

THE ADHD ADVOCATE

# PARENT HANDBOOK

A GUIDE TO  
SUPPORTING YOUR  
CHILD THROUGH  
GCSES, A LEVELS  
AND BEYOND

[www.theadhdadvocate.com](http://www.theadhdadvocate.com)





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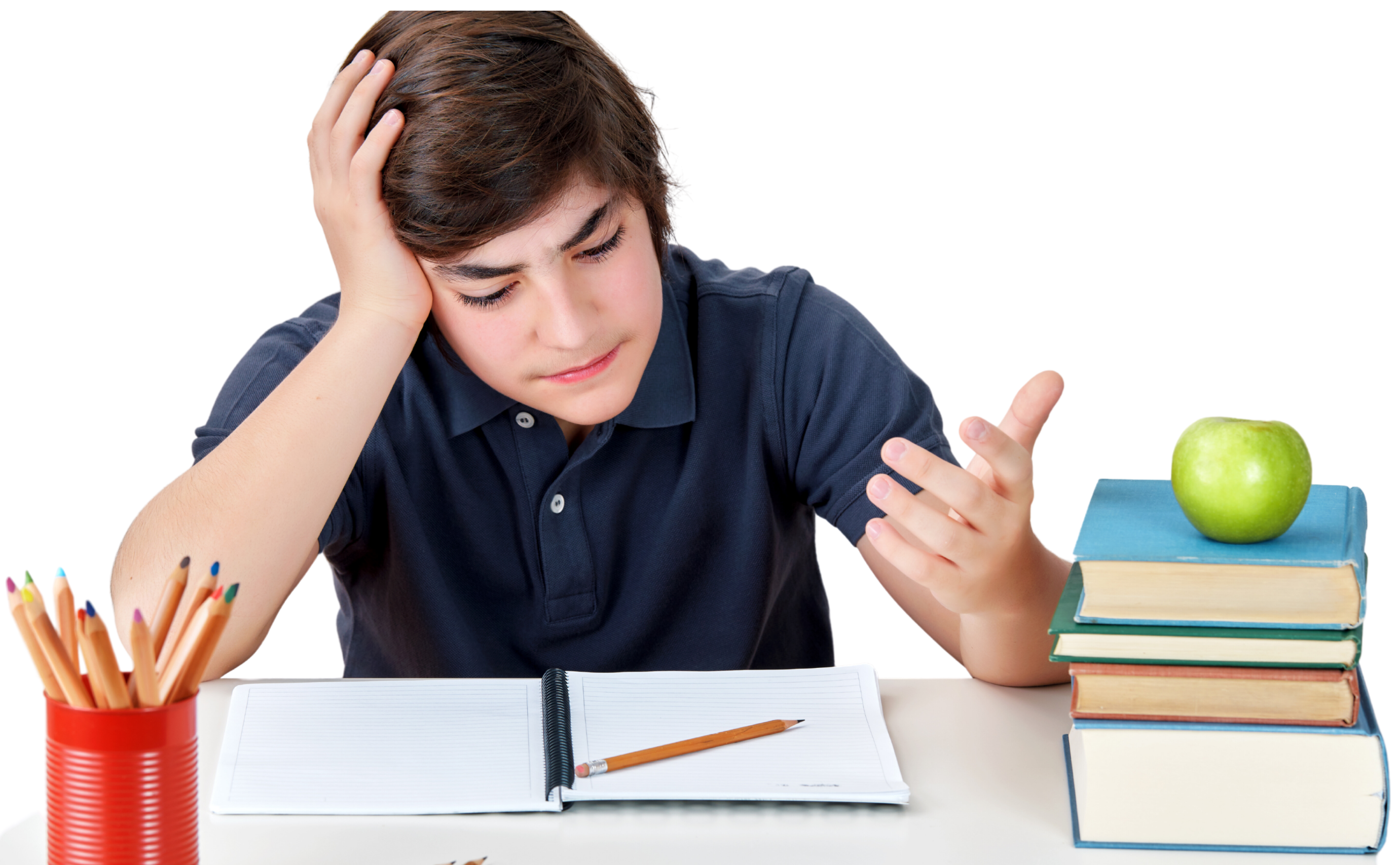


