

Parent training and Support groups

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Abstract

Parents who have a child with ADHD often feel isolated. There may be delays in making the diagnosis and they may feel that they are being blamed for having a “naughty child” as a result of poor parenting. Support groups are invaluable in assisting parents through the challenges of ensuring that the needs of the child with ADHD are fulfilled. ADDISS (Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service) is a national charity that provides a telephone helpline, has a website, offers training, provides resources and organises events for families of children with ADHD. It also extends to ADHD in adulthood. Although there are several parenting programmes available, 1-2-3 Magic is recommended by ADDISS, on the grounds of considerable experience and positive parental feedback. This programme is mainly non-verbal and addresses issues such as climbing, tantrums, fighting, swearing and other difficult behaviours. It is best to provide this programme for children before they reach the age of 12 years because it is less effective in older children if not started in early childhood. The younger the child the more effective the programme. Several local support groups, some of which are affiliated to ADDISS, and other parent training support programmes, for example Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme), are also available.

Parent Support Groups

National support group

ADDISS is here to help.

The national charity ADDISS (Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service) has for many years worked with families who have a child with ADHD. ADDISS provides a helpline, offers training and resources, and organises events. It provides families with the best possible information, improves understanding of ADHD and highlights practical strategies that achieve positive social, health and educational results.

The work of ADDISS extends to ADHD in adulthood. It engages with professionals and practitioners across a range of disciplines, including family doctors. The GP is often the first person that a parent will approach to try and make sense of their child’s behaviour and in search of that all-important diagnosis.

Local support groups

Local support groups are usually run by volunteers who are parents themselves. If you are lucky enough to have a group in your area they can be an enormous source of support for parents. Some will be small, unconstituted groups who meet in each other’s homes or in a local church hall, offering a safe, friendly place for parents to let off steam and support each other. A few groups are better established and may have funds which enable them to have premises and admin staff. A very small number may offer holiday schemes for the children or parenting programmes. Because of the difficult nature of this complex and onerous condition, many support-group leaders burn out and the groups are unsustainable. We find groups come and go rather quickly.

The parent’s perspective.

My child’s behaviour is not really like that of his peers. I can’t quite put my finger on it, but I just know something is different.

He’s always fighting with other children and sometimes he even physically attacks me. The idea of sharing seems to be totally beyond his comprehension and so he has hardly any friends. Other people

tell me that all my naughty child needs is discipline and I know they think I'm a bad parent. Perhaps I am.

My health visitor reassured me and says not to worry, it's just the "terrible twos", and he'll grow out of it - but I just know there's more to it than that.

The local Children's Centre offered me a parenting programme but after a few sessions none of it seemed to apply to my child. I feel totally at the end of my tether. My sense of isolation is overwhelming. I can't sleep. My marriage is in trouble and nobody seems to understand - and then someone mentions ADHD...

At ADDISS this is such a common and sad story.

Parenting programmes

What is parent training?

Parents initially feel defensive when offered parenting programmes as they feel it is an attack on them and a criticism of their skills as a parent. It is important to reassure parents and explain that they need to learn new and different skills to parent a child who has ADHD and behavioural difficulties.

Parenting programmes are crucial for families to achieve a balanced home life. There are many on offer but not all are suitable for the temperament of a child who has ADHD. Likewise many programmes are not compatible with the skill of the parents themselves, who may have undiagnosed ADHD. Parent training should be a combination of good behaviour-management skills together with a psycho-educational course on ADHD to help parents understand their child's condition better.

Triple P (Positive Parenting Programme)	A 12-week intensive course used mostly for children from age ten into their teens.
The New Forest Parenting Programme	A 12-week course which is delivered both in groups and in the home in a one-to-one setting, primarily for pre-schoolers, but also useful for older children.
The Incredible Years – Webster Stratton	A 12-week course of two hours per week for children age 3–10years. Useful for developmental issues, changes in the family and parental mental health problems.
1-2-3 Magic	3–5 week course of up to 3 hours per session. Tackles difficult behaviour first then moves onto building family relationships.
The Parent Factor in ADHD	An 8-week course of 2 hours per session, teaching parents about ADHD and all aspects of advocating for their child.
ADHD Parent Empowerment and Skills Training (PEST)	Developed and delivered in Lancashire by ADHD Northwest. A 12-week programme delivering skills to parents to help tackle all the difficulties ADHD presents to families.

Each one of these programmes has its own strengths. The programme should be chosen to fit the family and their particular difficulties.

ADDISS recommends 1-2-3 Magic, a programme that really does work. ADDISS has received overwhelmingly positive feedback from parents, who say their lives have been transformed. 1-2-3 is

a behaviour management programme designed to address the symptoms of ADHD. It fits extremely well into a psycho-educational course on ADHD.

1-2-3 Magic is designed for parents of children from the age of 2 to 12 years and is an excellent intervention for GPs to consider before making that first referral for an ADHD assessment.

1-2-3 Magic was developed by Dr Thomas Phelan in Chicago over 30 years ago. It is designed specifically for ADHD children and is delivered with ongoing support. This means that parents can face their child's future with confidence.

Its primary appeal is that it is simple and that it appears to work almost immediately – hence the name. 1-2-3 Magic takes parents through three elements: controlling difficult and obnoxious behaviour, encouraging positive behaviour and strengthening the family relationship. Counting tactics (the 123 of the title) are used to address behaviours we want to stop and to encourage children to become better self-managers.

