

One-Page Summaries:

# Building Routines & Screen Management

ADHD Parenting Summit 2024



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# The Surprising Details Parents Overlook When Building Routines That Truly Work



Dayna Abraham

*“When kids push back, it’s often an unmet need making it hard for them to meet expectations.”*

## How to make routines exciting?

As someone with ADHD, routines are key for me—when I create them myself. I’ve realised that starting my day with a specific activity sets everything in motion. If I skip it, my day feels off. For example, I always start with a glass of lemon water. If I don’t, I end up not drinking enough water all day.

These little habits trigger the rest of my routine and keep me on track, letting me stay creative. To avoid getting bored, I mix things up. I have a different smoothie Monday through Wednesday, then repeat them for the rest of the week. It’s routine with just enough variety to keep it interesting. This approach works for kids too—stick to the routine but change up the details to keep it fun.

## When kids ignore routines

If they could stick to the routine without a fuss, they would—but they’re not. So, what’s really going on? It’s not about disrespect, manipulation, or just being a moody teenager. Why are they struggling with this routine? Sure, they’re glued to their electronics, but why is that? Maybe the homework feels too hard, or they don’t even know where to begin.

If they’re resisting the routine, it’s usually not the task itself that’s the issue—it probably just feels like too much. For kids like this, routines can often seem either boring or overwhelming. They might feel stuck, not knowing how to dive in, or their brain could be too overloaded to cope. Instead of pushing, try helping them break it down into steps.

One approach is to just sit with them while they’re on their devices. Ask, “What are you playing?” without bringing up homework. Build that connection first. Once there’s some trust, you can say, “I see you’re having trouble getting started on your homework. Is the game just too fun, or does the homework feel scary?”

# When to Cut Some Slack and When to Get Serious: Everyday Hacks for Raising Awesome Kids

Dr. Ann-Louise Lockhart



*"Parents expect kids to go with the flow and adapt when plans change, but then parents don't know how to be adaptable when kids do things they didn't expect."*

## Learning together

Most of us haven't been taught about executive functions, and it's only recently become a topic of discussion. We need to **give ourselves some grace** and recognise that we might also have our own challenges—whether it's undiagnosed ADHD, stress, or just the demands of everyday life.

When our kids forget to do something we've reminded them about a hundred times, like cleaning their dishes, it's easy to get frustrated. But we need to remember that repetition is a big part of learning any skill, and it might take countless tries before it sticks. Help them find what works best for them.

Parents usually ask, *"How many times do I have to remind them before it sticks?"* Honestly, I don't know the number—every kid is special. Some kids might focus better with a timer, while others might get anxious. Try things out together, and if something doesn't work, switch it up. Experiment until you find what works for you both.

## Balancing expectations

It's important to **know when to be flexible and when to stick to non-negotiable routines**. A lot of times, we set expectations that might be too high. For example, expecting a child with ADHD to complete 10 chores on a Saturday might be unrealistic. ADHD brains struggle with starting tasks, and what might seem like defiance could actually be emotional overwhelm or the fear of failure.

Instead of overwhelming them with too many tasks, focus on what they do well and enjoy, like cleaning or vacuuming. Include a couple of these tasks on their list to boost their confidence. Then, introduce one or two more challenging tasks where they might need reminders or a "body double" to help them along.

# The Must-Know, Hard-to-Hear Facts for Parents Raising ADHD Kids in a Tech-Driven World

Dr. Victoria Dunckley



*"If we just got rid of screen time altogether, not just cut back, but got rid of it, the kids would get better. Their focus, grades, learning, and even kindness would improve."*

## Electronic Screen Syndrome (ESS)

When we talk about Electronic Screen Syndrome, or ESS, we're looking at how repeated exposure to screens—whether it's for gaming, videos, or even educational content—triggers a series of physiological responses in the brain. Every time a child interacts with a screen, it activates the brain's reward pathways, particularly those involving dopamine. Over time, this constant stimulation can lead to a state of overstimulation and desensitisation.

ADHD kids have a tough time controlling their energy, and this complicates things more. The frontal lobe, which is responsible for things like focus, impulse control, and mood regulation, essentially goes offline. This makes them more impulsive, reactive, and less capable of thinking ahead or considering others' feelings.

## Going 'cold turkey'

Now, I know it can be tempting to try to just cut back on screen time gradually, but I've found that this often isn't enough to reverse the effects of ESS. The best approach I've seen is going cold turkey—removing all screen stimulation for at least three to four weeks. This gives the nervous system a chance to reset.

To get your kid on board with this, teach them how the brain works—how it manages emotions and thinking. Schools talk about this, so just build on it. Explain that while screens are fun, they're not always great for the brain. Use real-life examples, like a friend who plays too many games and acts out, so they can see the effects themselves.

