

ADHD and Church

ADHD is one of the most common neurodevelopmental disorders in childhood and can last into adulthood. It is associated with executive functioning. Executive functions are a set of cognitive abilities that help us manage our thoughts and actions - things like organization, emotional regulation, self-awareness, time management, working memory, and more. In other words, executive function plays a big role in the types of activities we often give our students at church.

ADHD - Common Challenges and Tips for Support:

1. Inattentive - Trouble focusing on something that a student is not super interested in is a common symptom of ADHD. Look to see if there are ways to make your lesson more engaging. Try adding in interactive or hands-on activities, or look for ways to incorporate things that your student is interested in into the lesson.

2. Hyperactivity - Students with Hyperactive/Impulsive or Combined type of ADHD may have a really hard time sitting still. Try channeling this energy into something acceptable, such as a fidget or allowing a student to doodle at their seat. For more active students, consider adding a break space where they can get the wiggles out

3. Impulsivity - Speaking or acting without thinking is a common symptom. Reinforcing behavioral expectations through modeling, verbal, and visual reminders can help. Hang posters that list behavioral expectations where they can be seen easily. Also, consider adding in a secret hand signal to help individual students be reminded of expectations without drawing attention from their peers. And, if a student says something without thinking that hurts your feelings, choose not to be offended and give grace. Unfiltered words are not worth ruining your day or your relationship with the student.

4. Working Memory - Many students with ADHD struggle with working memory, which can make remembering new information harder. Help by breaking instructions down into small steps, writing down important key points, and giving students extra time to process new ideas.

5. Emotional Regulation - Managing emotions is often hard for kids with ADHD and can result in big feelings that are hard to handle. Approach with empathy and acknowledge their feelings. Then when the student is ready, help them work through the problem. Calming techniques or offering controlled choices can be a great place to start.

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6. Self-Awareness -Picking up on social cues and making friends can be hard for some students with ADHD. If you see a student continuing to interact in ways that are turning off his peers, try compassionately coaching the student in the moment. Discreetly remind them of how others may feel and invite them to think of different ways of handling things. Remember to notice when they have made good choices with peers and give them praise.

ONE MORE THING...

Many people with ADHD struggle with self-esteem. While there can be many reasons for this, one may be that too much focus is put on a person's challenges. People with ADHD have many gifts and strengths too. So, if you have students who have ADHD, try focusing on their strengths more than anything else. You will be glad you did.