



Stress and the ADHD Brain

Tips to Stay Focused and Positive Amid Chaos

If your child or teen is having trouble focusing or is anxious about school, you're not alone. Many kids, teens and adults under stress are feeling like it's more difficult to get tasks done, stay energized, keep calm and maintain balance in their lives.

At Brain Balance, we understand how stress impacts the brain. We've got a plan, and we've got your back. We created this guide to give parents actionable steps to help improve focus and calm anxious feelings throughout the school year. There is a way forward to an even brighter future for you or your child.

How Stress Impacts the Brain

Let's first discuss why so many are feeling "out of balance" due to the pandemic. Simply put, stress and change impact the way the brain functions. When we go through periods of high stress, the strong, higher functioning areas of our brains can become overwhelmed and overworked. When this happens on the inside, we can feel more foggy, unfocused, fidgety and anxious on the inside. The more stress, the more our brain function is affected. The result? Kids and teens who already felt unfocused may feel even worse, and those who entered the pandemic without these struggles may be feeling "out of balance."

The good news is the brain can change and areas affected by stress can be strengthened. Research shows that the brain can develop new pathways and networks, which improve cognitive ability and performance in many areas of our lives. Everything we do in the Brain Balance Program is done to build and strengthen these pathways, using sensory engagement, physical development, academics, and nutrition.

Tips to Improve Focus and Stay Positive

We know that the brain can change at any age. By targeting and strengthening different areas, networks, and pathways in the brain, focus and concentration can improve. Just like you're able to target and strengthen different muscles in your body, it takes repetition and it takes specificity. Here are some ways to help improve how you or your child may be feeling and functioning.

1. Nutrition: It's so important that our brain and body has the fuel it needs to perform. Processed carbohydrates, lots of sugar and processed food provide your body with energy, but it's short-lasting energy, ultimately leading to a crash. Instead, it's important to consume healthy fats and proteins throughout the day so that the body burns through its fuel much more slowly. This helps to even keel mood, emotions and behavior and avoid those peaks and valleys.



Memory Enhancing Foods

- **Cold Water Fish Like Salmon or Tuna**
(Light chunk tuna variety is best, as it contains less brain contaminating mercury.)
- **Walnuts**
- **Avocados**
- **Sunflower seeds**
- **Almonds**
- **Flax seeds**
- **Edamame**
- **Wild Rice**
- **Pasture Raised Beef**



How much *sleep?*



Ages 3-5
10-13 hours
(including naps)
Ages 6-12
9-12 hours
Ages 13-18
8-10 hours

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, this is how much sleep a child needs each night.

2. Sleep: Children need plenty of sleep to remain focused throughout the day.

According to the American Academy of Sleep Medicine, kids with ADHD who get inadequate sleep experience significant deterioration in their ability to pay attention and achieve academic success. A recent study suggests that even moderate sleep gains (approximately 30 more minutes each night) can lead to improved alertness and better behavior in school-aged children.

Find below eight tips to calm your child before bedtime and help him or her get more restorative sleep.

Calming bedtime routine strategies

- **Limit screen time and turn off electronics an hour before bedtime.**
- **Wind down with a good book.**
- **Enjoy a nice conversation with your child.**
- **Diffuse essential oils that calm**
- **Listen to soothing music.**
- **Take a warm bath or shower.**



3-Minute Circuit (Ages 4-10)

Choose 3 activities.
Complete each for 1 minute.
Repeat 2x per day.

5-Minute Circuit (Ages 11+)

Choose 3 activities.
Complete each for 1 minute.
Repeat 2x per day.

3. Exercise/Activity: Engaging and exercising key regions of the brain have been shown to improve brain connectivity and endurance, improving feelings of focus and attention. Physical exercise can actually enhance and engage both our attention and our memory. There's also benefit in short-term exercise. It only takes three to five minutes to engage your muscles, spike your heart rate and positively impact your focus and memory.

Brain Power Exercise Circuit

- Bike ride
- Dance to a song
- Jumping jacks
- Jump rope
- Tag
- Relay race
- Stretching & yoga
- Planks
- Sit ups
- Running in place
- High knees
- Simon says
- Frog walk
- Obstacle course
- Fast paced walk around the block
- Army crawl

3. Smell: Your nose knows! If used carefully, essential oils can enhance focus in children with ADHD and attention issues. Diffusing essential oils activates a neurotransmitter in your brain called acetylcholine, which is correlated with memory. So, when you smell things, it helps to enhance and activate memory. Try using various aromas to wake up and engage your brain. Diffuse oils like vetiver or peppermint while your child is doing homework, or when you're groggy or sluggish, take a deep inhale of that cup of coffee! When it comes to essential oils and kids, it's important to always consult with your doctor and a trained, qualified aromatherapist. Due to their weight, children are more sensitive to the effects of essential oils than adults are.




Calming Essential Oils

- Lavender
- Geranium
- Bergamot
- Neroli
- Sandalwood
- Ylang ylang

Essential Oils for Focus and Concentration

- Peppermint
- Rosemary
- Clove
- Cinnamon
- Basil





Brain Balance recommends limiting your child's non-school related screen time to **no more than** *one hour per day.*

3. Limit Screen Time: As a longer term strategy, put in place limits to the amount of screen time you or your child get each day. Too much screen time can affect the brain, negatively impacting development and the ability to stay calm and focused. Limited time in front of screens can be okay, but it's important to balance it with other activities, like reading a book, doing a puzzle, or playing a logic game that requires your brain to think and be engaged. By strengthening those pathways, kids and adults alike have a stronger ability to sustain attention and focus.

Making Breakthroughs Possible

Is something blocking your child's social or academic progress? Brain Balance picks up where conventional approaches leave off, going beyond the treatment of symptoms to address root causes. At Brain Balance, we're not about coping with barriers. We're about knocking them down, one small breakthrough at a time.

Harvard University's McLean Hospital conducted a research study focused on the impact of the Brain Balance Program on ADHD. The study showed the Brain Balance Program® is as effective as stimulant medication in alleviating ADHD symptoms in children.

"The Brain Balance training had clinical, behavioral, and neurobiological effects on par with pharmacological treatment. This is very encouraging as we believe that the ultimate goal in psychiatry is to develop non-pharmacological treatments for psychiatric disorders that exert enduring beneficial effects."

- **Dr. Martin Teicher**, associate professor of psychiatry at Harvard University and lead investigator of the study.

Read more about Harvard University's study of the Brain Balance Program [here](#).

To learn what's possible for your child, visit BrainBalance.com and fill out our form. One of our knowledgeable team members will reach out to you!

Disclaimer: The information presented is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. All information is intended for your general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical advice or treatment of specific medical conditions. Discuss this information with your healthcare provider to determine what is right for you and your family.

Daily Optimal *focus* Checklist

S M T W T F S

Servings of Protein
(Goal = 3-5)

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Servings of Healthy Fats
(Goal = 3-5)

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Servings of Veggies/Fruit
(Goal = 3-5)

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Diffuse Focus Essential Oils
(daytime)

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Brain Power Exercise Circuit
(Goal = 2 per day)

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Diffuse Calm Essential Oils
(nighttime)

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Calming Bedtime Routine

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