The programme is primarily non-verbal. Strategies address whining, tantrums, shoving, fighting, hitting, jumping, swearing and other “obnoxious” behaviours.

In practical terms 1-2-3 Magic operates through 3 to 5 sessions of up to 3 hours each. These are delivered by trained practitioners, typically on a small group or one-to-one basis. ADDISS has trained practitioners from a range of disciplines, including youth offending teams, specialist nurses, educational psychologists, local authority parent support advisors and school staff. There is an educational component that lends itself to delivery to children by teaching staff, and we have delivered training in schools.

1-2-3 Magic can be delivered in a variety of languages; ADDISS has trained practitioners in Romania, Ireland, Gibraltar and many other countries in recent years.

The recommended pattern is to deliver one session and then allow a one-week gap for parents to apply the lessons learned before embarking on the next session. In this way skills are built up and consolidated in a structured fashion, with opportunities to review successes and discuss problems along the way.

Many other parenting programmes leave parents unsupported at the end of the sessions. 1-2-3 Magic is different. Part of its strength is the monthly drop-in, which is an effective way to sustain learning when the programme is finished. ADDISS advises parents of pre-school children, in particular, to continue to attend monthly sessions for 3 to 5 years in order to gain the maximum benefit. Excellent resources are available to accompany the programme.

There are several local groups across the UK which can offer 1-2-3 Magic programmes. ADDISS can provide contact details and advice on actions that can be taken in the meantime.

1-2-3 Magic helps parents to impose a discipline that keeps the child safe, and helps them to respond and adapt to the structures of school and the wider world around them.

What about older children?

Early intervention in the pre-school years is ideal but for some families the ADHD diagnosis comes when the child is much older. However, it is not too late. The 1-2-3 Magic programme is suitable for parents of children up to the age of 12 years. However, it is less effective for a child older than this if used as a first time intervention. Catching a child before the difficult teenage years and imposing a calm and controlled structure for family life is possible; harmony in the home can be achieved even at this late stage using some of the techniques in the programme which are revisited in the follow-up programme “Surviving your Adolescents”.

In these economically difficult times, local authorities and health services are clearly mindful of the costs and benefits of parenting programmes. It is worth pointing out that this is a relatively low-

cost programme to deliver and significant savings can be achieved through investment in early intervention. In our experience, many children make such progress through the 1-2-3 Magic approach, that additional and expensive support in schools is much reduced or even no longer needed. This is a point worth remembering when commissioning services.

What is the role of the GP?

The most useful thing that family doctors can do to support families with an ADHD child is to empower the parents. A well-informed parent, equipped with skills and strategies to address their child's needs, can achieve amazing things. Time and again we have seen families emerge from seemingly impossible situations to achieve some semblance of normal family life. Getting past the "naughty child" syndrome is one of the biggest hurdles. A listening and non-judgmental GP who can guide a family towards sources of support is priceless.

Conclusion

A child with ADHD can make great demands on the family but assistance is available through various sources, not only through professionals such as teaching and medical staff but also through parent training and parent support groups, such as the national support group ADDISS.

For more information on the service ADDISS provides and the 1-2-3 Magic programme contact Andrea Bilbow at andrea@addiss.co.uk, telephone 020 8952 2909 or take a look at the website for events and resources.

GP Comment.

What have I learned from this paper?

1. This paper confirmed my impression that ADHD is often diagnosed late, sometimes after many years of the inappropriate label "naughty child" having been applied, with no additional support having been given.
2. Support groups that offer assistance for both children and adults with ADHD, such as the national support group, ADDISS, and local support groups can be invaluable.
3. Reading this paper has made me even more aware of the importance of referring families for support and parent training.

Dr Sarah Griffith, GP, Shefford Health Centre, Bedfordshire.

ADDISS (The National Attention Deficit Disorder Information and Support Service)

Premier House
112 Station Road
Edgware
Middlesex
HA8 7BJ
Telephone helpline 0208952 2800
Email: info@addiss.co.uk
Website: www.addiss.co.uk

Other UK-based support groups

ADDISS Affiliated groups

These are independent groups who work together and have agreed to abide by a code of conduct to ensure patient and professional confidence.

London area

London Borough of Havering

Add+up

01708 454040

addup@addup.co.uk

Harrow

ADHD and Autism Support Harrow,

Tel number 020 8901 8009

Email: adhd@adhdandautismharrow.co.uk

Other parts of the UK

Cheshire & the Wirral

WAADDSUP,

Email: waaddsup@hotmail.com

Hartlepool

ADDvance,

01429288113

Email: addvance@hotmail.co.uk

Lancashire

ADHD North West

Lancaster 01524 389550

Accrington 01254 352586

Email: reception@adhdnorthwest.org.uk

Lincoln

Lincoln ADHD Support Group

01522 539939

Email: lincoln.adhd@btconnect.com

South Tyneside ADHD Support Group

01914242862

Email: jeansinclair@blueyonder.co.uk

Stafford

The Lighthouse ADHD Support Group

07754 822288

Email: contact@lighthousegroup.org.uk

Scotland (Ayrshire)

ADD It Up

07867903435

Email: additupenquiries@aol.com

Northern Ireland(Belfast)

ADD-NI

02890200110

Email: hello@addni.net

Non-affiliated groups**Southampton**

Southampton ADHD Support Group

02380522704

or Lisa Osborn 07766987386

<http://www.southamptonadhd.com/>

Weymouth

Dorset ADHD Support Group

01305 768297

Email: adhdsupportgroup@btinternet.com