

**Raising An ADD Child:
6 Things You Absolutely
MUST DO**

By
Brenda Nicholson
ADD Coach



Contents

Disclaimer	3
About Me	4
Raising An ADD Child	5
# 1: Get A Good Diagnosis	6
# 2: Educate Yourself	8
# 3: Build Your Support Team	9
# 4: Get Organized	11
# 5: Learn to Advocate	13
# 6: The Big Picture	15
Conclusion	16

Disclaimer

The advice in this book is not intended to take the place of advice given by a medical or mental health professional. I am an ADD Coach, trained at the American Coaching Association, as well as the mother of 3 children with Attention Deficit Disorder. The contents of this book are based upon my own personal experiences and observations, professional training, and over 20 years of research in the field.

Every effort has been made to assure the accuracy and reliability of it's contents.

Note: The contents of this ebook are owned and copyrighted by Brenda Nicholson and ADD Moms. No portion of this ebook may be reproduced or reprinted without express written permission.

About Me

My name is Brenda Nicholson. I am the owner and sole contributor to [ADD Moms](#), a website dedicated to offering coaching, education, and support to moms who have children with Attention Deficit Disorder or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

I am an ADD Coach, trained at the American Coaching Association, an organization that specializes in training ADD coaches. I have been a coach for about 7 years - I completed my training in 2000. I have maintained a private practice for most of that time, and have also served as an ADD Coach for Schoolcraft College in Livonia, MI. I created and implemented an ADD coaching program for the college while I was there that was funded by grants from the state as well as the college.

In addition to my background as a coach, I have an extensive background in being an ADD mom. I have 3 children, all diagnosed with either ADD or ADHD.

I first noticed something different about my son when he was just a toddler, and with a little research, concluded that it was Attention Deficit Disorder. Because I wanted to be the best mom I could possibly be, I decided to learn all I could about ADD.

I read every book I could find, and talked to anyone who would listen. I started joining groups, and attending conferences, and when I found out about ADD coaching, I knew it was for me.

I took my son for an official diagnosis when he was 11, and the ADD was interfering with his schoolwork. I soon found out that I was more knowledgeable than most of the professionals that I took him to for help.

That convinced me that parents need someone in their corner; someone who knows not only facts and theory about Attention Deficit Disorder, but who has lived it every day, and can give them solid advice on how to really manage ADD symptoms and teach them how to help their child succeed.

I hope that you find this information helpful. I would love to hear your comments.

Please email me at: Brenda@ADDmoms.com.

Raising An ADD Child: 6 Things You Absolutely Must Do

Note: The terms “ADD” & “Attention Deficit Disorder” are used throughout this e-book and on my website. For the sake of simplicity, they should be taken to mean both ADD & ADHD.

There are a lot of challenges that you will face as the parent of a child with Attention Deficit Disorder. Some will come from your child, and some will come from other places: friends, family members, neighbors, teachers, and even strangers.

I could write an entire book about all of the things you're likely to encounter, and the best ways to deal with them. Instead, I've boiled them down to the essentials: things that I believe are universal to all people with Attention Deficit Disorder, along with suggestions on how to best handle them.

My website (and this e-book) deals primarily with moms raising kids with ADD, but the information contained here, as well as on my site, is applicable to anyone struggling to understand and manage ADD.

OK, then, let's get started with number 1. (By the way, I've organized these not by importance, but by the order you're likely to encounter them – when possible.)

1: Get a Good Diagnosis

If you suspect, or the school tells you, that your child has Attention Deficit Disorder, the first thing you will need to do is to confirm it. To do that, you need a **qualified professional**:

- A medical doctor, like your pediatrician or family doctor
- A psychologist
- A psychiatrist
- A Master Level Counselor (a counselor or psychologist with a Masters degree)
- A social worker

If the school is the one to suggest that your child has ADD, then they are responsible for the evaluation. They will arrange to have your child tested, and they will pay for it. They will also choose who does the evaluation. Typically, it's either a social worker or a Master Counselor employed by the district.