# WHAT IS ADHD?

ADHD is a neurobiological condition that is very much misunderstood and underdiagnosed. Fortunately, awareness of ADHD and its unique impact on the brain and associated behaviours is growing. Its so important for parents in particular to be able to look at their children through an "ADHD lens". Understanding ADHD is crucial for parents to not only support, but get the best out of these often very bright, innovative and talented young people.

Let's start with the three main types of ADHD as described by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual ("DSM-5"), which contains the diagnostic criteria for ADHD:

- 1 **Predominantly inattentive**  
(re distractability/executive function issues/forgetfulness)
- 2 **Predominantly hyperactive/impulsive**  
(re physical hyperactivity/excessive talking/impatience)
- 3 **Combined-type**  
(a mix of both inattentive and hyperactive/impulsive)





# INTEREST-BASED NERVOUS SYSTEM.

According to William Dodson, individuals with ADHD have an "Interest-based nervous system" as opposed to an "Importance-based nervous system".

Children with ADHD are basically "hard-wired for interest".

William Dodson believes that the performance, mood and energy level of individuals with ADHD are solely determined by the momentary sense of "ICNUP":

Interest (fascination)

Challenge (competition)

Novelty (creativity)

Urgency (usually a deadline)

Passion (what's meaningful/brings joy)

This is essentially the fuel for the ADHD brain. Without these elements nothing really happens.

Children with ADHD are driven by "FOLI" (fear of losing interest). Boredom for them is what kryptonite is to superman and they will seek to avoid it at all costs, preferring crisis and chaos to no stimulation at all. When engaged however, these children are instantly energetic, positive and social.

Often *interest* wins over importance (to others), making it very difficult for children with ADHD to deliver what is expected of them.

It also makes decision making very difficult, as importance (to others)/priority doesn't organise or motivate. This makes conventional systems of planning and organisation (based on importance and time) very challenging.





# EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT AND REJECTION SENSITIVE DYSPHORIA

In addition to the obstacles presented by their Interest-based nervous system, children with ADHD also struggle with emotional dysregulation, in particular Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria (RSD) which is one of the most crippling aspects of ADHD and unfortunately the least known.

Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria ("RSD") as a concept was developed by William Dodson. Dr Hallowell describes it as **"the painful syndrome of feeling acute and profound dejection at even the slightest perceived insult or 'dis'"** and it is pervasive among individuals with ADHD.

It is not taken seriously as it's not recognised as an official trait of ADHD. The DSM-5 (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*) doesn't take into account RSD (or any type of emotional dysregulation) in the diagnostic criteria for ADHD. However, through our experience of coaching, practically all of our clients have reported experiencing RSD to varying levels.

RSD is characterised by the following behaviours:

- **People pleasing**

Some children with ADHD will do anything to fit in with their peers often leading to them getting into trouble (having fallen in with "the wrong crowd"), not setting any boundaries and more worryingly, not really knowing who they are and what they want.

- **Avoidance**

The fear of failure for some children with ADHD is so great that they will avoid anything that takes them out of their comfort zone and shines a light on themselves. They keep their expectations small and themselves smaller in order to not fail or disappoint. This is at the cost of them realising and expressing their authentic voice and fulfilling their potential.

- **Aggression**

Some children's sense of self is so delicate that they will stop at nothing to protect it from any perceived threat. These children use attack as the best form of defence, building their walls high and defending anything that even has the vaguest whiff of criticism. When they receive feedback on an area in which they could improve, they'll immediately retaliate and look to blame external forces. Everything feels personal and pointed.





# WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THEIR CHILD WITH ADHD

The more parents understand their children's ADHD and associated behaviours, the more equipped they will be to help their children navigate their ADHD challenges and harness their unique gifts. Here are some top parenting tips to help you look through the "ADHD lens". After all, "True love is born from understanding".

## 1 "Ferrari Brain, Bicycle Brakes" – Dr Ed Hallowell.

Think of your child's brain like a car. If your child has ADHD, it is more like a Ferrari. In order for the Ferrari (ie your child's brain) to run it needs fuel, and that fuel is anything that is authentically interesting/stimulating to your child.

## 2 Boredom is to Your Child what Kryptonite is to Superman.

It is actually painful for your child to do something that is not authentically interesting to her. Your child's brain is like a car remember, and it needs fuel (which is interest) to run. Chances are if you ask your child to clean her room she will either ignore you or protest very strongly.

Resist the urge to shout! Help her by making the prospect more stimulating: Make it a 5-minute challenge. Turn it into a game! Put her favourite music on. Promise her an immediate reward of her choosing after the task is done. The same applies to homework. Instead of starting with the more "boring" task first, start with something that your child finds authentically interesting so that her brain has some momentum (and is not going from a stand still!)

## 3 Engage as many senses as possible.

If your child is not interested in a task, different sensory modalities can help her focus on that task. Your child could try moving about, making noise, listening to music, chewing gum, having white noise in the background such as the tv, or even having another person present (a "body double"). Your child may also benefit from a bit of rough and tumble, a big cuddle, or being turned upside down. Anything that will provide the stimulation she needs to get started... Experiment!

## 4 Ask, don't tell.

Don't tell your child what to do. As soon as you tell your child "do this!" you have taken the idea away from her. She eliminates it as a possibility. It may appear as oppositional behaviour, but it is a fight/flight reaction due to her feeling emotions more intensely. Enlist your child in the decision making so that she owns it (or it's her own idea!) Create some visual charts/routines with a theme of her choosing. If you have an Alexa, you may want to set regular reminders and alarms – this is particularly helpful if you are a parent with ADHD yourself.

## 5 Give Positive Descriptive Praise and don't criticise your child for what she cannot do.

Your child desperately wants to please you... Try positive reinforcement and descriptive praise and see the difference in her attitude and behaviours. The better your relationship with your child, the better response you will receive, after all, there is nothing more she wants to do than please you. Don't forget that!!

## 6 Your child is not her ADHD behaviours.

It is your child's ADHD brain that is responsible for her more challenging behaviours, not "her". The challenging behaviours are not who she is. Make sure this is clear when addressing these behaviours with her.





**7 Give your child a sense of structure so that she feels the press of time.**

Create and consistently follow routines. Your child will get a better sense of time and will do more and be more efficient as people with ADHD love to be busy and get things done, and quickly ("ADHDers are sprinters, not marathon runners!"). This will also help with your child's fear of losing interest. It will also mean you are not telling your child what to do all the time (which will not work anyway!)

**8 Help your child "be present in the present with all her presence" ie to get out of her head and back into her body.**

This can be achieved through exercise, mindfulness or being in nature - this reduces "mind chatter" and rumination (it's easier and more stimulating for the brain to turn to negative thoughts).

**9 Help Your Child with Transitions**

Transitions are very hard for ADHDers. Your child will even find it difficult to make a transition to something that she will like as there is a space in between the activities where she could be bored (remember - Kryptonite to Superman). Enlist your child in plans and ask her how the transition can be made easier for her.

**10 Special Time**

Give your child some special time each day and occasionally take her out for a "special day", particularly if she has siblings. Make sure you do the same for siblings! Special time will strengthen your relationship and in turn, your child will try even harder to overcome her challenging ADHD behaviours for you.

