

## **ADD Homework Success Program**

Based on the book "Homework Success for Children with ADHD" by Thomas Power, James Karustis, and Dina Habboushe, Guilford Press, 2001, and "The A.D.D. Book" by William Sears, M.D. and Lynda Thompson, Ph.D.

# ADVANCED Psych Care

## ADD Homework Success Program

Welcome to the ADVANCED Psych Care Homework Success Program. This program is designed to assist your family in coping with the challenges of homework, so that your child can succeed better academically and so that you can enjoy a more satisfying relationship with your ADD child. Many families have reported that the strategies learned in this program have enabled them to change homework from a time of conflict and stress to an opportunity for collaboration and problem solving.

### OUR APPROACH

We use what is called a *Conjoint Behavioral Consultation Model* in this program. By *Conjoint* we mean that all individuals who are important to the child play a role in intervention. Specifically, the individuals (and their roles) involved in this team are:

1. **Parents:** Learn and apply the program's behavioral strategies
2. **Child:** Learn the strategies and cooperate with parents in applying them.
3. **Therapist:** Teach the behavioral strategies and provide consultation to team members.
4. **Teachers:** Provide frequent feedback to child and parents. Make accommodations based on collaborative problem solving with the parents and therapist.
5. **Physicians:** Prescribe and monitor medication as needed. Consult with therapist as required.

It is important that within each of these roles we are all working together for the common goals of increasing homework productivity and decreasing your child's behavioral problems.

*Behavioral* refers to an approach that focuses on identifying and targeting environmental influences on a child's actions. Specifically, we are interested in examining and changing the events that occur before and after a problem behavior and that may serve to provoke or maintain a problem. The key to a behavioral approach is to focus on events that can be changed and not to focus on intrinsic personality issues that are very difficult to change.

*Consultation* refers to the process of promoting collaboration among team members to work adaptively and solve problems by effectively using behavioral strategies in different settings.

Please bring this information packet to each session with the therapist, as we will be distributing more worksheets and handouts each week.

1. **Please arrive at each session on time.** One of the basic principles of Homework Success is to begin homework at the same time each day. Therefore it is important that you *model timeliness* for your child by being ready to begin the session on time. We will try to schedule sessions weekly for 6 weeks, with a booster session to follow 4 weeks later (a total of 7 sessions). In the booster session, we meet to discuss successes and problems each person has encountered using the tools provided in the Homework Success Program.
2. **Do your homework.** This is an active, goal-directed program. Parents who are committed to improving the quality of their child's homework consistently do their Homework Success assignments. If you become frustrated (which is common), let us help you in trouble-shooting with you.
3. **Communicate with your child's teacher.** Frequent and collaborative home-school communication is essential to achieve the goals of this program. Ask questions of your child's teacher, and be sure to let him or her know how your child is progressing regarding the Homework Success goals.
4. **Call us.** Do not hesitate to call us if you experience problems when doing your between session assignments during the week. Dr. Richardson can be reached at 847-222-0793, option 3.
5. **Hang in there.** Although many families begin to experience positive benefits from the program right away, benefits will usually tend to become more evident as the sessions unfold. So while you and your child work hard and try to remain patient, we urge you to hang in there.
6. **Be hopeful!** Addressing homework difficulties is a very challenging process. However, we are confident that if you consistently listen, ask questions, and work very hard to apply these strategies, you will observe some very positive changes in your child's homework productivity, as well as in your relationship with your child.
7. **Enjoy the process!** Strange as it may sound while you and your child are experiencing homework problems and conflicts, the process of working on improving homework time does not have to be painful. We strongly encourage you to take note of the gains that you make and to celebrate them.

**Weekly Family Assignments**

Week	Assignment	Day or Days completed

## **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Basic Facts**

1. **Is there more than one type of ADHD?** The disorder now referred to as ADHD has undergone many changes of the years in terms of how it is classified. The primary categories that are accepted by the psychiatric community as a whole are (a) *inattention* (b) *impulsivity*, and (c) *hyperactivity*, which are classified in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (DSM-IV) into three ADHD subtypes: predominantly inattentive type, predominantly hyperactive and impulsive type, and combined type. It is not necessary for all children diagnosed with ADD to have the hyperactivity component. There is new research, using neuroimaging data that suggest that these categories are incomplete and may be misleading in terms of proper treatment protocols. Dr. Daniel Amen, in his book *Healing ADD*, describes 6 distinct types of AD/HD based on SPECT studies of the brains of normal and ADD children and adults, which include the 3 listed in the DSM-IV (with the combined type and the hyperactive/impulsive type conflated). The inattentive type of ADD and the hyperactive type of ADHD all involved an underactivity in the frontal lobes of the brain, specifically the prefrontal cortex, and are associated with a deficit in the neurotransmitter Dopamine. There is also an “overfocused” subtype of ADD that is based on overactivity in the cingulated area of the brain, an “explosive” subtype of ADD that is based on dysregulation in the temporal lobes of the brain, a “depressive” subtype that is based on dysfunction in the limbic system in the mid-brain, and a “ring of fire” subtype that is based on multiple dysfunctions in a large fraction of the cerebral cortex. As Dr. Amen explains, these different subtypes require different medications, dietary modifications, nutritional supplementation, behavioral management approaches at home and at school, and neurofeedback approaches. Dr. Richardson has a Diagnostic Screening Survey that includes Dr. Amen’s criteria for the different subtypes of ADD and will inform your work together with him and the recommendations that he makes for treatment.
2. **If a person has the symptoms, does that mean he or she has ADHD?** The occurrence of ADHD symptoms in itself is not enough to receive an ADHD diagnosis. The following criteria must also be met:
  - a. Symptoms must be present in more than one setting, such as both home and school.
  - b. The child must have some sort of clinical impairment associated with the symptoms. In other words, the symptoms must cause a significant problem in the child’s academic, social, and/or behavioral functioning.
  - c. Some of the symptoms must have been present before the age of seven.

3. **Where does ADHD come from?** First, let us dispel some rumors:
  - a. ADHD is not caused by faulty parenting
  - b. ADHD is not caused by poor teachers
  - c. ADHD is not caused by the junk food your child eats
  - We are not claiming here that parenting and teaching practices cannot affect a child's functioning (more on this later). In fact, one of our guiding principles for treatment is that effective parenting and teaching practices can help increase appropriate behaviors, and decrease undesirable behaviors.
  - Solid research outlining the role of diet on the core symptoms of ADD has yet to be published in peer-reviewed journals, but it does seem clear that at least for some children, dietary modifications can have some benefit for children with ADD, although rarely are they sufficient except in the case of severe food allergies. However, when the simple DSM-IV diagnoses are amplified by Daniel Amen's subtypes, a sensible dietary strategy can be implemented based upon what neurotransmitter may be deficient in your child.
  - ADHD tends to be inherited.
  - There is increasing evidence that ADHD is a neurologically based disorder entailing deficits in behavioral inhibition and self-regulation. Put simply, this means that those areas of the brain that play a significant role in concentrating, planning, and controlling impulses (the frontal lobe and prefrontal cortex) may be underactive.
  - ADHD is more common in boys than in girls (in a ratio of about 3 or 4 to 1).
  - Despite all the attention that the disorder gets in the press about its overdiagnosis and epidemic proportions, the prevalence of ADHD has been found to be about 5% of school children world-wide. ADHD can be misdiagnosed and treated incorrectly, so it is imperative that an accurate diagnosis be made before treatments are started.
  