While this may be cost effective for you, **it's not always in your child's best interests**. Here's why:

- **The person doing the evaluation may not be an ADD specialist.** Even some of the most affluent school districts are under budget cuts these days, and it's not unusual for school employees to have to wear more than one hat. I'm sure we've all run into some version of the gym teacher teaching chemistry at one time. I personally have dealt with Learning Specialists who had no more than a passing familiarity with ADD. Do you really want someone who spent a couple of weeks studying ADD to evaluate your child?
- **The evaluation may not be comprehensive.** One evaluation I've seen is a one page

ADD Moms

checklist, given to the teacher and both parents and then scored by the counselor or social worker. ADD almost always occurs with what are called co-morbidities; co-existing conditions like a learning disability, anxiety, or depression. You most likely won't find out about these from an evaluation such as this.

- Once a diagnosis is made, you will need someone else to prescribe medication. Only a medical doctor or a psychiatrist can do that.

Let me be clear here: while I stand by my opinion that this type of evaluation may not be best for your child, I think you absolutely should let them do it. You don't want to paint yourself as a troublesome parent right off the bat. There is a time to stand up for your child and his rights, and this is probably not it.

So, agree to let the school do their evaluation, but ask some questions:

- Who is doing the evaluation?
- What are their qualifications?
- How much experience do they have with Attention Deficit Disorder?
- What does the evaluation involve?
- How will it be conducted?
- What information will it produce?

Once you get the answers to these questions, and the results from the evaluation, you can decide if you need more.

My recommendation to parents is always to find a professional who specializes in diagnosing Attention Deficit Disorder, ideally a psychiatrist, to do a proper evaluation on your child. This can be very costly if your insurance doesn't cover it, so this may not be an option for everyone.

Sometimes you can find a group of professionals who work together that will suit your needs. When my youngest daughter was diagnosed, she met with a psychiatrist who later prescribed her medication. The actual testing was done over a two day period by a specially trained psychologist. In addition, she met with a specially trained social worker weekly to help her deal with the anxiety that co-exists with her ADD.

OK, once you've got a good evaluation, you're ready for # 2:

#2: Educate Yourself About ADD

In order for you to be the best parent possible for your child, and to help them succeed and develop to their full potential, you've got to be educated about ADD and all that it entails. If your child were diagnosed with diabetes, wouldn't you find out everything you could about it? Of course you would. I am continually surprised, though, by the number of parents I meet who know very little about ADD.

ADD is not an isolated thing, it's a lifestyle. It is a fundamental part of who you are and it informs everything in your life:

- Diet can affect your ADD symptoms in either a positive or negative way
- Exercise can help manage ADD symptoms
- Sleep can be disrupted by ADD, but enough good sleep can help ADD symptoms
- Social relationships can be impacted by ADD
- School performance can be impacted by ADD
- Self-esteem, lifestyle choices, the job you end up with – the list goes on and on

As a parent, you've got to be aware of these things, and know how to manage them. That's where education comes in, but don't worry, it's not as overwhelming as you might think.

Start with the Internet, and my site: <http://www.ADDmoms.com>. There's a lot of information there, and I'm adding more all the time. Audio, podcasts, and a forum are on the list.

Check out my links to other sites about ADD, as well as my list of recommended

ADD Moms

reading, and then branch out from there.

Finally, talk to other parents and professionals (like ADD coaches) about Attention Deficit Disorder via forums, email, or in person.

Which brings me to # 3:

3: Build Your Support Team

Part of educating yourself included reaching out to others: parents, teachers, and professionals (like ADD coaches) in order to learn more about ADD. As you do that, you're naturally going to find some people who just “click” with you. Maybe you have some of the same issues you're dealing with, or maybe they've always got good advice to share. Make these people a part of your support team.

A support team can do a couple of really important things for you:

- They can offer you support. There will be times when you'll need a shoulder to cry on, or someone to vent to, or some good advice from someone who's been there. People who don't understand ADD can't help you nearly as much. Cultivate these relationships as you find them, and don't forget to be there for them when they need you.
- They can shorten the learning curve for you. Remember everything I discussed in #2: Educate Yourself? This is how you do it. Whenever you've got a question or concern, start by asking your support team. They may tell you all you need to know. If not, you can always follow up with research of your own.

