

Why Scouting can be Great for Scouts 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.
- Scouting promotes a Safe Haven, where physical and verbal aggression or put-downs are not tolerated. This serves as a model for appropriate social skills and creates an atmosphere where Scouts 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



Tips for parents and Scoutmasters

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 hyperactive and impulsive, but have 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 physical (neuro-biological) problem. There are many strategies for helping the AD/HD individual. Treatment often involves a combination of medication, counseling, behavior modification, and parenting. The single most common treatment is medication. 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, Cubmasters, and Scoutmasters, Scouting offers excellent opportunities for AD/HD Scouts to enhance the skills that will enable them to be successful in school, with his peers, and in life.

Tips for Parents

- If your Scout has AD/HD, **it important to let the Cub/Scoutmaster know.** This is best done when first joining the pack/troop. Discuss what treatment or strategies you have found to work best so that he can provide your son with what he needs to focus on, benefit from, and enjoy Scouting. Also let him know what strategies do not work with your son.
- If your Scout takes medication to help him focus at school, he may need to take it to help him focus and do his best during Scout activities as well. You may want to discuss this possibility with your physician.
- If your Scout is going on an outing, a weekend camping trip, or a week of summer camp, be sure to let your Cub/Scoutmaster know what his needs are. There are many things the Scoutmaster can do to make sure your Scout has an enjoyable and successful experience – if he is informed.
- If your Scouts needs to take medication while on a Scout activity, give the medication to the Scoutmaster or adult First Aider with *written* directions for administration. AD/HD Scouts often have difficulty remembering on their own to take medication in a novel situation. Under NO circumstances should Scouts be put in charge administering medication to each other. Make sure your Scout knows that his medication is to help him *focus*, not make him behave or “be good.” Some experts have compared taking medication AD/HD to putting on glasses if you are near-sighted. They help you focus on what is going on so you can do your best and have fun.

Tips for Cub/Scoutmasters

- 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 nature buddy to assist the Scout with directions and organization.
- Compliment the Scout whenever you find a genuine opportunity.
- 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, just as most people do.
- When it is necessary to redirect a Scout, do so in private, in a calm voice. Never use public humiliation to correct 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 may need a more active activity. During active games, be aware when a Scout is becoming too aggressive while playing. It may help to pull the Scout aside and suggest a drink of water; walk with him to get the drink, and give a “correction sandwich” to go with it.
- 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 it is necessary to impose consequences for out-of-control behavior, use time-out or “cooling” off.” 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 “be good.”
- 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 Cub/Scoutmaster.
- *Keep Cool* and don’t take challenges personally. Keep in mind that AD/HD Scouts want to be successful, but they need support, both positive feedback and clear limit setting.
- Find out from the AD/HD Scout’s parents what his medical needs are and make sure the Scout takes any prescribed medication.
- AD/HD Scouts are generally bright, energetic and enthusiastic. 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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