**11 Manage your own ADHD**

If you suspect you may have ADHD, you might also want to be assessed and receive treatment so that your own ADHD is sufficiently managed to enable you to parent more easily. If you are a parent with ADHD, managing your child's ADHD is going to be quite a challenge. Managing your child's ADHD aside, you may find it difficult to be present with your child, follow through with what you have said, engage in the activities your child wants you to participate in (particularly if you are not authentically interested in them) and keep your cool when your child's challenging behaviours present themselves. As they say, you need to put the oxygen mask on yourself first before putting one on your child!

**12 Accept your child's unique brain wiring and embrace her "superpowers".**

Celebrate your child's successes and help her remember these. Empower her to self-advocate. Focus on Your Child's strengths, what's working and what she loves. "Where focus flows, energy goes..." Focus on the positive and see the difference...

**13 Don't forget to have fun!**

If your child has ADHD, chances are she is very entertaining and can be a lot of fun to be around. When things get a bit tense, say or do something outrageous/out of character and divert your child's attention from the negative to the positive. This won't always work but its worth a try. Stay upbeat as much as possible and create plenty of opportunities for the family to have fun together such as family days out, eating out, movies, cooking, crafts, holidays and new experiences.

**Create positive memories for your child - the more she has of these, the more likely that she will be able to overcome her ADHD challenges and harness her ADHD strengths to thrive.**



# ADHD STRENGTHS

Whilst ADHD is characterised by many challenges as detailed above, it can also be a superpower. ADHD is situationally variable. In the right situations where their ADHD is understood, challenges mitigated and strengths harnessed, children with ADHD can thrive because of their ADHD, not in spite of it (often out shining and out performing their neurotypical peers).

There are many talented and creative entrepreneurs, thought leaders, actors and musicians who all have ADHD - Emma Watson, Tony Robbins, Simone Biles, Justin Bieber/Timberlake, Solange Knowles - these are living proof that ADHD character traits lend themselves well to success. In addition to the many celebrities that have 'come out', we are now seeing CEOs, bankers, lawyers and doctors speaking out about the competitive advantages that can come with having ADHD.

One of the most prevailing strengths of ADHD is **hyper-focus**. This is tied in with passion and interest. When interest in a task or project is ignited, they become so hyper focused on what they are doing it would be unfathomable not to achieve what they set out to do, whatever that may be. They keep interest and see things through to the finish line, giving their 'all' to get there. Often they will go above and beyond what was expected because of the sheer joy and passion invested in the task.

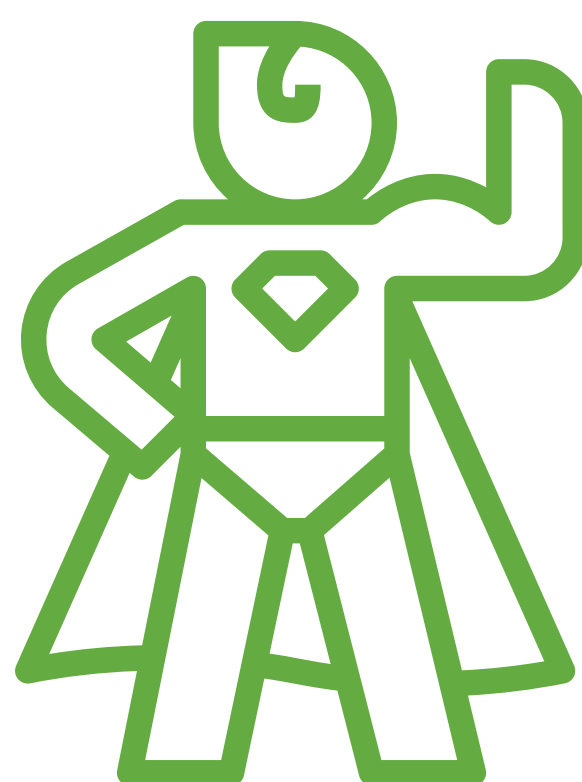
The ADHD brain is wired on a different tangent which furnishes children with ADHD with a greater ability to think **creatively** and offer **visionary** perspectives to problem solving and life in general. They are not held down by traditional constraints as they don't see them. Their minds are full of new and subversive ideas that aren't filtered by whether or not they might work. 'Why not' and 'just do it' are their mottos for exploration and new ideas. They often jump in head first with **unbridled positivity and conviction**.

