

A close-up portrait of a young girl with dark hair and freckles, looking slightly to the right. She is wearing a red shirt with a floral pattern. The background is a soft, out-of-focus light color.

# Meet Estella

She is extremely creative  
She is full of energy  
She thinks outside the box  
She has a great memory

But Estella can't always sit still and  
concentrate

## **ADHD and coronavirus**

**We have adapted our guide to learning difficulties to take account of coronavirus. Find out new ways to support Estella in the current crisis.**

# Understanding ADHD

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurodevelopmental condition - which means that it is part of the make-up of the brain. It is one of the most common of all learning difficulties and research indicates that around 5% of the population has ADHD. More males are currently diagnosed than females, though recognition of ADHD in girls at an earlier age is increasing.

A person with ADHD will almost certainly have difficulties with impulsiveness, inattention and hyperactivity. They may be unable to sit still, plan ahead or finish tasks. Due to their short attention span they may often be unaware of what is going on around them.

On a good day someone with ADHD may seem fine, leading others to think that the ADHD is something the individual can choose to switch on and off. This can lead to frustration and misunderstanding on both sides as it is not as simple as that. However, many people can learn to manage their own ADHD well, using a combination of approaches including educational support and behavioural strategies, and sometimes medication.

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) - it is now recognised that some people have attention disorder without hyperactive and impulsive symptoms. These individuals can appear lethargic, often struggling to pay attention, plan, organise and complete work tasks.

# ADHD: strengths and challenges

Estella often needs help with structure. It can be useful to provide her with reminders and prompts. Try to put Estella in a position that demands short-term bursts of concentration and give her good organisational support. A minimalistic environment would help to reduce her stress and hyperactivity.

Capitalise on her enthusiasm, her energy and her curiosity. Estella is best at projects and tasks that can be completed quite quickly. She is personable and good at looking after people. She thrives on new challenges with a short-term deadline.

## **In the coronavirus crisis, children and young people with ADHD may:**

- Feel especially anxious
- Be aware of the news, but be unable to process everything they hear, leading to a lot of confusion
- Forget the rules about handwashing and social distancing
- Find it very hard to adapt to learning at home – starting a task, staying on task and completing the task may be difficult to achieve and your child might need help with one or more of these stages

## **Here are a few ways we can all support Estella during the coronavirus crisis and lockdown:**

### **General**

- Talk with her about strategies that work best for her
  - Acknowledge that her worries are real, and many people feel the same
  - Help her to plan out activities or tasks
  - Encourage her to think of one day at a time – planning too far ahead is not easy for any of us right now
- Let her have breaks in the day
  - Breaks before and after any tasks will help her to manage to complete them

## At home

- Use a diary for notes and reminders
  - Involve Estella in creating colourful signs to remind the family about handwashing. Put these up in plain sight
  - Add handwashing stickers and symbols into her diary
- Give access to a peaceful and quiet space
  - Somewhere away from reminders about the lockdown
- Keep routines consistent but vary activities
  - Routines don't need to mirror the school day, find the routine that works best for Estella, and for you
  - Make tasks fun, include games and make use of technology and apps that make learning enjoyable
- Be consistent and clear with rules and boundaries

**When you help Estella to keep learning at home, think about these general tips for schools and see if you can also do these things:**

## At school

- Break large assignments into smaller blocks of work
- Check results regularly and give feedback
- Review study plans daily and help Estella to make schedules and lists
- Vary tasks and keep them fairly short
- Where possible, regularly assign fresh duties to help Estella stay on task

## At the hospital

- The hospital might have some different processes than usual, find these out in advance if you can
- Explain any medical procedures clearly
- Provide activities to occupy Estella
- Plan the best time of day for her appointment
- Ensure waiting times are as short as possible on arrival and that staff are aware of Estella's ADHD



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