

COACH / MENTOR

A coach or mentor needs to be a person who believes in the child with ADHD, has some understanding of the condition, and is able to meet either in person or by phone on a regular, at least weekly, basis, to encourage and to help with planning and progress generally.

Because children with ADHD tend very much to think in the 'here and now' and not plan ahead, one of the key roles of the coach is to structure, think ahead, organise and foreshadow forthcoming events, and to help think the child's way through them - to remember PE kit and directions for football games etc.

The coach can also be very helpful in reminding, encouraging and helping the child stay focused and on task.

During 'down' periods, encouragement can be very useful and help can be given in avoiding procrastination, providing help with organisation and trying to minimise negative, destructive thinking. All this helps encourage the child's self-esteem and promotes social skills.

We would suggest a regular, at least weekly, meeting at a regular time slot, for between 15-30 minutes. There needs to be an agenda and this is often best done with the use of a notebook where items discussed are noted, and these can then be reviewed at the forthcoming meeting. The previous week needs to be looked at and analysed as to where problems occurred, what might have been done to help, and generally encouragement given. The next week is then planned ahead, potential pitfalls identified, and as much praise and support and planning done as possible.

This can thus have a 'stepping stone' effect; it can be very useful as a non-medical strategy for ADHD, and is very effective in promoting self-esteem, organisational and social skills.

Dr G D Kewley