During this time, you'll likely notice your child becoming more organised, calmer, and able to focus better. Their brain will literally start working more efficiently again. The changes you'll see in your child can be quite profound. After this period, you can decide how, or if, you want to reintroduce screen time.

# Unbeatable Natural Methods Every Parent Must Know to Keep Daily Routines in Check Consistently

Alex Fraysse



*"Create routines with your kid. Don't just say, 'This is what we're doing.' Give them a few options and get them involved. It makes a massive difference."*

## Free, natural methods to treat ADHD

There are, what I call, free methods. So, there's breathwork, meditation, grounding and connecting to nature. One of my favourite studies was done in Japan with people diagnosed with mild depression, and the doctors prescribed them a dose of nature. After two months, they all came back and didn't need medication because their nervous systems had reset.

While you're in nature, you can do a bit of breathwork and a bit of meditation. For children, I'm not saying meditate for half an hour or an hour; that's not going to happen. Kids' attention spans are shorter, so you've got five to 15 minutes max. Also, exercise is great to get out the built-up stress in the body because the kids can have so much energy.

## Nutrition that boosts focus & emotional regulation

ADHD kids need foods that are rich in tyrosine and choline, which is why every child should be eating meat, chicken, salmon, eggs, lentils and chickpeas. I also teach my clients to spice things up for taste and for a health boost.

For example, rosemary is great for brain function and digestion. Thyme is great for digestion and also helps with mood. Turmeric and ginger are great for gut health and anti-inflammation. And all of these things also ensure proper bowel motions that have a massive effect on gut health. And gut health is key to having a more stable, more emotionally regulated mood.

When kids have issues with food textures or tastes, it's not something they're just making up. So, try to stay patient and flexible. If they don't like a certain food, try offering it in a different way—like mashed, roasted, or steamed. Letting them help with meal planning can also make them more open to trying new things.



# How the 'Wall of Awful' Makes ADHD Routines Harder & What to Do About It

Brendan Mahan



*"If you're going to overhelp or not help at all, the least skilled options are those extremes. It takes more skill to find the middle."*

## 'The Wall of Awful'

The 'Wall of Awful' is my way of explaining the emotional baggage we collect from repeated failures, especially with ADHD. Every time we fail, it's like adding a brick to this wall—failure bricks, disappointment bricks, and even rejection bricks if we feel let down by others. It's not just for ADHD; everyone has a Wall of Awful.

As these bricks pile up, they create an emotional barrier that makes facing certain tasks really tough. For example, if a kid struggles with homework, that wall can get pretty high, especially if they've failed a lot before. Sometimes, just the thought of a challenging task can bring that wall crashing down. To help them climb over, give them enough support to get started, but don't do things for them.

## Meet them where they are

That frustration? It's on the parents, not the kids. So, instead of letting it build, we've got to manage our emotions and adjust our expectations. If your kid is mentally drained, let them be. Don't push them when they're spent—just rearrange the day or so the important stuff gets done earlier.

Remember, ADHD brains develop at a different pace, so a high school freshman might be operating like a seventh-grader in some ways. It's all about meeting your kid where they are, not where you think they should be. And here's a big one: your kid's struggles don't reflect on you as a parent. Their story is theirs; we're just supporting characters, not the main act.

Essentially, your kid's struggles aren't about you. Their story is theirs, and we're just here to support, not star in it. When they fall short, it's not because they're lazy—it's because they need help building those skills. So, skip the comparisons and focus on what they need to grow.

# Powerful Stories From YouTube's #1 Family That Will Radically Change How You Parent Your ADHD Child



Kim & Penn Holderness

*"Your kid isn't ignoring you deliberately. They have plenty of attention; they're just finding it hard to channel it in the right direction."*

## ADHD forgetfulness

Forgetfulness happens because for those of us with ADHD, the stuff that seems easy for others can feel like climbing a mountain. It's not that we don't want to remember; it's just that our brains need some extra help. For me, it's all about lists—paper lists with little boxes to check off.

So, try encouraging your kid to make lists. Some people use lists on their iPhones and others use post-it notes. Personally, I like paper lists because I put a little box next to the thing that I have to do. And just the simple act of checking that box off is a little **mini dopamine hit** for me.

But the bottom line is—everyone's different. What works for me may not work for someone else, but everyone should look to a system like that for forgetfulness that is upstream, basically meaning that you will be cutting the problem off before it actually becomes a problem.

## "Borture"

When kids with ADHD get bored, they often become more hyperactive, which can make it challenging to get them to follow through with chores. To combat this, it's essential to **make chores as fun and engaging as possible**. At our house, we turn mundane tasks like doing the dishes into a fun experience by playing music and telling knock-knock jokes.

