more likely to respect the authority of the Scout leader.
- Keep Cool and don't take challenges personally. Keep in mind that AD/HD Scouts want to be successful, but they need support, positive feedback, and clear limits.
- AD/HD Scouts are generally energetic, enthusiastic, and bright. Help them use these strengths to become leaders in your troop. Activities such as leading cheers, performing in skits, and teaching Scoutcraft skills to younger Scouts may improve his ability to focus, raise his self esteem, and benefit the troop as a whole.

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