

AN OVERVIEW

Behavior Therapy for Children with ADHD

Behavior therapy is an important part of treatment for children with ADHD.

ADHD (attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder) can affect a child's ability to pay attention or sit still at school, and it also can affect relationships with family and other children.

Behavior therapy is a treatment option that can help manage daily challenges and reduce impulsive, risky, or disruptive behaviors. It is often helpful to start behavior therapy as soon as problems are diagnosed.

For younger children

Teaches parents, teachers, and other caregivers how to give children the support and structure they need.

For older children

Helps children recognize their symptoms and better manage their own behavior. Often includes parents and teachers.

What is Behavior Therapy?

The goals of behavior therapy are to encourage positive behaviors and reduce unwanted or problem behaviors.

Good treatment plans will include monitoring improvement closely and adjusting the therapy as needed along the way.

Types of Behavior Therapy

- **Parent training in behavior therapy:** Parents learn to use skills to better manage and support their child's behavior. Parents learn ways to strengthen their relationship with their child.
- **Behavior therapy with children:** The therapist works with the child to learn new behaviors to replace behaviors that cause problems. The therapist may also help the child learn to handle feelings in ways that do not create problems for the child or other people.

Behavior therapy can be individual or in groups. Teachers can also use behavior therapy to help reduce problem behaviors in the classroom.

Choosing Behavior Therapy at Different Ages

- Behavior therapy training for parents is effective for managing behavior in young children through age 12.
- The age when children are ready for their own therapy varies, but usually by about 8–10 years of age.
- For school-age children, parent training and behavior therapy with children can be very effective when used in combination.

Finding a Therapist

Psychologists, licensed counselors, and licensed social workers can provide behavior therapy.

- Check professional association directories or health insurance provider directories.
- Review the therapists' profile or call and ask about their approach to ADHD treatment.

American Academy of Pediatrics: Treatment Recommendations for ADHD

Age 4-5 years: Behavior therapy first, before trying medication

Age 6 and up: Behavior therapy and medication, preferably together

cdc.gov/adhd/treatment/behavior-therapy



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