

ADHD Parenting > School & Learning

FOR TEACHERS

What I Wish My Son's Teachers Knew About Him and ADHD

One mother shares what she wishes all teachers knew about the ADHD students in their classroom. Read and share with the educator in your life.

BY JENNIFER KAMPFE

To all the teachers reading this, thank you for teaching our children. It is my hope that this will offer insight into the world of a student diagnosed with attention deficit disorder ([ADHD or ADD](#)).

Dear Teachers,

I wish you knew that **my son doesn't want to misbehave**. What seems like misbehavior could be because he is overwhelmed, frustrated or embarrassed. If he is feeling any of these emotions, his brain responds by fighting, fleeing or freezing. It's a natural stress response. I wish you knew how stressful school is for my child.

I wish you knew that **my son doesn't mean to blurt out**. The frontal lobe of his brain, which controls impulsive behavior, is under developed compared to his peers.

I wish you knew that he can't transition from joking around to getting down to business like you or his classmates can. **Transitions are very difficult for him**.

I wish you knew that his joke making and comments in class to gain attention are his way of trying desperately to fit in with his peers. He doesn't get invited to friends' homes, he doesn't play on sports teams with his classmates, and he doesn't receive texts from close buddies. He is probably seen as immature and annoying by many of his peers. **No matter how confident he may appear, don't be fooled**. That is his natural defense mechanism kicking in to convince himself that he is cool.

[Free Download: [A Letter to Introduce Your Child to the Teacher](#)]

I wish you knew that **my son needs encouragement** more than other students. He is so used to hearing, "Carlton, be quiet," "Carlton, you're not trying hard enough," that the majority of the time he feels like a failure.

I wish you knew that when you **acknowledge him doing something right**, whether he shows it or not, it makes his day.

I wish you knew **when he says, "I forgot," nine times out of 10 he really did forget**. It isn't an excuse. His brain doesn't hold on to things the way your other students' brains do.

I wish you knew how difficult it is for him to walk into the classroom and get right to work. He has just come from chatting in the hallways with his friends, after sitting still and trying to be quiet for 50 minutes in another class. His brain is like, “No! Not again! I’ve gotta do something fun!”

I wish you knew how long it takes my son to complete homework. What might take a neurotypical student 15 minutes to complete takes my son an hour. **When the parents of a student with ADHD ask for a reduced homework load for their child, we aren’t trying to get him out of work.** We want him to know the material, but we want our child to feel confident about his ability to complete the work instead of feeling like there is no way he will ever get it finished.

[The ADHD Homework System We Swear By]

I wish you knew that **large tasks or projects overwhelm him.** The more you can break down projects into small tasks with due dates, the more successful he will be.

I wish you knew that **my son is a poor self-observer.** Many times he has no idea that he is coming across as disrespectful, or that he is acting or saying something inappropriate. Ask him questions that help him learn to self observe, but please do it in private.

I wish you knew that **he doesn’t read social cues well and therefore comes across as selfish or indifferent.** The more people I have serving as his “social coach” in a loving and respectful manner, the more likely he is to develop these skills.

I wish you knew that **my son doesn’t do well with unstructured class time the way other students do.** If there will be unstructured time in your class, talk privately with him before class starts and let him know he will have “quiet study time,” for example, toward the end of class.

I wish you knew that his **having ADHD doesn’t embarrass him.** He knows it is part of what makes him who he is and his parents choose to highlight the strengths that come with this diagnosis. He also knows that ADHD is not an excuse, it is an explanation.

I wish you knew that **getting his full attention, even by saying his name, before you start giving instructions makes the difference between him hearing all or part of what you say.**

I wish you knew that, as a parent of a child with ADHD, **frequent communication is important.** I know that you are going the extra mile for my child when you do this. If he has a problem in class that day, let me know. If you’ve assigned a project, let me know. Any and all communication is appreciated. I really do want to partner with you for my child’s success.

I wish you knew that he will go through cycles of doing well and then cycles of not doing well. He may turn in his homework for two weeks in a row, and then have a week where he struggles. **Motivation waxes and wanes for kids with ADHD.**

I wish you knew how difficult it is for his brain to focus, especially if he finds the subject boring. The ADHD brain is actually understimulated, meaning it requires more stimulation than the brains of neurotypical students.

I wish you knew that when he draws in class, it doesn’t mean that he isn’t listening. **Moving helps his brain stay focused.**

I wish you would be more open to offering him different ways to show you that he knows the material. He often has a hard time putting his knowledge into words, but he can express it well in a drawing.

I wish you knew how sensitive my son is. I know that one day he can be a delight to have in class and, the next day, he can be a disruption. The more even keeled you can be with him, the better. When you are frustrated and disappointed with him, he will sense it strongly. He doesn't want to disappoint you and, when he does, he takes it hard. **His inner voice tells him that he is a failure and not good enough.**

I wish you knew that his brain cannot filter out everything he sees and hears. **He can't determine what is important and what is not important right away.** Everything he sees and hears is of equal importance to his brain. I encourage you to visit understood.org and watch a video called "Through Your Child's Eyes." You will be blown away by what [ADHD students](#) live with everyday.

Finally, **I wish you knew how grateful I am that you teach my son.** Your job is not an easy one, nor is it for the weak of heart. If anyone understands how hard it is, I do. Your compassion and understanding toward my child will be something I will never forget. Neither will my son.

[Setting Realistic Behavior Expectations at School]

Updated on July 8, 2019

Copyright © 1998 - 2019 New Hope Media LLC. All rights reserved. Your use of this site is governed by our [Terms of Use](#) and [Privacy Policy](#). ADDitude does not provide medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. The material on this web site is provided for educational purposes only.