4. **Who is qualified to diagnose my child?** Professionals with expertise in developmental and behavioral principles include psychologists, psychiatrists, neurologists, and pediatricians. Standard diagnostic procedures include a history, behavioral assessments from a range of situations, and tests to rule out physical conditions that may mimic ADHD. In addition, psychologists can do further tests which can establish a more objective diagnosis, including computerized Continuous Performance Tests, IQ tests, tests for Learning Disabilities, and quantitative brainwave analysis.
  
5. **Could my child have a problem that looks like ADHD but is really something else?** Symptoms of ADHD can appear in children who actually have other problems. For example:
  - a. Medical problems that can mimic ADHD include severe allergies, reactions to medications, thyroid problems, endocrine problems,

birth trauma, brain damage, and others. It is necessary for someone in the medical profession to rule out these “ADHD Imposters.”

- b.** A child with psychological problems, such as depression, may have low energy and have problems concentrating, or become irritable and hyperactive. Stressful events in a child’s life can take up so much energy that there is a decreased ability to concentrate or control oneself. For example, a child whose parent is seriously ill may be preoccupied about the parent and may consequently not be focusing in school.
  - c.** A child with behavior problems, such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) may have problems following directions and misbehaving in class.
  - d.** A child with a Learning Disorder that have not been adequately addressed may have a difficult time sitting still and paying attention, mainly because he or she cannot understand what is being taught.
- 6. Could my child have a problem in addition to ADHD?** Yes. These are called “comorbid conditions.” Some common comorbid conditions with ADHD include:
  - a.** About 50% of children with ADHD also have ODD.
  - b.** Approximately 20% of those with ADHD have an anxiety or mood disorder
  - c.** About 25% of children with ADHD have a specific Learning Disability.
- 7. Will it go away?** Hyperactivity tends to decrease when children reach adolescence. However, most children continue to display symptoms of inattention and impulsivity into adulthood. There is a brainwave “signature” that indicates that a child’s ADHD will decrease significantly in adolescence and may not impair their academic and social functioning as much. With neurofeedback and Play Attention, the core symptoms of mild to moderate ADD can often be ameliorated to a sufficient degree to decrease or eliminate the need for medication. If there is a severe degree of hyperactivity, the child will probably continue to require medication even into adulthood. With the proper training and support, children with ADHD can develop skills to cope with their symptoms and go on to college, graduate school, and enter into successful careers and relationships.
- 8. What can be done?** An effective treatment plan generally includes behavioral and school interventions and, in many cases, the use of stimulant medications. In order to manage ADHD, it is necessary to identify and change practices in a child’s environment that sustain problems. This usually requires parent education about the disorder, as well as training in behavioral strategies, such as giving effective commands and consequences. School personnel also need to use behavioral techniques in the classroom, such as daily home-school notes (with home-based rewards), changes in seating, increased structure, frequent positive feedback, and the use of peer tutors. Individual talking

psychotherapy with ADHD children is uniquely ineffective with managing the core symptoms of ADD, but can be helpful in improving skills to cope with the inattention and social skills training. The use of neurofeedback and Play Attention is helpful in reducing the severity of the symptoms of ADHD and may allow children with mild to moderate forms of ADD to function with reduced dosages of medication or even do without.

9. **What about medication?** At least 75% of children with ADHD display behavioral improvements with the use of psychostimulant medications, such as Ritalin, Adderall, Dexadrine, Concerta, Focalin, Metadate, Ritalin LA, etc, as well as medications like Strattera and antidepressants such as Wellbutrin. Parents are advised to consult with their child's physician regarding possible benefits and negative side effects of psychostimulants. There are a number of misconceptions related to the use of medications for treating ADHD that should be addressed.
  - a. Research shows that children who are prescribed psychostimulant medication for ADHD are no more likely than other teenagers to abuse substances in adolescence.
  - b. A positive response to psychostimulant medication does not indicate that a child has ADHD. In fact, many individuals without ADHD demonstrate improvements in concentration, impulse control and work completion while on the medication. Unfortunately, due to this fact, there is a "black market" on college campuses for stimulants to give non-ADD students an "edge" while taking tests and studying for exams. Some students may take stimulants to "get high," but this is always at extremely high dosages (e.g. ten times the normal dose). Children or adults with ADD who take stimulants at the prescribed dosages do not get high or feel euphoric.
  - c. Children's needs change over the course of development. Although many children with ADHD continue to take medication into adolescence and adulthood, this is not inevitable. It should not be assumed that once prescribed medication, children will require it through adulthood. One of the positive things about most psychostimulants is that trial periods on and off medication can be used to determine if the medication is producing beneficial effects.
  - d. Ritalin and chemically similar medications are psychostimulants, not sedatives. Therefore when they are appropriately prescribed and administered, most children should not appear sedated.

You can probably think of other questions about ADHD. Bookstores will usually sell many books on ADHD. Current books on ADHD include *Healing ADD: The Breakthrough Program That Allows You to See and Heal the 6 Types of ADD* by Daniel Amen, M.D., *Getting Rid of Ritalin* by Robert Hill and Eduardo Castro, and *The A.D.D. Book* by William Sears, M.D. and Lynda Thompson, Ph.D.



### Some Ways ADHD is Related to Homework Problems

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Examples of ADHD		
Symptoms	Observed behaviors	Common resulting problems
Forgetfulness	Leaves homework book at school	Homework does not get completed Homework is done inaccurately or carelessly
Restlessness	Does not stay seated during homework	Daily arguments with parents Failing grades at school
Daydreaming	Does not remain focused during homework	Homework takes too long Parents become frustrated
Avoiding tasks that require effort	Attempts to get out of doing work	Child become discouraged Teacher lowers expectations Siblings and classmates are neglected.
Distractibility	Does not remain on task	Child gets a "bad" reputation Child's positive behaviors are overlooked.
Appearing not to be listening	Problems following instructions	Adults play "blame game" Siblings and classmates tease the child
Talking excessively	Disturbs others, fails to listen to adults during key instructional moments	

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### Homework Assignment Sheet

Assignments for the week of:			
Day	Subject	Assignment	Due
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>

Things to remember:

Teacher's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

## Homework Assignment Sheet

<b>Assignments for the week of: 11/29/05</b>			
<b>Day</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Assignment</b>	<b>Due</b>
Monday	Reading	Read chapter 4, pages 5 to 10	Tuesday, 11/25
		Answer questions 1 to 5, page 11	Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
	Math	Do all problems on attached sheet	Tuesday 11/25
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
	Social Studies	No Homework Assignment	
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
	Science	Do Section 11 of Atoms project	Wednesday 11/26
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
	Art	Cut out picture of space shuttle and bring to class	Tuesday 11/25
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>
			Completed <input type="checkbox"/>

Things to remember:

Teacher's Signature: Ms. Jill Johnson

**Homework A-B-C Worksheet**

	Antecedents	Behavior	Consequences	Outcome
	What happened immediately before?	What did your child do?	What did you do?	What was your child's response to the consequence?
Monday				
Tuesday				
Wednesday				
Thursday				
Friday				
Weekend				

### Establishing the Homework Ritual

1. **Location, Location, Location!** Location refers to the **where** of homework. Negotiate this with your child. There should be few distractions (e.g. television, siblings, toys). However, your child should be situated where you can provide the necessary supervision, such as being able to enforce time limits and provide spot checks. For instance, the bedroom may be relatively distraction free, but may not be close enough for you to provide necessary help.
2. **I wanna watch TV for a while!** Structure is absolutely essential when working with a child with ADHD. Set up a homework schedule and stick to it. This is the first aspect of the **when** of homework. Try to begin work at the same time each day. There are many things to consider here. First, if your child takes a quick-acting medication (such as Ritalin) after school, you may wish to wait 30 minutes before beginning homework. Consider when your child is able to pay attention best after school, as this will vary from child to child. You will also have to take into account meals and after-school activities such as sports. Try to allow your child enough play time at the end of homework to serve as a reward for getting work done.
3. **Time limits are vital.** Establish reasonable time limits for homework and do not let homework exceed these limits. Using time limits may initially seem uncomfortable to many parents who are anxious about their child “falling behind.” It has been our experience that many children initially seem to fall behind a little when time limits are instituted. But the payoff is usually superb! You will learn to set goals to reinforce your child for greater and greater levels of productivity. As you practice setting time limits, you will eventually become very comfortable with this strategy. Most children with ADHD who are held to time limits by their parents will become more productive, even though they are gradually spending less time on homework.
4. **“Gimme a break!”** This should be agreed upon ahead of time. Only a minute or two! We recommend a fun minute of jumping up and down. (A three-foot round trampoline is perfect). Alternately, the break time can be used to go to the bathroom or to get a drink of water.
5. **Use a time.** This should be set for the amount of time until the break. For some children you may have to keep the timer out of view to minimize distraction.

