

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

Symptoms: hyperactivity, impulsivity, and/or inattention

- In constant motion.
- Squirm and fidget.
- Do not seem to listen.
- Have difficulty playing quietly.
- Often talk excessively.
- Interrupt or intrude on others.
- Are easily distracted. Do not finish tasks

Tips:

- Make directions clear, short, and split into smaller steps. Give reminders often.
- Help the camper organize and keep their work area free of clutter.
- Plan activities well. Think in advance what you will do when s/he gets fidgety or can't sit still.
- Prepare the camper for any change.
- Make up games to preoccupy him/her during transitions.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)

Symptoms:

- an ongoing pattern of uncooperative, defiant, and hostile behavior toward authority figures
- Excessive arguing with adults.
- Often questioning rules.
- Active defiance and refusal to comply with adult requests and rules.
- Deliberate attempts to annoy or upset people.
- Blaming others for his or her mistakes or misbehavior.
- Often being touchy or easily annoyed by others.

Tips:

- Give brief and direct instructions in a calm tone.
- Discuss the problem privately with the camper.
- Walk away before the situation gets too "hot."
- Work on identifying the types of activities that are likely to cause frustration in the child and help him or her develop coping mechanisms.
- Clearly state their behavioral expectations.
- Listen to the camper before reacting.

Depression

Symptoms:

- Grumpy, sad, or bored most of the time.
- Sleeps too much or too little.
- Feels hopeless, worthless, or guilty.
- Has trouble concentrating, thinking, or making decisions.
- Thinks about death or suicide a lot.

Tips:

- Let the child know you are a support system for them.
- Focus on the positive things the child does to remind him/her that they have skills of which to be proud.
- Encourage the child to look to the future, and discuss their dreams with them.
- Put some color and music into their life to boost their mood.
- Encourage activity to get the child up and moving.

Aspergers

Symptoms:

- Does not pick up on social cues and may lack inborn social skills.
- Dislikes any changes in routines.
- Avoids eye contact or stares at others.
- Has unusual facial expressions or postures.
- Has heightened sensitivity and becomes overstimulated by loud noises, lights, or strong tastes or textures.

Tips:

- Give one or two warnings before a change of activity or schedule.
- Break directions down into simple steps.
- Provide guidance during unstructured times.
- With lots of other kids and noise, try to help him/her find a quiet spot for some "solace."
- Identify 1 or 2 empathetic children who can serve as "buddies" to help the camper to make friends.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Symptoms:

- "What if" fears about situations far in the future.
- Perfectionism, excessive self-criticism, and fear of making mistakes.
- Feeling that they're to blame for any disaster, and their worry will keep tragedy from occurring.
- The conviction that misfortune is contagious and will happen to them.
- Need for frequent reassurance and approval.

Tips:

- Pay attention to the camper's feelings.
- Stay calm when the child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- Recognize and praise small accomplishments.
- Don't punish mistakes or lack of progress.
- Modify expectations during stressful periods.
- Plan for transitions.

Tourette's Syndrome

Symptoms: Motor and vocal tics

- Sudden, brief, repetitive movements, such as eye blinking, facial grimacing, shoulder shrugging, and head or shoulder jerking.
- Repetitive throat-clearing, sniffing, or grunting sounds.
- Touching objects, hopping, jumping, bending, or twisting.
- Yelling, repeating the words or phrases of others.

Tips:

- Keep in mind that motor or vocal tics are occurring involuntarily.
- Try not to react with anger or annoyance.
- Try to be a role model for the campers on how to react to the Tourette's symptoms.