Henry Ford explains the reason why many ADHDers succeed in areas where many others fear to tread.

**"Whether you think you can or think you can't, you're right."**

Many with ADHD are stimulated by risk and change and are avid **problem-solvers**, thriving on the new and welcoming the challenge. They like the feeling of positive uncertainty that comes from **new ideas** and creations, truly believing that 'anything is possible'. They will often bring a **new perspective** and will always be willing to share their ideas for growth, always seeking to improve the status quo. **Innovative and out of the box thinking** are trademarks of ADHD and they are ever eager to be part of something bigger than themselves.

**These are the world's pioneers, thought leaders and changemakers...**





# TELL A NEW STORY: SETTING YOUR STUDENT UP FOR SUCCESS DURING REVISING

The ADHD Advocate has designed a programme for students to support revising so that they can better:

- understand and manage their ADHD challenges
- harness their ADHD strengths
- recognise and prioritise their emotional wellbeing
- enable them to fulfil their unique, and often great, potential.

If parents have ADHD themselves, The ADHD Advocate can help parents understand their own ADHD, how it manifests in their parenting and equip them with the knowledge and tools that they need to support their children with the aim of recognising the great, unique strengths of ADHD.

## During the course of this programme, students will:

- gain a better understanding of ADHD and how it manifests at home and at school;
- explore the revising challenges associated with their ADHD, the impact of these traits on their behaviours and performance at home and at school;
- revisit and document their success stories to increase self-confidence;
- learn to set and achieve S.M.A.R.T (ie Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Bound) goals to improve self-confidence and performance and translate these goals into a revising action plan;
- set and follow agendas that they create;
- identify and address sources of overwhelm, procrastination and conflict;
- learn strategies to overcome time blindness and promote better time management;
- break projects and bigger tasks into manageable actionable tasks;
- modify their environment to encourage more positive behaviours and develop healthy habits;
- develop their network and sense of community to promote good mental health and emotional well-being; and
- most importantly, tell a new story about themselves and their children's ADHD, thriving because of their ADHD, not in spite of it and fulfilling their great potential.





# THE ADHD ADVOCATE GCSE/A LEVEL REVISING PROGRAMME CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING:

## Tell a New Story- Student Initial Consultation

- A consultation to prepare your teenager for revising. A senior ADHD coach works with your student to create a revision plan based on the 6 revising steps developed to help students achieve success. This is a stand-alone offering. The fee for this 90-minute consultation and plan is £350 (inclusive of VAT).

## Tell a New Story Session -Planning, Implementation and Coaching

For additional, bespoke support, we offer:

- Our 6-session Revision Plan in which a senior ADHD coach works with your student to create a bespoke plan following the 6 revising steps. The fee for these 6 planning sessions and a step-by-step revising schedule and plan is £1620 (inclusive of VAT).
- To complement the Revision Plan, we offer a 12-week Implementation and Action Plan to help your student remain focused on revising, hold them accountable and offer unbiased support around challenges they may encounter, especially those which we recognise to be symptoms of their ADHD. These sessions can be split to best support the student: for example, as twice-weekly, shorter sessions. The fee for the 12 implementation sessions ranges from £2820-£1435 depending on the seniority and experience of the coach (inclusive of VAT).

## Parent Education and Support

- We offer our online ADHD Parent Education course, a concise, self-paced program of 4 modules. Our course also offers a 1-month membership to ADHD Unlocked, a membership community full of resources, podcasts and most importantly, support and accountability.
- The Parent Education course and the 1-month membership to ADHD Unlocked are offered at £120 (inclusive of VAT). Please contact [admin@theadhdadvocate.com](mailto:admin@theadhdadvocate.com) for details and to register.





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