6. **Use a homework kit.** Be sure to have a homework kit in good shape prior to beginning work. This should include the following, if they are appropriate to your child's needs and developmental level (you and your child may wish to include additional items):
  - a. Pencils
  - b. Paper
  - c. Calculator
  - d. Pencil sharpener
  - e. Scissors
  - f. Timer (see above)
  - g. Pens (if appropriate)
  - h. Eraser
  - i. Adhesive tape

Praise your child if he or she has the homework kit already prepared. You may wish to make a game of initially obtaining the materials and assembling the homework kit. A number of parent/teacher educational stores sell colorful containers specifically designed to hold homework materials.
7. **The teacher told me we don't have any homework tonight!** How can you be sure you know what homework your child needs to complete? This is part of the **what** of homework. Most students are supposed to use some form of Homework Assignment Sheet. Make this part of the homework ritual. For instance, one rule may be that your child shows you the Homework Assignment Sheet as soon as he or she walks through the door and greets you. This should be signed by the teacher, with "No Assignment" written in and signed when appropriate. If this is completed, give the first reward! If not, have a backup plan ready. Many schools have homework hotlines. Your child should also have the telephone numbers of at least 3 classmates. The **what** of homework also refers to bringing home the books that are needed to complete assignments. (If not bringing home the correct books to do the homework is an ongoing problem, you can request that the school provide you with a second set of books to keep at home as part of your child's IEP or 504 Plan). There may be space on the Homework Assignment Sheet to indicate that your child has the proper materials for homework.
8. **Remember to keep your roles clear.** Your child will at times need your help with understanding the homework material. This is part of your role of homework tutor. Keep this job distinguished from your role as homework supervisor. Provide assistance to your child before and after an assignment. Your primary role during homework, however, is to be a supervisor who monitors performance and who provides frequent praise for productive behaviors.
9. **Here are the rules!** Post the ground rules for the homework ritual prominently. This should include each aspect discussed above, such as when homework is to begin, where it is to be completed, and when the

- Homework Assignment Sheet is to be shown to the parent. Make a game of devised a clear, meaningful poster of the ritual. Use poster board or construction paper. Change the appearance of the poster periodically.
10. **Be patient but persistent.** Stick to the homework ritual on a consistent basis, and you will soon find yourselves expending much less energy on the basics of homework.

**Homework Ritual Worksheet**

Where?		Consistent place?
		Minimal Distractions?
		Can I easily supervise?
When?		Consistent time to begin?
		Time limits?
		Homework broken into segments?
		Scheduled short breaks?
What?		Homework Assignment Sheet completed and signed by teacher?
		Child has materials from school?
		Child has supplies? (e.g. pencils, paper??



### Effective Instructions

1. **Don't complete with the TV.** Instructions that you intend to give should be issued with as few distractions as possible. Therefore, make sure that your child is not distracted by the television, stereo, or video games when you issue a request.
2. **Maintain eye contact.** You are much more likely to have your child's attention if you make and keep eye contact.
3. **Keep instructions brief.** Given that children with ADD typically have problems following directions, particularly those involving more than one step, it is important to issue instructions in simple statements. Limit them to one specific behavior at a time. *Example:* "Please put your books on the desk." *Not:* "put your books on the desk, take out the worksheet, and do the first 10 problems."
4. **Use a neutral tone of voice.** Many children with ADD are highly reactive to the emotional tone of instructions given by others. Consequently, such children often respond in an oppositional or hostile manner to the instruction, ignoring or not noticing the actual content of the message.
5. **Make it a statement!** In other words, an instruction should not be given as either a question or a favor.  
*Question* "Do you want to start your homework now?"  
*Favor:* "Would you do me a favor and get out your homework book?"  
*Statement:* "Please begin your assignment now."
6. **Be reasonable.** Make your instructions reasonable and achievable. Don't set up your child to fail. Remember the saying, "Choose your battles carefully."
7. **Mean what you say and say what you mean.** Show your child you mean what you say by issuing instructions firmly and by being prepared to *follow up* on promised consequences. Remember, actions speak louder than words, despite how loudly our words can be stated. Be patient with your child's responses as you begin to use this technique. At first children are likely to test you by displaying more noncompliant behaviors. The key reasons for this increase in undesirable behaviors are:
  - a. Your child will not believe you are serious until you consistently demonstrate follow-through.
  - b. Your child will not initially like your reassertion of authority.
8. **Please tell me what I just said.** Tell your child to repeat each simple instruction. This may feel awkward to you at first. However, by telling your child to repeat what you have requested, you get the benefits of:
  - a. Making sure you were heard.

- b. Getting feedback as to *how* your instructions are heard. For instance, you may not realize that you are giving multiple-step, overly complicated directions until your child attempts to repeat what you have said.

Remember to praise your child when simple instructions are correctly repeated back to you. Also praise partial correctness (e.g., “Terrific! I did say that it is time to begin, but we agreed to work on math first.”) If your child does not repeat your instruction at all correctly, state it again in a calm voice, and again ask her of him to state it back to you.

- 9. **Have positive consequences prepared ahead of time.** State these clearly when you issue the instruction. (More on these later.)  
*Example:* “Bobby, if you finish these five math problems, you can pick a reward from this list.”)
- 10. **I am only going to say this once.** Make clear to your child how many times you are willing to repeat an instruction before you will enforce negative consequences. Our recommendation is to issue the direction, give your child 15 seconds to comply, issue a warning if necessary, and then within 5 additional seconds provide a consequence if your child does not comply.

## Using Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement refers to providing a consequence that makes a behavior more likely to happen again. Positive reinforcement is a very powerful tool for changing behavior and is generally preferable to punishment.

Parents often express their opinion that “my child misbehaves in order to get attention.” Statements such as this reveal a common understanding that attention is a powerful reinforcer of behavior. There are many examples of how positive reinforcement plays a role in daily life. For instance, if you did not receive a paycheck for going to work and doing your job (positive reinforcement), you would probably stop going to that job. Furthermore, if your boss is someone who lets you know when you are doing a good job, you are more likely to want to work harder for that person.

A key to using positive reinforcement as a strategy for changing behavior is to selectively reinforce specific desirable behaviors and to consistently withhold reinforcement for undesirable behaviors. For example, a reward may be given for beginning homework on time, with no reward earned for beginning homework late. Using positive reinforcement makes sense, and most parents are aware of its applicability in many areas of life. However, there are often a number of challenges to consistently providing positive reinforcement with children who have ADHD.

