

# Three Helpful Tips for Talking to your Teenager About ADHD



*Elizabeth has always had a hard time paying attention in school, and she often found herself getting easily distracted and not finishing her assignments. Teachers have also continuously complained about how she is constantly talking and interrupting other students. As her junior year of high school was quickly approaching, Elizabeth wanted to find a way to get these behaviors under control. As the first day of school got closer, Elizabeth and her mother made an appointment with her primary care doctor who suggested talking to a psychologist. The results of a neuropsychological evaluation diagnosed her with ADHD. Elizabeth's mom could tell that she left the appointment with a handful of questions about her diagnosis, as well as a strong desire to have some control in deciding on a treatment plan.*

If you have a younger child who has recently been diagnosed with ADHD you can likely expect to have a simple, informative, and direct conversation with her about ADHD. However, if you have a teenager with a recent ADHD diagnosis, you are likely to be involved in a far more complex and involved discussion. Teenagers are likely to have many questions about ADHD and often have more say about how they want to approach their treatment. Teens may desire a certain level of control over their ADHD interventions. For example, they will likely be more involved in decisions about things such as medication, tutoring, and accommodations made for them in the classroom. As a result, consider these tips to help you talk with a

teenager who has recently been diagnosed with ADHD.

Perhaps the most important thing when talking to a teenager about ADHD is to be armed with an abundance of factual information. You can educate yourself about ADHD with help from a number of resources, including the CHADD [website](#), many great [videos](#) on youtube and other platforms, as well as [books](#), magazines, and articles such as [this one](#).



If you do not feel that you are knowledgeable enough to have this discussion with your teenager, setting up an appointment with your teenager's pediatrician or a child psychologist who specializes in adolescent ADHD would be a good choice. Although you may want to go in with your child, as you may have questions of your own, it is recommended that your teenager has an opportunity for some private time with the expert during this meeting. Also encourage your child to talk with peers who have been diagnosed with ADHD. Suggest that she talk to them about medication, useful study skills, and concerns about self-esteem issues related to ADHD. Getting other teenagers opinions will likely feel less like they are being told what to do.

There are a few issues that are extremely important for parents to consider as they prepare to talk to their teenagers about their ADHD. Here are three helpful tips for talking to your teenager about ADHD.

**Help your child to understand the neuroscience of**

1.

ADHD. You do not have to be an expert on the brain to help your teen search for a better understanding of the science of ADHD. While we are still learning a great deal about ADHD, learning about how the brains of people with ADHD change and vary over time is likely to be useful for her. There are a number of great resources for learning that are also engaging so that teens may want to explore them in more detail. By developing an understanding of the neuroscience of ADHD, teens are also more likely to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and work to make ADHD an asset rather than a deficit.

2. Help your teenager to understand that ADHD is a disorder of executive functions. By reframing ADHD as a disorder of executive functions, you are more likely to be able to help her recognize the areas that she may struggle with and where she may need to work to improve. For example, many teens with ADHD have problems with organization, planning, working memory, and time management. Helping your child to look at specific skills may help her to see ADHD as a disorder in which she can target areas for improvement, rather than her feeling stuck with her current level of executive functioning.

3. Approach ADHD as a difference rather than as a deficit. While most teenagers with ADHD find that attention difficulties cause some problems in the academic setting, they may also find that they are very capable of focused attention and success in many other realms. Helping your teenager with ADHD

begin to identify areas of success where she can stay focused and persistent will be very important for her choice of academic endeavors and future careers. Maybe consider letting her know that a higher percentage of people with ADHD are successful entrepreneurs than individuals without ADHD!