

First Steps When Your Child Is Diagnosed

A calm, practical guide for your first weeks — from a parent who has been there.

“Take a breath. Your child is the same wonderful kid they were before the appointment. What changed is that you now have information — and information is the beginning of help.” — Ivonne, Founder

1**Let yourself feel it.**

Relief, grief, worry, even guilt — every one of these is normal, sometimes all in the same hour. A diagnosis is a lot to take in. You don't have to have it all figured out this week.

2**Learn the basics — just the basics.**

ADHD is a difference in how the brain manages attention, impulses, and planning. It is not caused by parenting, sugar, or screens, and it says nothing about your child's intelligence. Skip the internet rabbit hole for now; one good page is enough: studentsguidedpath.com/understanding-adhd

3**Tell the school — in writing.**

Email your child's teacher and principal: share the diagnosis (or your concerns) and ask, in writing, for an evaluation for school supports (an IEP or 504 Plan). A written request starts legal timelines that a hallway conversation does not. Our School & IEPs toolkit walks you through every step: studentsguidedpath.com/toolkit/school

4**Build your child's team.**

Your pediatrician, your child's teacher, and one or two family members or friends you trust. You don't need a big team — you need people who listen. If a provider dismisses your concerns, it is okay to find another.

5**Talk with your child — simply and warmly.**

Try: “Your brain is a race-car brain — fast and powerful, and we're going to help you with the brakes.” Your child should hear that nothing is wrong with who they are, and that the adults around them have a plan.

6**Take care of yourself, and find your people.**

Parenting a child with ADHD can feel isolating — it isn't just you, and you don't have to do this alone. Join our newsletter for resources and local Bay Area gatherings: studentsguidedpath.com

What you do NOT need to do right now

- You do not have to make any decision about medication today — or ever, on anyone's timeline but your family's.
- You do not have to tell everyone. Share on your terms, with the people you choose.
- You do not have to fix everything this month. One step at a time is the plan.
- A diagnosis is not a prediction about your child's future. Plenty of thriving adults have ADHD — your child gets support they didn't have.

Where to learn more

Students Guided Path — studentsguidedpath.com — parent-to-parent guides and Bay Area community

CHADD — chadd.org — national ADHD advocacy and local support groups

Child Mind Institute — childmind.org — free clinical articles and guides

ADDitude Magazine — additudemag.com — practical strategies and expert Q&As

Students Guided Path shares parent-to-parent educational information. This guide is not medical or legal advice. Please consult your pediatrician, school district, or a qualified professional about your child's specific situation. © 2026 Students Guided Path, Alameda, CA.