1. **ADHD.** Children with ADHD often display more disruptive and unproductive behaviors than cooperative and responsible behaviors. Parents of children with ADHD may feel that it is difficult to find examples of cooperative behaviors to reinforce.
2. **Let sleeping dogs lie.** Many parents do not praise their child out of the concern that if they do so, disruptive behaviors will soon resurface. *This concern often has a basis in fact.* The problem, however, is that when the “sleeping dogs lie” approach is used, parents do not reinforce cooperative behavior and may end up inadvertently reinforcing undesirable actions.
3. **I object!** Sometimes parents do not feel particularly comfortable giving rewards for their children’s appropriate behavior. These objections take several forms:
  - a. “I shouldn’t have to reward my child for things he should be already doing.” We agree: Your child *should* already be acting appropriately. However, he or she is *not* behaving in a way that works well in your home. *Reality check: Start with where your child is, not with where you think your child should be.*

- b. "I'll go broke!" As you will see, reinforcers that do not involve money are actually preferable to ones for which you must pay. The bottom line is that you are in control of the structure of this system and should feel comfortable with it.
- c. "My child will expect to get something every time he behaves well." *First things first:* The immediate goal is to improve your child's behavior and performance. Over time you may find that you can gradually reduce the frequency of rewards and change the kinds of reinforcers you provide. For now, however, provide reinforcers very, very frequently.
- d. "There's nothing my child wants," or "Something that's rewarding one week is ineffective the next week." These objections highlight the need to use variety (and mystery), particularly in dealing with a child with ADHD, when providing reinforcement. For some children, it will be difficult to identify effective reinforcers. Be creative, and be sure to ask your child about what he or she may like to earn. Ask other parents as well for reinforcer ideas.
- e. "This all takes too much time." As with all changes in parenting routines, the establishment of a positive reinforcement system takes some time. As it becomes routine, however, little additional time will be required.

## TYPES OF POSITIVE REINFORCERS

There are four main categories of positive reinforcers. As you review these categories, you may note that your child responds well to different types of reinforcers in different situations.

1. **Sense of personal pride.** This refers to the intrinsic feelings of accomplishment an individual gets for a job well done. Although many parents believe that their child should be motivated mainly by personal pride, in many situations this type of reinforcement is not sufficient, particularly for a child with ADHD.
2. **Attention.** This pertains to becoming involved with another person in response to a particular set of behaviors. Specifically, regarding a parent and child, attention can take the form of any sort of engagement with your child, in both verbal and non-verbal ways. Remember that attention can be either positive or negative. The focus here is on using positive attention. We recommend that parents use a variety of verbal and nonverbal attention reinforcers, such as:
 

"Nice Job"	"I like it when you work so hard"
"Keep up the good work"	Thumbs up sign
Winks	Hugs
Smiles	High-fives

3. **Privileges.** Special activities that must be earned. Some examples:

Taking a trip to the park	Helping make dessert
Having a late bedtime	30 minutes of TV time
30 minutes of video game	Playing a special game
Going to the movies	Overnight with a friend
Having a party	Eating out
Planting a garden	Being excused from a chore

4. **Concrete rewards.** Prizes, stickers, and tokens. Some examples:

Money	New clothes
Toys	Special snack
Tokens, points to reward	Select own gift

Personal pride, attention, and verbal praise, and privileges are preferable to relying on the use of concrete rewards. However, it is important to recognize that concrete rewards can be very effective, and in some case necessary, in changing and shaping behaviors.

## REWARD MENU

Positive reinforcement systems tend to be more effective when children know ahead of time that they will have a reward menu from which to choose. Select a good time to sit down and tell your child, “We are going to start a reward program in which you can earn things. Let’s start a list.” If your child names an expensive item or time-consuming activity, you can direct the child to cut a picture of the item out of a magazine or to draw a picture of the activity. The picture can then be cut into smaller pieces. Each time the child earns a reinforcer, a part of the picture can be pasted onto a piece of paper on the refrigerator. When the picture is completed the reinforcer is earned! Also, we recommend that reinforcers be divided into:

- a. Reinforcers that can be earned on a daily basis (frequent reinforcers)
- b. Reinforcers that can be earned on a weekly basis (can also be used for bonuses)
- c. “Bigger ticket” items that can be earned form tokens or points

## VARIETY

Reward systems tend to become stale. Therefore, it is important to vary the list frequently. An element of mystery often increases a child’s motivation to increase desirable behaviors. For instance, the name of a reward can be written on a piece of paper and placed in an envelope, with the envelope labeled “mystery motivator.” Alternately, there can be a “grab bag” of small prizes, such as those that can be purchased at a dollar store. Some parents have also found the use of a “wheel of fortune” –type spinner or Velcro dartboard to be helpful ways of keeping mystery and variety in the reward system, with the child

receiving the reinforcer that corresponds to the number that is obtained on the spinner or board.

## **BONUS TIME!**

Your child should know that bonuses are always available for exceptionally good behavior. Many parents like to give bonuses for good attitude, such as cooperating and beginning work without being asked.

## **TOKENS AND POINTS**

Giving concrete rewards or privileges to a child each time he or she is productive is usually not practical. Tokens and points, on the other hand, tend to be more practical in helping parents stick to the basic principles discussed below. Some parents keep tokens in their pocket at all times so that positive behaviors can be immediately reinforced. An additional handout will be provided that provides guidelines for using a token or point system.

## **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES**

Many parents have previously tried some form of positive reinforcement system. However, some of the basic principles may have been omitted. We refer to the basic system as CISS-4.

**Consistency:** Reward consistently for desirable behaviors

**Immediacy:** To the extent possible, give rewards immediately

**Specificity:** Be very clear about what you expect

**Saliency:** Use reinforcers that are meaningful to your child

**4-to-1:** Positive to negative ratio for responses

### **Consistency**

Easier said than done, we know, but reward systems usually do not work well when they are used inconsistently. With consistency, both you and your child will know exactly which behaviors will be responded to and in what manner. You are also likely to find that arguments and other conflicts will be reduced.

### **Immediacy.**

Immediate positive responses to productive behaviors can make a large difference. Don't delay! For tasks that are lengthy, such as homework, provide reinforcers as soon as you notice examples of productive and attentive behaviors.

## **Specificity**

Being very specific about what you expect and what you are reinforcing is critical. Rewarding a child for “being good” can be very confusing and does not inform the child specifically what he or she has done to be reinforced. Consequently, reinforcement delivered in a nonspecific manner may not be that useful in increasing the likelihood that a child’s behavior will improve. Thus, instead of saying “you earned a reward coupon for being good,” you may wish to say, “you earned a reward coupon for following my directions without any reminders.”

## **Saliency**

Making sure that rewards are *meaningful* to your child seems like an obvious point. Families cannot afford to get too comfortable with reward systems, however, because what is meaningful to your child this month may not be very attractive next month. Remember that as your child becomes familiar with the system, his or her preferences for rewards will change.

## **4-to-1 Positive-to-Negative Ratio**

We have already discussed how important and challenging it can be to get into the habit of giving positive reinforcement. There is a place for using punishment, as you will see in future sessions. However, even when punishments are introduced, it is vital that the frequency of positive reinforcers far outweigh that of punishments. Keeping a 4-to-1 ratio will make you feel more positive about managing your child’s behavior, and research has shown such a ratio to be very effective. And, in turn, you will be more likely to be seen by your child as someone for whom it is good to work for, a “good boss.”

## **IMPORTANCE OF PRACTICE**

At this point, it is important that you use positive reinforcement extremely frequently. Pay close attention to what your child is doing, and make it a point to notice the productive and cooperative behaviors. In some families this may entail giving praise or a token for complying with such commonplace parental requests as passing the salt at the dinner table. The key point here is to make a radical shift in the ratio of positive to negative feedback you are giving to your child and to get into more positive parenting habits.