The key is to inject some fun into these tasks, as boredom can feel like torture—what we jokingly call "borture"—especially for those with ADHD. It's also important to recognise that what might seem like boredom could actually be frustration or shame. So, instead of criticising them for not completing chores, make sure to offer encouragement and set realistic expectations.



# A Strong Get-It-Done Plan for Kids With ADHD to Overcome Even the Roughest Days

Nikki Kinzer



*"Emotional support is crucial because being different is not bad; we need to normalise that everyone thinks differently."*

## Staying motivated

When kids with ADHD want to do something, it can be difficult for them to get started. That's because ADHD causes impaired executive function due to a lack of dopamine in the brain. Executive functions are those things that control focus, self-motivation, emotional regulation, and the ability to organise and get started.

So the question isn't so much, *"How do I motivate myself to do something?"* It really becomes more about, *"How can I get started? How can I make this easier? How can I break this down into smaller pieces?"* One of the strategies I suggest is to create **outside motivation** because they're going to be motivated to do the things that they want to do, not what they're being told to do.

## Balancing tasks without feeling overwhelmed

Balancing tasks without forcing or neglecting them is key for productivity, especially with ADHD. For both parents and kids, **relying on memory isn't effective**. Instead, create a visible calendar or command centre to track events and tasks, using alarms and notifications as reminders.

It's not so much about doing everything immediately; but you don't want your kid to forget tasks either. And when things keep popping up, their to-do list can feel overwhelming. To manage this, get them to treat tasks with actual deadlines (like buying a birthday gift by Friday) as priorities.

For things that aren't urgent yet—like a party that's weeks away—get them to set a reminder to review it later. When it comes up again, they can decide if it needs action now. If not, they can push the reminder forward. The key is to keep adjusting and prioritising based on what's most important at the moment, without feeling pressured to do everything at once.

# How to Get Kids Off Technology Without Meltdowns (Yours or Theirs)



Diane Dempster

*“Parenting is about staying calm as a parent, learning how to collaborate with your kids, and moving the challenges forward—not necessarily fixing them.”*

## Planning screen time

When talking to your kids about screen time, it's best to start with an open conversation about what you both expect. For example, you could sit down together and come up with a plan. You could ask, *“What rules do you think we should have to keep you safe?”* and then share your thoughts too.

When it comes to screen time, especially with kids who have ADHD, it helps to be aware of the challenges they might face. For example, getting off a video game might take longer than you'd think. Instead of just telling them to stop right away, try working with them to **create a step-by-step routine** that helps them wind down. This might mean giving them a heads-up to start wrapping things up, checking in with friends, and planning when they'll play next.

## Why yelling isn't a great tactic

Yelling might feel like a quick way to get your kids' attention when they're glued to screens, but it's not the best approach. While it does create a sense of urgency, it also triggers a stress response in everyone involved. Constantly relying on yelling takes a toll and wears everyone down over time. Plus, so many parents tell me they feel awful after raising their voice, full of guilt and frustration. So, give yourself grace and focus on finding **healthier ways to connect with your child**.

What you want to do instead is figure out what's going on underneath the behaviour. Maybe your kid's having trouble transitioning or they're overwhelmed. Instead of issuing orders, take a deep breath, calm yourself down, and ask, *“How can I help them get through this?”* It's not about being perfect but doing your best day by day.

# How to Get Kids Pumped About Nature When They'd Rather Be on Their Phones



Dr. Joel Gator Warsh

*"Focus on making one small change at a time, and gradually move the needle in the right direction."*

## One walk at a time

The amount of time kids spend on screens today is a huge issue. The average teenager is on a screen for 7 to 9 hours a day, which is just way too much. I'm not against screens—they're a part of our lives—but the problem is that while they're on screens, they're not getting outside, they're not moving, and they're not spending time in the community with friends.

To get kids off screens and into nature, I think it's really important to **start small and build from there**. Every child is different, and some might resist going outside at first, but that doesn't mean we should give up. It's about finding solutions that work within what's reasonable for you as a parent. Maybe you start with just one walk a week, and then gradually increase that to two walks. You'll likely find that once they're out there, they enjoy it, and it starts to become part of their routine.

## How nature outshines meds

Exercise is a key way to get that dopamine hit that kids often seek from screens. Almost every study shows that **physical activity works better than any other medication** meant to improve mood and mental health. Whether it's playing in the park, going for a hike, or just taking a walk, these activities help ground kids and balance their mood in a way that screens just can't.

To help kids get started with exercise, don't overcomplicate it. Start with something simple, like a family walk after dinner or playing catch in the yard. It doesn't have to be a big deal—just get them to move a little bit. The key here is consistency. You want to ease them into being more active without any pressure.

Sure, it's not going to happen overnight, but if you keep at it, these little changes will start to add up. Over time, you'll see that getting your kids into nature and off their screens will significantly improve their behaviour and overall health.

