

diagnosis. Let's stop and discuss diet, and medication. Remember how your parents used to say you could not have sugar before bed because it kept you awake? Remember why you don't have coffee before you go to bed? Research has shown that, for some kids with ADD or ADHD diet can help them pay attention better. So if a parent gives you this information, use it! Often restrictions include no milk, no wheat, no chocolate or no eggs. Do not allow a kid to fall off his diet just because "it's camp." He deserves to have a great experience and you will enjoy him more if you help him keep his "even keel." The same idea applies to medication. Make sure you adapt the scout's schedule to enable him to take and process his medication as directed. Do not decide he does not need it or he can go a day without the medication without specific instructions.

Diet and medication are only part of any ADD or ADHD program, however. Most parents have a sense of how best to work with their child and can share their best strategies with you. Even if they have no formal "diagnosis," listen carefully to what the parents tell you.

Even if the parents do not share strategies with you, there are a number of things you can do to work with an ADD or ADHD scout.

Try inviting them to sit next to you and lightly touching their shoulder if they begin to fidget.

Try acknowledging the subject is boring and inviting the whole group to do some short physical activity

Remember that punishment will not generally be effective with ADD or ADHD, in part because it is hard for the scout to remember the "why" of the punishment while it is taking place. Instead, establish clear short rules along the lines of "signs up, mouth shut" and provide some praise or reward system that goes with consistent following of those rules. Remember to build a system with flexibility - you are aiming to help this scout be a part of the group, not

for perfection!

If your scouting activity involves close detail work, try to give this scout a less-distracting area to work.

If you need to give instructions, try to get as close to their face as you possibly can to give the instructions - be as large as you can in their "field of vision" so that there are fewer distractions.

Give the scout some choices in what to do within reasonable boundaries.

Remember to maintain your own emotional control. You might feel better after yelling, but they won't.

### **Food for thought**

As you get to know Scouts with ADD, you might want to know some others who had/have ADD or ADHD:

Thomas Edison - inventor

George Patton - WWII general

Walt Disney - cartoonist and movie maker

Dwight D. Eisenhower - U.S. President

Henry Ford - founder of Ford

### **Additional Resources**

BSA's new book: Working With Scouts with Disabilities - order it on-line!

[www.childdevelopmentinfo.com](http://www.childdevelopmentinfo.com) - general website describing ADD among other learning disabilities

[www.chmed.com/old/adhd.htm](http://www.chmed.com/old/adhd.htm) - website with useful strategies

[www.adda-sr.org/Spanish/](http://www.adda-sr.org/Spanish/)

[whatparentsshouldknow.htm](http://whatparentsshouldknow.htm) - Website describing the disorder and provides useful strategies.



# Scouting With Challenges

## Attention Deficit Disorder/Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA

Written and Donated by Liam G.B. Murphy to the Baden-Powell Council. All suggestions and descriptions are written by him and reflect his own views and research. You may make as many copies of this pamphlet as you wish!

## What is going on with this kid?

You are at the start of your meeting. You are deep in your notes, making sure you have everything you need. Scouts have been checking in with you as they walk in, providing constant interruptions. Two scouts, Tony and Tim, come up to you:

“Hey, did you hear about the latest dinosaur find?” Tony says.

“Sure” you say, focusing on your notes, hoping they will go away like the others did once you turn back to your papers.

“They found this HUGE meat-eater” yells Tim.

“Great” you say sourly, thinking <<can’t they see I need to focus?>>

“The find was late Cretaceous by Paul Serino” continues Tony.

“Un-uh” you say, thinking <<I can’t believe these kids are this rude>>

“We went to the track races on Saturday, they were AWESOME” shouts Tim.

“That’s nice” you growl.

“Serino’s going to the desert in Africa where he will continue his prior excavation” Tony says.

“Yes, Tony” you say in that clipped voice you use before you explode at your own kid.

“I’m learning how to throw a split finger fast ball - wanna watch me?” says Tim.

Fade out. You are about to explode, right?

These kids don’t seem to understand you are trying to get ready for a meeting. They can’t even see they are both competing for your attention at the same time. At this point, you are thinking there must be something really going wrong at home since their parents haven’t been able to teach them the basic minimum of manners.

Step back for a minute. Yes, there may be some problem at home, but it may also be you are dealing with a different kind of kid: one with ADHD (something you’ve heard about) or Asperger’s Syndrome (something not as widely discussed).

## What is going on with this kid.

Tim is showing some of the classic signs of Attention Deficit Disorder and, possibly, some of the symptoms of Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. A lot of people look at ADD/ADHD as an easy label for problem kids who just need to take a “magic pill” to become “normal” or who just need someone to “take control.” Both views are wrong.

It helps to start with a basic description of ADD and ADHD. ADD is a situation where the brain’s wiring is different so that small distractions that other people could ignore will distract an ADD person. An ADD kid may be a daydreamer - easily distracted by his own thoughts. In fact, an ADD kid may not be a problem kid at all since he may be perfectly content to daydream - until of course he can’t finish a test or a merit badge.

ADHD is a little different. If ADD involves distraction, ADHD adds an inability to keep movement in control as well. One kid with ADHD described it as having a bunch of radios in his head all playing at the same time: it’s hard to concentrate on any one of them. With ADHD, it’s almost like the “discriminator” in the brain works differently - that little voice that says “don’t do it” just isn’t as loud in their head and, for an ADHD kid, that voice may even say “let’s run and play NOW.”

Now, if you are trying to teach knife safety, running through the “blood circle” is not something you had in mind. You can work with an ADD or ADHD scout - you’ll just need to adjust to his different time scale and his different view on life - and it’s worth doing.

## Advantages of going on with this kid

What advantage? I mean, who wants to deal with a kid who’s always disruptive? You should. First, it does keep you on your toes: if you are doing really interesting things, chances are you will have a better chance of holding this kid’s attention longer (but don’t expect it ever to be “perfect”). So this kid is an early warning signal if you are getting boring. Second, ADD or ADHD kids tend to be really enthusiastic. Ever notice how a group sparks up when a kid says “WOW - let’s go that sounds great!” Well, your ADD kid can generally be counted on to be that kind of spark for your group. What you need, however, are some ways to exploit those advantages and to help this scout to be a better member of the group. You need strategies.

## Strategies for going on with this kid

As with any kid who is challenging, always start with talking to the parents. Realize that the parents may not yet have a diagnosis and, for any one of several reasons, may not want to discuss any formal diagnosis with you. So, don’t ask “does your son have a mental condition?” Rather, ask “I sometimes have problems coordinating with Tim, can you suggest some strategies to me?”

If you are told about ADD or ADHD, you need to understand two basic types of information from the parents. First, they should be prepared to share with you what strategies work for their scout. Second, they should be prepared to share with you something about his diet or medication.

We’ll deal with strategies last because you can use behavioral strategies even if there is no