

Auditory Processing Disorder - How Parents Can Help

1. **Tell your child that they are not alone.** Your child needs to know that there are many children and adults with APD. If you have problems with listening etc. tell them that and explain how you cope.
2. **Tell your child that it isn't their fault.** It will help your child to know they are not lazy or stupid, just that they may need to learn things in a different way and need more time to process information.
3. **Explain to your friends and family.** It is vital that they know that your child has a problem in processing what they hear and encourage them to make allowances and adjustments to help your child.
4. **Help your child to learn about APD.** Find out as much as you can about APD to help your child understand what it means, that it is for life but with their own coping strategies and understanding and support from friends, family and school they will be able to cope. Also pass on information to your child's school so they can help too.
5. **Ask your child what they find helpful.** Even a young child will have developed some natural coping strategies and it will help you to know what they are so you can better help them.
6. **Make sure your child is looking at you.** They need to be facing you when you speak to ensure they can lip-read if they need to.
7. **Find out how your child prefers information to be repeated.** If they cannot understand the first time, some prefer a straight repetition using the same words, others prefer it reworded differently. Speaking louder will not help but speaking clearer might.
8. **Try not to interrupt or hurry your child.** If they are telling you something; they may take time to think of the right words and if interrupted may forget what they were saying altogether, which can be very distressing.
9. **Some children prefer routines.** Familiarity and order can sometimes help them cope with the world around them, help them to keep to these for some sort of security. Some people with APD are very disorganised so help in this area is essential.
10. **Help your child to self-advocate.** Encourage your child to tell their friends and other family members that they need time to process what is said, that people need to look at them when they speak etc. or whatever measures they have found that they need to cope. People can't help if they don't know about it.
11. **Encourage their gifts, talents and interests.** All children need to know that they are good at something. For the child with APD this is particularly important. Everyone is good at something, no matter how trivial it might seem to someone else. They need to feel special and good about themselves because low self-esteem and poor self-confidence are very common in children with APD.
12. **Help your child with homework.** Your child may need to have information presented differently for them to process it. If they are having problems understanding what they have to do, try writing instructions out in a different way for them. Try to present information in a way that you know they will understand. Draw pictures, it need not be anything too artistic, just stick men or doodles to get the point across, or find pictures on the internet or in magazines. Use incidents and familiar experiences, items from around the house as examples. Multi-sensory online games (many are free) or interactive CD-ROMs can help a lot here, especially with maths.
13. **Help your child with social skills.** Encourage your child to pay attention to body language and facial expression as social cues to aid processing. Also role play at home can help ease embarrassment in social situations. Encourage them to make mental reminders that if one approach fails, or something doesn't come out right, they can reword it and try again, or if they don't understand, they can practise asking people if they could please repeat it again or reword what they have said etc. As they get older it might help to rehearse conversations beforehand.
14. **Self-image.** Encourage your child to be happy with who they are. Acceptance of APD by themselves and others is the biggest thing to overcome. It may bring problems but it will also bring compensations in other areas and you should help your child to discover what these might be. A positive self-image is the best gift a child with APD can have and the one thing that many need most.