## **WE’VE TRIED THIS BEFORE: IT WORKS FOR A WEEK AND THEN STOPS WORKING**

If you are thinking this right now, we encourage you to reread this handout and closely examine where in the CISS-4 system to your previous approach may

have been somewhat weak. As with the other strategies taught in this program, if you experience a problem, talk with Dr. Richardson at your next session.

### **BE PATIENT!**

Many parents report large increases in compliance almost as soon as a positive reinforcement system is begun. However, it may take a week or more of consistently using the system before you notice results. With an emphasis on “catching him being good,” though, we are confident that over time you will begin to experience changes in behavior and an improvement in your relationship with your child.



**Homework Rewards Worksheet**

Week of __/__/__							
# of Points	Behavior	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat-Sun
	Bonus Points for: (write in)						
	Totals						

Total Points for week: \_\_\_\_\_

## Homework Rewards Worksheet (Sample)

Week of __/__/__							
# of Points	Behavior	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat-Sun
10	Homework book signed by teacher	10	10			10	
5	Work area neat	5	5		5		
10	Materials ready	10			10		
15	Work started after one request		15		15		
15	Stayed on task for 10 minutes	15				15	15
10	Returned to work after breaks by one request		10			10	
	Bonus Points for: (write in)		No reminders needed 25			Didn't roll eyes 10	
	<b>Totals</b>	40	65	0	30	45	15

Total Points for week: 195!!

### Token and Point System Guidelines

You are already familiar with some of the main categories of positive reinforcers: a sense of pride or accomplishment, verbal or nonverbal praise, privileges, and concrete reinforcers. As we have seen, reinforcement from each category can be effective for different types of tasks and situations. When attempting to improve homework performance in a child with ADHD, however, most parents find that reinforcers that are intangible and given verbally are usually not powerful enough to result in consistent gains in homework-related behaviors and performance. Establishing and using a token or point system can provide you and your child with a means of consistently and immediately reinforcing positive behaviors in a way that is simple yet meaningful. This handout summarized the main points discussed in the ADD Homework Success Program regarding the use of such systems. You are encouraged to refer to these guidelines from time to time as you use and revise your individualized system.

The first step is to decide whether you will use tokens or points. Older children (e.g., 10 years of age and older) and those with relatively mild ADHD may respond well to the use of points. On the other hand, younger children and those with relatively severe ADHD will often require the use of tokens. During the initial stages of your use of these reinforcement systems, do not penalize your child for undesirable behaviors by removing tokens or points. During this time “withdrawals” should take place only when your child wishes to exchange tokens or points for a concrete reinforcer or privilege.

#### TOKEN SYSTEM

1. **Introduce the system to your child.** Sit down with your child and discuss the system you are about to implement. Present this in a positive light, such as, “We are going to begin using a system to reward you for all the efforts you are putting into your homework time.” Mention that each of the important homework behaviors will be rewarded when displayed. Have the following materials ready:

Tokens, chips, coins, or “homework money” (see below)

A container in which the tokens will be placed when earned

Cardboard or colored paper on which to tape tokens or chips (e.g., tape 1 blue, 1 red, 1 white poker chip on the paper with their values written below them)

Homework Reward Worksheet

2. **Tokens and alternatives.** This handout refers to “tokens,” but there are several alternatives that can be used. Alternatives to tokens include poker chips, coins, or “homework money.” Homework money refers to slips of paper on which you and your child write a number of points and draw a picture. These slips can be created in increments of 1, 5, 10 and 20 “homework dollars.” Likewise, you may wish to assign values of 1, 5, and 10 points to white, red, and blue poker chips, respectively. In any case, a sample of the token or alternative that is selected should be posted near the homework location.
3. **Prepare the container.** You and your child should then decorate a token container with colorful pictures or drawings. The container and tokens will be brought out during homework time but should otherwise remain in your possession. Demonstrate for your child how the container will be used by

placing a token in it for cooperative behaviors displayed while the system is being discussed.

4. **Reward menu.** A reward menu should now be created for use with this system. The first step in creating a menu is to brainstorm reinforcer ideas. Some children will volunteer primarily expensive items, which are inappropriate for daily use as reinforcers. Do not criticize your child's ideas, but if he or she suggests primarily expensive items, write them on the reward menu in a category labeled "longer term rewards." Then provide examples of reinforcers that can be earned on a short-term basis, such as a special dessert, 30 minutes of TV or video game time, and exemption from doing a chore for the night. After the ideas have been generated, create a more formal-looking reward menu. You are encouraged to make the reward menu appear as attractive as possible. Many parents choose to create a reward menu resemble a restaurant menu. Particularly at the outset, do not make the price of rewards overly expensive, or else your child may become discouraged and lose interest in the system. Here is a selection from a sample reward menu:

Reward	Price
30 minutes of TV	5 chips
Trip to movies	25 chips
Weekend sleepover	100 chips

5. **Optional progress tools.** It may be difficult for you and your child to keep track of how many tokens have been earned, particularly if the child is seeking to earn a "big ticket" item or privilege requiring many tokens. In such cases you may wish to draw a "thermometer" which will be gradually filled in as tokens are earned. Write the name of the desired reinforcer at the top of the thermometer; when it is completely filled in the reinforcer is earned! Alternately, a picture or drawing of a desired reinforcer can be cut up into smaller "puzzle" pieces. As each piece is earned (e.g., 5 points per piece), the pieces of the puzzle are posted together until it is completed. Again, once completed the reinforcer is earned.
6. **Variety: The spice of positive reinforcement.** Be sure to include variety both in the way you *deliver* reinforcers and in the *diversity of items* on the reward menu.

*Delivery of reinforcers.* Short term reinforcers, or items that can be issued very frequently, may be delivered by way of a "wheel of fortune"-type spinner, Velcro dartboard, grab bag, or "mystery motivator." Regarding the use of a spinner or dartboard, once having earned (for example) 10 points, your child may spin the wheel or toss a velcro ball. The reinforcer that is earned will be the one on which the wheel pointer or ball lands. A grab bag can be filled with dollar-store items or with slips of paper on which you have written special activities or privileges. When using a mystery motivator, an item (or slip of paper with the item or privilege written on it) is placed in an envelope. The outside of the envelope may have a question mark written on it. The envelope should be prominently placed for the child to see. It has been found that the element of surprise in all of the suggested delivery methods described above tends to increase children's interest in, and enjoyment of, positive reinforcer systems.

*Variety of reinforcers.* It is important that the reward menu be periodically revised to ensure that only effective reinforcers are on the list. You are aware that your child's interests change over time. Thus an item or privilege that may be a powerful reinforcer when you initially use your system may lose its effectiveness

- over time in promoting productive behaviors. Be sure to review the reward menu with your child on a monthly basis and delete items as indicated.
7. **“Dad, please give me the reward now! I promise I’ll finish my work!”** Some children will attempt to bargain with parents, saying that they will be productive in the future if they can get a reinforcer immediately. Many parents find this to be a situation in which they are tempted to defer to the child’s wishes. It is important, however, that reinforcers be delivered only after the target behaviors have been displayed. Such an approach ensures consistency and structure in your reinforcement system.
  8. **How about when a reinforcer has not been earned?** If a reinforcer is not earned, do not criticize your child. Merely express your hope that she or he will earn the reinforcer during the next homework session, and refer to the Homework Rewards Worksheet as a reminder of which behaviors need to be displayed at that time.
  9. **Tip the scales toward success!** Your positive reinforcement system should be devised so that your child earns a reinforcer about 80% of the time. This is important because overly stringent standards may very well discourage your child and lead to conflict and frustration. On the other hand, if your child earns reinforcers nearly 100% of the time, there is little incentive for behavior changes.
  10. **Be patient.** Some children may oppose the use of a positive reinforcement system during homework time, particularly in the initial stages of using the system. Presenting the system in a positive manner should help you reduce such opposition. Particularly if your child does not earn reinforcers immediately, you should persist with the program, tip the scales toward success, and remind yourself to be patient. Most children ultimately find the experience to be a positive and enjoyable one.

