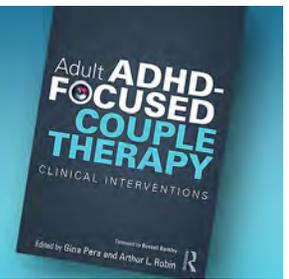


Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions

With Gina Pera and Arthur L. Robin, PhD



Dear Reader,

Attached please find the "Contract for Improving Home Behavior."

This document is provided to complement the information in Chapter 8, "Co-Parenting," of the book *Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions* (Routledge, 2015), by Gina Pera and Arthur L. Robin, Ph.D.

Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy

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Contract for Improving Home Behavior

Supplement to Chapter 8: “Co-Parenting Strategies” in

Adult ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: Clinical Interventions

By Barbara Easterlin, PhD

A behavior contract is a simple positive-reinforcement intervention that can be used to improve behavior.

The contract spells out in detail the expectations of the child, parent, and/or teacher in carrying out the plan. It also helps to unite parents on co-parenting strategies, especially when one or both parents have ADHD, as explained in my chapter, *Co-Parenting Strategies*, in the book *ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy: A Clinical Guide* (Routledge, 2016).

Steps in Implementing This Intervention

Children are much more likely to abide by and work toward the contractual goals if they participate in creating the list of specific behaviors and in developing a menu of rewards.

Parents can guide the choice of specific behaviors they would like to focus on, however, by developing a list of up to 10 behaviors they would like to see improve. Presented with the list, the child selects 2-3 behaviors to work on first. A clearly stated reward is an essential component of a behavioral contract. The child can participate in developing a “rewards menu,” guided by a list of rewards the parent develops beforehand.

When possible, parents should define behavior targets for the contract in the form of positive, pro-academic, or pro-social behaviors. For example, if arguing is a problem that a parent would like to decrease, the statement could read: “Displays respectful and patient behavior when asking for something he or she wants.” For a home behavior contract, the parent(s) talks to the child about how the behavior contract is a tool meant to decrease conflict and to increase organization and time management at home.

The contract should include:

- A listing of specific behaviors that are to be reduced or increased. As stated above, the child's behavioral goals should usually be stated in positive, goal-oriented terms (e.g. “taking care of teeth by brushing for one minute every night before bed” or “being kind to others by using

‘inside voice’ at home”). Also, behavioral definitions should be described in sufficient detail to prevent disagreement about compliance.

- The specific minimum conditions under which the child will earn a point, sticker, or other token for showing appropriate behaviors. Points can be represented by tangible items such as stickers placed on the chart, play money, or marbles collected in a jar.
- The conditions under which the student will be able to redeem collected stickers, points, or other tokens to redeem for specific rewards. For example, “Sarah can choose her reward once she has earned 5 points.”
- Bonus points (optional). Bonus points can provide extra incentives for the child to follow the contract. A bonus clause usually offers some type of additional 'pay-off' for consistently reaching behavioral targets.

Make it Visual!

Posting the behavior contract or chart in a readily viewable location acts as a daily reminder and can be positively reinforcing.

For example, a chart posted on the refrigerator that lists the desired behavior, dates the behavior is expected and a clearly stated outcome allows for greater accountability for everyone involved. It doesn't need to be fancy, just easy to read and understand. For young children or for those who are unable to read, using pictures is an effective way to communicate.

Troubleshooting: Addressing Common Problems

There may be several possible explanations why a behavior contract is ineffective:

- A child may not be invested in abiding by the terms of the contract due to having no significant role in its creation. If this is the case, children should be consulted and their input should be incorporated into a revised contract.
- The rewards that can be earned through the contract may not sufficiently motivating. Parents should review the list of rewards with the child, and revise the reward list to include choices favored by the child.
- Points and rewards are not awarded consistently or frequently enough to motivate the child. The adult in charge of the contract should make sure that behaviors on the chart are always rewarded in the same manner and that rewards are issued reliably and consistently.
- **Particular considerations for parents with ADHD:** Just as the contract should be easily accessible to the child, it should also remain convenient to the parent who has ADHD—stored as an image on the iPhone, an

- index card in a wallet, or wherever it being handy can help pre-empt impulsive decisions or promises that are at odds with the contract.
- **Particular considerations for children with ADHD:** The child having a role in creating the contract is no guarantee that this will be remembered later, ADHD symptoms being what they are. The more the child can “personalize” the contract, with illustrations and colorful signature, the more likely the lasting impact. Yet, a certain degree of protest is to be expected, even when full participation has taken place. As with adults who have ADHD, it can be helpful to troubleshoot with the child where precisely is the trouble with achieving the targeted behavior.

Sample behavior charts and rewards can be easily downloaded from the Internet by typing “behavior charts” or “behavior contracts” into the search box of your Internet browser. There are many free downloadable PDFs available for using at home or at school.

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Author of “Co-Parenting Strategies” in *ADHD-Focused Couple Therapy:*

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