Who should be on your support team? Basically, anyone you want. Look for people with a positive outlook, a supportive attitude, and some knowledge of ADD. They don't have to be formally trained; in fact, some of your best resources are likely to be other ADD Moms just like you.

Here are some suggestions:

- Your doctor. You may not think of your doctor as someone to include here, but you should. He/she should be someone you are comfortable talking to, and they

ADD Moms

should be open to answering questions.

- **Your child's teachers.** It's not always possible to establish a good relationship with your child's teachers, but if you can, go for it! Teachers are great resources, with lots of knowledge to share.
- **An ADD Coach.** ADD Coaches are specially trained in Attention Deficit Disorder, and are ideally equipped to answer many of the questions that you may have. In addition, they are experts at helping you find solutions to the problems you face; they do it all the time.
- **Other moms with ADD kids.** They can relate to what you're going through, and how you feel. They are often wonderful sources of solid, practical information. Look for them in your community as well as online communities.
- **Support groups such as [CHADD](#).** Their website has a meeting locator function on it to help you find a meeting near you.

Try to make your team a mixture of supportive friends as well as professionals; each has something to offer. And realize that your team members may change now and then; that's OK.

Once you have your team in place, you're ready for #4:

4: Get Organized

Getting organized may or may not be something that you need to do. There are those rare people among us who live their lives in an organized, orderly fashion without giving it a second thought. If you know exactly where your child's birth certificate is, when the car insurance is due and how much it is, and all of your laundry is done, quit reading this and go on to #5. For the rest of us:

ADD and disorganization go hand in hand. You've got a messy kid who needs all the help she can get, and if she got her ADD from you, then you're both going to need some real help. (I am assuming here that you are the parent basically in charge of running the household and dealing with kid related things like school.)

It is absolutely vital that you get as much of your home and your lives in order as possible. In addition, if you think you are the ADD parent, you should seriously consider getting yourself evaluated and on medication. I can't stress to you enough how much of a difference it will make to your entire family.

That said, organization is important for a number of reasons:

- Your child needs help in this area - keeping track of homework and permission slips, being able to find matching socks or clean clothes to wear.
- The aggravation factor – think of the amount of stress that could be eliminated just by being able to find what you need when you need it.
- Medication – this is a huge one. Once you get your child on the proper medication, it will be important to you both to make sure he always has it on hand. ADD medications are controlled substances, and have rules that must be followed. Doctor's visits may be required at regular intervals, and there is a small

ADD Moms

window of opportunity for you to fill the prescription, usually 48 hours. This is something that you have to keep a close eye on, and being organized will help you immensely.

- **Documentation** – depending on your child and what needs they have, you may need to keep track of medical, insurance, or school records. Being organized makes this process easier and ultimately insures that your child gets exactly what they need.

I'm sure there are other reasons to get organized, but you get the picture. So, how do you do it?

There are a number of ways for you to go about the process of getting organized. Here are some suggestions:

- **Get a book** about organizing. There are a lot out there, some even devoted to the organizational needs of people with ADD. I'm a huge fan of books, but they aren't for everybody. If you have serious problems with organizing, this is probably not the solution for you.
- If you've got **someone you trust** who is very organized, see if they will come over and help you get things together. Make sure you're really comfortable with this before you do – you're really exposing yourself here.
- **Hire a professional organizer.** Check out **NAPO** to find an organizer near you. Really consider this if you're having problems. Professional organizers can be very affordable, they have solutions you've never thought of, and they won't be shocked by what they see. Some of them are also very knowledgeable about ADD. I would suggest that you have a very clear idea of what you want to work on before you call, and that you choose something that will make a big difference for you.

Next up, #5:

5: Learn to Advocate

Do I have to tell you to stand up for your kid? I doubt it. But here's what I can tell you that you might not know:

- It's important **how you advocate for your child.**
- You need to **teach your child to advocate** for herself.

How to Advocate Effectively

There will be times when you will have to stand up for your child in order to make sure that they are treated fairly or get what they are entitled to. You already know that. **How you conduct yourself during these times is very important, because it will affect how people behave in response.**

I know how emotionally charged these situations can be; I'm an ADD Mom, too. I've been there. This is your baby that someone is attacking and it can bring out the worst in you: screaming, crying, cursing – just complete venom and rage. You are not helping when you behave this way.