## POINT SYSTEM

Most of the guidelines pertaining to token systems are also appropriate when using a point system. There are a few special considerations, however.

1. **The “Bankbook.”** Parents should create a “bankbook” when planning a point system for homework time. There should be columns for date, “deposit” of points, “withdrawal,” and balance, just like a checkbook register. You may wish to label the front of this simply as “Homework Bankbook,” or use a label suggested by your child.
2. **Open for business!** As with token containers, a point-system bankbook should be kept in your possession except during homework time. In order to jump-start the system, you may wish to place 100 points (for example) in the account as a reward to your child for cooperation during the initial discussion of the point system. At the outset of homework time, display the bankbook in front of your child and remind him or her about the current balance.
3. **Deposits and withdrawals.** Using a tool such as the Homework Rewards Worksheet (see Handout 11), keep track of points earned during homework. When homework is completed, you should supervise your child while she or he enters points earned in the “deposit” column of bankbook. Provide similar supervision when points are withdrawn for use in purchasing reinforcers from the reward menu.

## **OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

Some parents may have reservations about particular aspects of a token or point system or may object to using such a system at all. Refer to the handout on positive reinforcement in order to address common concerns of parents, such as beliefs regarding “bribery” and the amount of time reinforcement systems consume. Note that if you have other children who are also in elementary school, they may wish to have their own token or point systems for homework, particularly once they notice that their brother or sister is earning reinforcers for productive and cooperative behaviors during homework. In such cases, you are encouraged to devise a token or point system that is appropriate to the other children’s needs and developmental level.

### Managing Time and Goal Setting

The first key to effective time management and goal setting is to look closely and honestly at where your child and you are at this point. Review your progress regarding giving effective instructions. Be clear, direct, specific, and consistent with consequences. Keep up the positive reinforcement system. Give yourself some praise for your efforts and some to your child for his or her efforts. *It will be important to maintain your daily logs each day, including on-task time and total amount of time spent on homework, in order to monitor progress.*

1. **Dear Diary. . .** Your daily logs should include a daily estimate of the length of time your child was able to remain on task.
2. **OK, break it up!** Homework should be subdivided into smaller units of relatively equal length. You can divide homework by subject area and (if homework for a particular subject is lengthy) according to the amount of work required for each subject. Remember to keep in mind your child's unique attention span. Be generous regarding how long you think each subunit should take your child to complete. We have found that a simple formula for subunit length is *about 3 minutes for each grade level*. For instance, a fourth-grader may have subunits of 12 minutes each.
3. **Break it up?** By segmenting assignments in this manner, your child is more likely to be able to sustain attention to the particular subunit. Note that the end of each subunit is an opportunity to provide a quick yet meaningful positive reinforcer (e.g., praise, small reward, or points toward a privilege), although (as described in the step-by-step guidelines below) it is important that you give your child specific verbal praise while he or she is actually working.
4. **Supervise and tutor.** The distinction between your roles as supervisor and tutor has been previously discussed. This point in the program is a particularly crucial time to remind yourself of this distinction. Your *primary* role is to supervise your child's homework. Your role as *tutor* should only come into play in making sure, at the outset, that your child understands the directions and, at the conclusion of homework for a particular subject, to *briefly* review the work.
5. **Let's be realistic.** Teachers occasionally report to us that a particular child's rate of homework completion and accuracy is about 100%. These children are often the ones who spend 4 hours or more on homework, with frustrated parents becoming accustomed to the pattern of standing over the child until the work is done. Although this pattern can temporarily address a parent's fear of a child "falling behind," the strain on the parent-child relationship can be quite severe. We have a tool . . .
6. **Goal-Setting Tool (GST).** Time limits are now to be used in a very systematic fashion. This system may at first seem intimidating. However, we have found that the GST can be very effective when used consistently and correctly. It is recommended that you and your child learn how to use it in steps. These steps, when taken one at a time, will help you to make the GST a part of your homework routine. We will provide you with a demonstration regarding how to use the GST and will give assistance as you practice. Ask questions, and refer to the GST worksheet attached to this handout.

## USING THE GOAL-SETTING TOOL

1. **Decide ahead of time what the reward will be when goals are met.** Present this as an opportunity to earn something positive. Decide how many points are needed to earn the reward, and follow the GST guidelines for distributing points after each subunit of work. Be clear about what you expect, including how many points are required for the reward.
2. **Break up the assignments into subunits,** as noted above. This will take some practice and will initially seem as if you are actually increasing homework time. As the GST becomes a part of the daily routine, you will begin to see it providing clear expectations and structure for your child. Consistent use of the GST should also ultimately be associated with significant reductions in homework time and with noticeable improvements in productivity.
3. **Set time limits.** Decide how much time your child will be permitted for each subunit. As noted, about 3 minutes for each grade level is advised. However, feel free to adjust this time limit in order to ensure success at least 80% of the time. Write this under "Time" in Step 1 of the GST.
4. **Set completion goals.** For each subunit, ask your child how many problems he or she thinks can be completed in the time limit. This is another opportunity for you and your child to improve your negotiating skills. Based on your experience supervising homework, you may not know that your child is typically able to complete 5 problems in this period. However, do not be surprised if your child believes that 10 is a realistic goal. In such cases, you are encouraged to compromise on a goal of 7 or 8. Write that in for the "# items completed" in Step 1 of the GST.
5. **Set accuracy goals.** Having set a completion goal, the next step is to negotiate the *accuracy goal* with your child. From the above example, the tow of your may decide that 5 correct answers is a reasonable goal. It is important that you guide your child and set goals that will ensure that he or she succeeds at least 80% of the time. Write the accuracy goal in the "# items correct" slot of Step 1 of the GST.
6. **Make sure your child understands the directions.** Remember that during the time that your child is working on each subunit, you will be providing verbal praise for on-task behaviors and will be keeping an eye on the clock. In other words, you will be engaging in supervision activities. It is very important that you make sure your child understands what to do before beginning each subunit of work.
7. **Get ready!** Set the *completion timer*. Instruct your child that he or she is to keep working during this time and that you will be checking to make sure that homework is being completed.
8. **Provide verbal praise.** While your child is working, it is important that you provide verbal praise for on-task behaviors and productive work. Remember to be specific. Particularly while you are both getting used to using the GST, a general guideline is to provide verbal praise about two to three times per subunit. Do not respond to requests for assistance with the work during this time. If such a request is made, tell your child to keep working and that you will give assistance when the time limit is up.
9. **Direct the child to evaluate work.** At the end of the time limit, compliment your child for the work that was completed. Then direct your child to Step 2 of the GST. Have your child write in the appropriate slots how many items she or he completed and how many he or she thinks is correct. You should then check your child's work to make sure that accurate information has been entered in Step 2.
10. **Evaluate completion.** In Step 3 of the GST, place a check mark in the appropriate slot, depending on whether your child exceeded the completion goal, met the goal, or did not meet the goal.
11. **Evaluate accuracy.** Follow the same procedures for Step 4 as for Step 3, this time focusing on *accuracy*. Indicate how your child fared relative to the accuracy goals.
12. **Count up total points.** In Step 5 of the GST, write in points earned based on what was noted for Steps 3 and 4. Be sure to praise your child's efforts regardless of whether a reinforcer has been earned.
13. **Provide rewards!** At the end of homework, be sure to give the reinforcer if it has been earned. Remember that if your child is not succeeding at least 80% of the time, you may need to adjust the goals.



