**Parenting Tips**

**Useful for children who have difficulties with attention/concentration/impulsivity and anger/frustration**

**Get attention and Giving Attention**

* When giving instructions make sure that you have the child’s full attention
* Turn off the TV/radio/music
* With young children, gently hold their hands and point their face towards yours
* Approach older children from the front
* Look them in the eye
* Speak clearly, without shouting
* Give your child regular time and attention – when picking your child up from school, be interested in their day, listen to them, show your interest by asking questions – avoid chatting to friends on your phone. Use open ended questions, for example “tell me about your day”
* Use the time after school to play a game with your child – this can give your child a focus as they walk/travel home
* Be mindful of when you are on the phone - it is important that you have specific times when you put your phone on silent or turn it off all together
* Give you and your child special time each day. This time should be without interruptions
* Think about how you ask your child questions… if they come home with a lovely picture from school rather than saying “what’s that?” say “Wow! What an amazing picture, tell me some more about it!”
* When you are doing things around the house, for example, cooking the dinner, include your child in different ways – they can help to measure things out, mix things. Perhaps they can try and name and spell all the things you are using

**Be Positive**

* Tell them what to do rather than what not to do e.g., “Alfie please eat your chips” rather than “Stop playing with your chips”

**Make clear rules**

* Write them down so that there are no arguments about what the rules are
* Focus on areas of behaviour that are important to you and others in the family - Start with one or two rules
* Don’t waste effort on less important rules
* Once rules are well established, there may be opportunities to be flexible and negotiate certain boundaries

**Set up routines**

* Children with attention difficulties tend to respond better to routines because they have a better idea of what they are supposed to do
* Changes to routine create distraction and uncertainty
* Getting ready for school in the morning/ getting ready for bed in the evening should follow the same routine
* Use checklists and visuals to support and to act as reminders

**Praise**

* Try and catch your child being good
* When they have completed a task or behaved well, say how pleased you are and what exactly you are pleased about
* The praise should be immediate, not hours or days later
* It is easier for children with attention difficulties to get into a vicious cycle of criticism, which makes them feel bad about themselves, which can then make them behave badly
* The aim is to set up a circle of praise, which makes them feel good about themselves and in turn will make them behave better

**Reward**

* Set up a reward scheme
* Your child can earn points for good behaviour
* Points can add up to something that you both agree on
* You can use different systems to keep track of the points, for example, gold stars, plastic tokens in a jar etc

**Plan for Peace**

* Organise things at home to cut out stress and confrontation
* If planning a big shopping trip which you anticipate being difficult try and find another time to go on your own in peace
* If you are dreading a long car journey, think about breaking it up into two or three shorter journeys with stops between to do something else
* Have different resources to hand – reading, colouring, word searches, other games to play in the car

**Focus on strengths**

* Boost your child’s confidence by praising them and encouraging them in the things they are good at
* Praise for behaviours you like to see e.g. playing nicely, sharing etc. Always name what you are praising for

**Can’t and won’t**

* It can be tricky sometimes working out the difference between “can’t” and “won’t”
* Talking out of turn, forgetting instructions, being disorganised, being easily distracted – maybe a specific difficulty for your child
* Even if your child finds these things tricky, they can still be worked on and improved, however, they may not be being wilful or naughty
* Sometimes your child may be naughty and deliberately misbehave
* As a parent you are the best person to become an expert on telling the difference between “can’t” and “won’t”

**Say how you feel**

* Rather than criticise the child directly, e.g. “you are behaving badly”, talk about the way their behaviour affects you, e.g. “it really upsets me when you….”
* “I feel really proud of you when I see you …”

**Avoid arguments**

* There are clear rules
* You know them; your child knows them – end of story

**Use time out**

* You can establish a special place – a chair, a step, a corner – where the child goes to cool off (and let you cool off) for a fixed period (e.g. 5 or 10 minutes).
* You can use a kitchen timer
* During the time out, don’t talk to the child and don’t answer them
* When the time is up don’t talk about the problem.
* They have served their time, and now the slate is clean
* If the child refuses to take time out, then explain the consequence, e.g. To withdraw a privilege, such as playing on the computer
* Use a “do not disturb sign” – the child can decorate it and can use it when they need to be alone

**Look after yourself**

* Parenting can be exhausting!
* Try and organise breaks for yourself
* Remember it is difficult to be an effective parent when you are at the end of your tether
* Talk to your partner/friend – share

**Books and resources that may be helpful:**

*The Kids Guide to staying awesome and in control* - by Lauren Brukner

*What to do when your temper flares – by Dawn Heuber*

*Starving the Anger Gremlin – By Kate Collins-Donnelly*

*Relaxation and mindful techniques and stories*

