

The 5 Cs of PARENTING

a kiddo who has ADHD



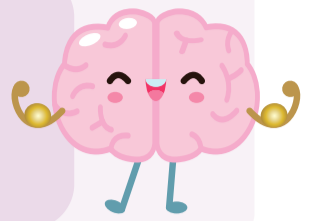
Parenting a kiddo who has neurodivergent skills takes a special set of parenting skills.

A child who has ADHD has some skills and struggles that are different from those of a neurotypical child. Not better or worse – different.

What does "neurodiverse" mean?

The Australian sociologist Judy Singer coined the word "neurodiversity" in 1998 to recognize that everyone's brain develops in a unique way.

Having a neurodivergent brain means your brain is different, not sick or defective.



1

CONTROL

SELF-control, that is.

aka
CHILL
"Put on your own oxygen mask first."

Drawing from your own regulated state, your child can co-regulate with you. Your kiddo will move towards matching your energy, so they need you to model self-regulation. They need you to stay calm and cool as a cucumber, so they can practice and learn getting back to a chill state. Over and over again. Consistently.

TIPS

- Pause before responding
- Respond, don't react by matching their energy
- Reflect on your own triggers
- Grow your coping skills by rehearsing them. Repeatedly playing out scenarios in your mind rebuilds your own neural pathways, developing your ability to consistently respond in a regulated way.
- Use whatever coping skills you have access to in the moment



2

CONSISTENCY

aka
TRY
"There is try. Try. Try. Try."



- Repetition, repetition, repetition.
- Aim for small, easy, incremental steps.
- The goal is practice, not perfection.
- Allow your kiddo and yourself grace. Growing and learning is HARD.



3

COLLABORATION

A collaborative, constructive, positive approach is way more effective than a punitive one.

aka
TEAM
"We."

- "We" instead of "you" statements
- Incentives, not punishments
- Incentives teach that "have-to's" come before "want-to's"
- Punishments do not teach skills

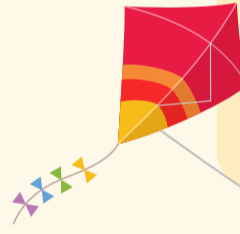
Use the Premack Principle.

The Premack principle was developed by psychologist David Premack in 1965. According to this principle, a person will perform a less preferred activity (low probability behaviour, e.g., homework) to gain access to a more preferred activity (high probability behaviour, e.g., playing outside).

aka

FIRST - THEN

"First homework. Then, after homework is done, you can play outside."



4

COMPASSION

- **Do not compare your child.** Meet your child where they are. Your child is not neurotypical. Comparing your child to a neurotypical peer or sibling is not fair.
- **Do not compare yourself to other parents** with neurotypical or neurodivergent kids. Comparison serves no one.
- **Have compassion for your child and for yourself.** Remember: you and your child are doing your best to manage.

aka
HUMAN

Compassion is a relationship between equals. Compassion becomes real when we recognize our shared humanity.

—Brené Brown

TIP Use reflective listening.

When your child shares their concerns, repeat back what they said to you and ask if you have fully understood. This helps your kid feel heard and understood, and it helps you both to connect.



5

CELEBRATION

A child's sense of self is compromised when their behaviour is constantly criticized.

Unfortunately, it happens more often than you might suspect. Researchers estimate that a child with ADHD receives **20,000** more corrective or negative messages by age 10 than a child without ADHD. That's 5.5 harsh messages a day. The good news? You can override those with constant celebration!

TIPS

- **Flip the script.** Shift your focus to celebrating everything that is working instead of bringing up what is not.
- **TIP the scales.** Celebrate constantly. Acknowledge, validate, and celebrate your child's successes often— at least 3 times more often than you point out what isn't working. Aim for **15+** happy celebration messages a day.

BTW

This works for adults, too. In a couples relationship context, Dr. John Gottman found that stable relationships have a **5:1 ratio** of positivity to negativity during conflict.

aka
PROGRESS not PERFECTION
"Celebrate good times, come on."
—KOOL & THE GANG



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