## GOAL-SETTING TOOL

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 1. What is my goal?

# items completed \_\_\_\_\_  
# items correct \_\_\_\_\_  
Time \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 2. How did I do?

# items completed \_\_\_\_\_  
# items correct \_\_\_\_\_

### Step 3. Did I reach my completion goal? (Circle one)

	<i>Points</i>
Yes, far above my goal	2
Yes, I met my goal	1
No, goal not met	0

### Step 4. Did I reach my correctness goal (Circle one)

	<i>Points</i>
Yes, far above my goal	2
Yes, I met my goal	1
No, goal not met	0

### Step 5. Total Points!

_____	+	_____	=	_____
Completion		Correctness		Total Points
(from Step 3)		(from Step 4)		

\_\_\_\_\_ (Check here after giving praise for effort)

**Goal-Setting Tool: Summary Worksheet**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Goals: Items completed: \_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance: Items completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I reach my completion goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Did I reach my correctness goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Total Points  $\frac{\text{Completion}}{\text{Completion}} + \frac{\text{Correctness}}{\text{Correctness}} = \frac{\text{Total Points}}{\text{Total Points}}$

\_\_\_\_\_ (Check here after giving praise for effort)

---

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Goals: Items completed: \_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance: Items completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I reach my completion goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Did I reach my correctness goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Total Points  $\frac{\text{Completion}}{\text{Completion}} + \frac{\text{Correctness}}{\text{Correctness}} = \frac{\text{Total Points}}{\text{Total Points}}$

\_\_\_\_\_ (Check here after giving praise for effort)

---

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Goals: Items completed: \_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Performance: Items completed: \_\_\_\_\_ Items correct: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Did I reach my completion goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Did I reach my correctness goal? (*Circle one*): 2 (Far above goal) 1 (Met goal) 0 (Goal not met)

Total Points  $\frac{\text{Completion}}{\text{Completion}} + \frac{\text{Correctness}}{\text{Correctness}} = \frac{\text{Total Points}}{\text{Total Points}}$

\_\_\_\_\_ (Check here after giving praise for effort)

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### Using Punishment Successfully

Due to the disruptive and unproductive behaviors displayed by most children with ADHD, many parents are well acquainted with procedures such as time-out, removal of privileges, and other punishments. We are often told by parents that “no discipline seems to work.” Indeed, with children who have ADHD and are defiant toward their parents, punishment frequently does not have much of an effect on child behavior.

Punishment can be an effective disciplinary strategy, but it is vital that it be used *strategically*. When children become accustomed to receiving large doses of criticism and punishments, they often give up easily when they are unsure if they will succeed. Therefore, the emphasis in any sound behavioral program should remain on incentives and positive reinforcers. On the other hand, with children who have impulse control difficulties, systems that *only* include positive reinforcement are often not adequate.

1. **Know yourself.** Observe your reactions when you deliver punishment to your child. The key word is *observe*, not judge. Your emotional responses to your child’s misbehavior are critical. If you are harsh and highly emotional, your child’s misbehavior may escalate. If you are firm and under control, on the other hand, you will be more successful in managing misbehavior.
2. **Key word: Strategic.** Remember, when you use punishments, you must remain in control of the situation. Therefore, use punishment sparingly until you are comfortable with the consistency and structure of your positive reinforcement system for homework.
3. **Keep a 4-to-1 ratio.** That is, make sure that the amount of positive reinforcement you use is at least four times the amount of punishment. This approach will help to prevent unintended side effects, such as discouragement, anger, and aggressiveness.
4. **Mean what you say, and say what you mean.** Be clear and firm in delivering punishments. Don’t tell your child that she or he will be grounded for 6 months unless you are interested in giving *yourself* some serious punishment. For children who display oppositional and defiant behaviors frequently, it is recommended that groundings or removal of privileges be limited to one or two days at the most for each infraction. If you give long punishments, defiant children do not learn from them; they typically forget why they are being punished and develop grudges and resentments that can spoil whatever positive benefits one is intending by the punishments. Whatever you decide, be ready to back up what you say with a consequence.
5. **Choose correction whenever possible.** Correction offered verbally and nonverbally can be an effective form of punishment. When giving correction, state what the child *should* do (e.g., “You are supposed to begin work *now*.”), not what the child should *not* do (e.g., “Stop daydreaming and wasting time.”)
6. **Provide correction immediately.** The goal is to respond to your child as soon as possible after misbehavior occurs. We acknowledge that responding immediately is not always possible, but it should be in the goal and standard practice.
7. **Be specific.** Specify the behavior that the child needs to improve (e.g., “You need to pay attention to your work”). Avoid vague statements (e.g., “You’re doing badly”).

8. **Keep your corrections *simple and brief*.** Correction is useful if it is stated clearly and very briefly.
9. **Be firm, but not harsh.** State the correction in a firm manner that indicates you are serious about what you are saying. Avoid asking questions (e.g., “would you mind getting back to work?”).
10. **Response cost.** Response cost is a particularly effective technique for children with ADHD. Response cost refers to the removal of positive reinforcers, such as points, privileges, or rewards. Include response cost in your token reinforcement system. For example, your child can earn points for productive work but can lose points for hitting a sibling or for leaving the homework location. However, be sure to keep in mind the 4-to-1 positive ration.
11. **Time-out.** Time-out is usually effective in managing behavior. However, we do not recommend this strategy in managing homework problems because time-out can reinforce children by getting them out of doing homework.
12. **Use of punishment in nonhomework situations.** Over time you may wish to apply these punishment strategies in situations besides homework. However, make sure that you use the CISS-4 principles and that punishment does not become the primary behavior management technique. Keeping these points in mind will help to prevent “backsliding” into an overly punitive system.
13. **Remember CISS-4.** Remember, the basics are consistency, immediacy, specificity, saliency (meaningfulness), and a 4-to-1 positive-to-negative ratio.

### **Maintaining Success and Anticipating Future Problems.**

Many images could be used to describe the challenge of successfully managing your child's homework. At first it can seem a juggling act, with parents struggling to use all of the different components of Homework Success: the homework ritual, effective instructions, positive reinforcement, the A-B-C Worksheets, the Goal-Setting Tool, and strategic use of punishment. Perhaps even at this time, it is not clear how these different parts fit together. Our hope is that these components are at least starting to become part of your routine. And as you integrate the parts, what you should experience is an improvement of your parent-child relationship and more homework success.

It may be most appropriate to picture all of these elements put together like a *symphony*. And like all symphony conductors, you will have to continue to pay attention to what is going on around you and make adjustments as needed. *Remember: It is an ongoing process.* At times the strategies will work nicely together, and your child will respond productively and cooperatively. At other times, you may overemphasize one element (e.g. punishment) and need to accentuate the importance of another element (e.g., positive reinforcement).

So, here's our handbook on putting it all together and looking to the future.