In order to do the best for your child, you have to rise above that, and you have to go back to # 2: Educate Yourself. **Arm yourself with knowledge, with facts, especially those that are pertinent to your child.** Picture yourself as a high-powered defense attorney and behave accordingly. You'll find that you will be much more effective that way.

One of the most emotionally charged times for me when my kids were younger was when I had to go to **parent-teacher conferences.** I hated them. I felt like I was getting called down to the principals office. Two hours spent discussing my child's numerous shortcomings and failures with a variety of teachers, trying to smile and promising all of them that they would do better. I always left feeling like the worst mother in the world.

ADD Moms

Then I decided to turn the tables. My educational background is in business management, so I decided that from then on, I would take charge of these meetings, and conduct them in a business-like manner. I came in, armed with information. I had specific questions for each teacher, as well as a short summary of things I wanted the teacher to know about my child. I took charge, including asking the teacher to back up the statements they made regarding my child.

It was a more effective meeting, and I left feeling more empowered. And in case you think it's all about me, let me just say that feeling good about one meeting makes you more confident for the next. And that's good for your kid.

Teach Your Child to Advocate

Once you learn how to stand up for your child effectively, you need to start passing on those skills to your child. There will be times when you won't be there to defend them, and as they get older, it's important that they learn to do this for themselves.

Once again, we go back to # 2: Educate Yourself. As you are learning about Attention Deficit Disorder, begin sharing some of it with your child. You may have to work to find a way to present it so that they are willing to listen; short, simple, and a little at a time is usually best. Keep it age appropriate, and positive. You are arming them with the same facts that you use when advocating for them.

In addition to giving them the facts, teach them the proper way to use them. I always told my kids that it was important to remain polite and respectful; otherwise, they'll just get into trouble. Obviously, the older they are, the more effective they are likely to be, but it's important to start building the foundation when they are young. It's an ongoing process.

Remember too, that it can be a painful one at times. They may fight you on this, or ignore you, they may even be hurt. Be gentle, and take it slow if you need to, and always do everything you can to keep their self-esteem intact.

Which brings us to # 6:

6: Never Lose Sight of the Big Picture

I've said it before, and I'll say it again: being a parent is hard, and sometimes being the parent of an ADD kid is harder. I know all about the hard days – they can be brutal. The important thing here is to **never lose sight of the big picture**:

- How important is failing 9th grade algebra when you're 25 or 45 or 65 years old?
- Will your child's entire life be ruined by repeating a grade?
- What about getting suspended? Or having to go to summer school?

I'm not saying these aren't big deals; they are. Of course you have to **take them seriously, and deal with them appropriately**.

But what I'm also saying is **you can't let them get you down**. You can't, in a moment of despair, let yourself believe that the latest report card will change the entire course of your child's life, because it won't. This is one of those times when you fall back on # 3: Build Your Support Team.

Ultimately, I think all most of us want for our children is for them to be happy, well-adjusted adults. We want them to have a job they enjoy that provides for them financially and a family to love who loves them in return.

And yes, a good education can help with that. Kids with Attention Deficit Disorder and really bad GPA s can still go to college. They may not get into Harvard, but they can get an education. There are options and opportunities out there.

You may not have one of those kids who goes straight from high school to university and graduates four years later. I'd be willing to bet that you don't. But that's OK. You have to **look at the big picture, and stop comparing your child to other people's kids**.

Go to [my website](#) and search for Thomas Edison. (The search box is in the upper right hand corner.) You'll find an article I wrote about ADD/ADHD and School. Read it, and you'll see what I mean.

Conclusion

There you have it – the 6 things that I believe are most important when raising kids with Attention Deficit Disorder:

1. Get A Good Diagnosis
2. Get Educated
3. Build Your Support Team
4. Get Organized
5. Learn to Advocate
6. Never Lose Sight of the Big Picture

Remember to check [my website](#) and blog often for continuing information on managing ADD/ADHD. You'll also get pertinent information from my newsletter. If you need further support, you can [email me](#), and as always, I am available for one-on-one coaching.

[ADD Moms](#)