1. **Some progress? Any progress?** Perhaps you are fairly pleased with the progress you and your child have made over the course of the program. Or maybe you are wondering if you've actually made progress at all. It is our experience that most parents are somewhere in between feeling on top of the world about homework and feeling totally discouraged. In other words, at this point in the program most parents report that they have made significant gains but would still like to improve homework time. Even if you are not particularly satisfied with your progress, a close look at where you are should reveal at least *some* changes for the better. In order to keep steady regarding the progress you have made, it is helpful to assess your knowledge and experiences regarding each component of the program.
2. **Remember the relation between ADHD and homework.** The inattention, impulsivity, and (often) hyperactivity associated with ADHD can account for many homework problems. When you refer back to Handout 3 (ADHD: Basic Facts) and Handout 4 (Some Ways ADHD is Related to Homework Problems), you will be reminded that ADHD is not caused by faulty parenting. Children who by nature are forgetful will have problems completing their homework assignment books, remembering to bring home the books needed for homework, and consistently beginning work on time. Likewise, children who are distractible tend to have particular problems remaining on task during homework time. Keep in mind that homework problems are very, very common among children with ADHD and that homework success requires specialized techniques and strategies.
3. **Follow the A-B-C's.** When a particular behavior is displayed by a child, he or she is usually getting something rewarding out of it or is avoiding an unpleasant situation. Antecedents (A's) are what comes first. Examples include the Homework Ritual and how instructions are given. The behaviors (B's) of interest are what follow the A's. Consequences (C's) are responses to specific

behaviors. Examples of consequences include ignoring inappropriate behaviors and praising compliance with commands. We strongly encourage an approach to behavior management that continues to look closely at the A-B-C's.

4. **Use a Homework Ritual.** By now you should have a consistent homework ritual. Refer as needed to Handout # 7 (Establishing the Homework Ritual) and Handout # 8 (Homework Ritual Worksheet) to make sure that the *where, when, and what* of homework are consistent and clear. Set up the homework environment in such a way that your child is likely to be productive and cooperative.
5. **Give effective instructions.** Giving instructions properly is a necessary step in improving your child's behavior. Refer to Handout # 9 (Effective Instructions) and review these tips:

Don't compete with the TV

Maintain eye contact

State instructions briefly

Make it a statement, not a request

Be reasonable

Be prepared with consequences

Mean what you say (be willing to impose a consequence if you are not obeyed)

6. **Stay positive.** Refer to Handout # 10 (Using Positive Reinforcement) to review the basic principles of positive reinforcement. Remember how powerful your attention is, so use it strategically. Be patient, look for productive behavior, and reinforce it when you see it.
7. **Keep the token or point system going.** Handouts 11 (Homework Rewards Worksheet) and 12 (Token and Point System Guidelines) can be used as tools for strengthening the positive reinforcement you provide. When used consistently, these systems should be associated with increased productivity and cooperation.
8. **Remember CISS-4.** Have we mentioned CISS-4? You may be tired of reading this by now, but it is important to remember these basic principles:

*Consistency* is a cornerstone of behavior management. Your child must know what is acceptable and what is unacceptable. Provide positive reinforcement for desired behaviors and withhold reinforcement for undesirable behaviors. Follow these guidelines as often as you can.

*Immediacy* is also important. Administer consequences as soon as you can after a targeted behavior is displayed.

*Specificity* pertains to making it clear what will be rewarded or punished and being precise in your responses.

*Saliency* refers to the meaningfulness of behavioral consequences. Reinforcers must be valuable to the child in order for them to be effective. Remember that what is salient one week may not mean much to your child in a month or two. So be sure the keep your reward menus fresh and interesting.

*4-to-1* refers to maintaining a ratio of 4 positive reinforcers to 1 punishment. Don't lose sight of this ratio! Your relationship with your child will benefit and behavioral improvements will be more consistent with a predominantly positive approach.

9. **Have a goal in mind.** Keep using the Goal-Setting Tool. Refer to Handout 13 (Managing Time and Goal Setting) for strategies about how to use this technique. These included segmenting work into subunits of reasonable length, setting realistic goals for completion and accuracy, evaluating performance in relation to goals, and providing reinforcement for achieving goals.
10. **Use punishment sparingly and strategically.** Refer to Handout 15 (Using Punishment Successfully) to remind yourself of how to use punishment. If you find that you are slipping back into relying excessively on punishment, stop and get that positive-to-negative ratio back up to 4-to-1.
11. **Congratulate yourself.** You have probably learned some new principles to guide you during homework time. In this short program you have been asked to alter many well-established patterns of parenting. If you haven't reached perfection yet, don't worry. If you consistently use the principles outlined in the ADD Homework Success Program, things should continue to move in a positive direction. Take time to applaud yourself and your child for the efforts you have made, the progress you have displayed, and the strategies you have mastered to meet future challenges.
12. **Now what?** It is important that you and your child attend "booster sessions." At that time, we will view how homework time has proceeded during the intervening weeks. Your child will also be involved in learning "Meta-Cognitive Strategies" that help him learn and solve problems better. Booster sessions will be an opportunity for us to assist you with troubleshooting old problems that have reappeared and new ones that may have surfaced. The following is a review of some of the problems you may encounter.
  - a. **The Blame Game.** The Blame Game is an old nemesis. It is easy for parents to forget that no one is necessarily at fault when behavioral problems appear. As discussed in this program, ADHD is related to numerous compliance problems, particularly regarding high-demand situations such as homework. If you find yourself falling into the blame trap, take a deep breath, forgive yourself and your child, and review what you have learned here.
  - b. **"The devil whispered in my ear."** When you consistently experience progress in your child's behavior, you may have the thought that "my child must be cured." Remember, the focus of this program has been on managing behavior, not curing it. So don't be discouraged if problems reappear. You are now in a better position to navigate the ups and downs of problem behaviors related to ADHD.
  - c. **"We kept it up for awhile then it kind of faded away."** Don't let this happen to you. Perhaps the most common pitfall once a program ends is to slack off on using the strategies. Remember that you and your child did not change magically. Maintaining progress will only occur through continued hard work.
  - d. **"Now he wants to be rewarded for everything."** Remember that verbal praise and attention to positive behaviors are preferred responses. Effective behavioral approaches tend to gradually withdraw reinforcers as the desired behaviors become more habitual for your child. One way to accomplish this is to provide concrete reinforcers less often. If you are using a token or point system, over time your child may need to earn more tokens or points in order to obtain reinforcers.
  - e. **"It's hard to stay positive."** Some parents report that they have a difficult time remaining positive during homework time, even after

completion of this program. We recommend that you keep a “recipe card” that outlines the CISS-4 principles, and have it with you during homework time. If you find yourself backsliding into giving too many punishments, keep a tally of the number of times you are giving positive reinforcement versus punishment. Increasing your self-awareness in this manner will help to change your own behavior.

- f. **“I can’t seem to figure out why he does what he does.”** Remember, most behaviors can be traced to getting something that is rewarding (even if it is a reprimand from a parent), or avoiding an unpleasant situation (such as beginning homework). Keep using the A-B-C Worksheets to help you identify what may be sustaining a particular behavior.
  - g. **“Nothing is rewarding.”** We occasionally encounter children who do not respond to typical reinforcers. Parents of such children need to work harder than other parents to identify effective rewards. Of course, you are encouraged to include your child in structuring and revising the reward menu. Be creative: Ask other parents, attend a local CHADD meeting (800-233-4050), surf the internet (the local librarian can help with this), and talk with your child’s teacher. You are particularly encouraged to talk with Dr. Richardson if your child’s lack of response to rewards seems to be related to a depressed mood.
  - h. **“Talk with my child’s teacher?”** Most parents find it helpful to be in regular contact with their child’s teacher. Such an approach has many potential benefits, including increasing home-school consistency, receiving timely feedback regarding your child’s progress, and increasing parental involvement in learning.
  - i. **“Where the heck did this come from?”** Some problems will arise that you simply cannot anticipate. From time to time you will encounter new and “interesting” problems. However, the principles you have learned in this program should serve as guidelines for meeting unanticipated challenges.
13. **Now go treat yourself to a reward.** When the final session is over, treat yourself. You have worked hard and you deserve it. Dr. Richardson will see you at a booster session in the future at a time of your scheduling.