



Take Action Toolkit

Understood

for learning & attention issues



Welcome to the Understood Take Action Toolkit!

Becoming an advocate starts with getting *your* child help and support. But many of you have asked about how you can help get better resources for *all* kids with learning and attention issues. You'd like to become more involved in making change happen in your school and your community.

This toolkit is the first of many Understood is creating to help guide you through that process. It offers a range of actions that you can take to help spread the word about the 1 in 5 and connect people to our resources.

For those of you who have pushed for change on any level, thanks for your hard work. If you want to take the next step, we hope this toolkit gives you some ideas on how to engage and collaborate with other parents in your community to work together.



Why take action?

If you're far enough along in your journey as an advocate, you've learned a lot about what it takes to make your voice heard. You've also built vital skills to gain support for your child. Imagine if you joined with other parents and used all that knowledge and skill to have an even bigger impact.

- What kind of change could you bring about to make your child's teachers and school more responsive to your child's needs?
- How many other parents could you support and guide?
- What impact could you make on raising awareness and understanding of the challenges our kids face?

There are still so many myths to correct to make sure our kids get what they need to reach their potential. We still have to fight stigma in the community (and sometimes even with friends and family). And we have to raise awareness of what the issues are, and the fact that 1 in 5 kids struggle with them.

You can achieve a lot for your own child. Getting other parents involved lets you make a difference for many more kids with learning and attention issues.

- With the proper tools and training, you can be a catalyst for change
- You can be a great leader on learning and attention issues
- You can inspire others into action
- Your power is your story—and need to tell your story
- Understood's power is you





How you can help

You don't need to become a full-time crusader for learning and attention issues to have an impact. You can do it on any level. This toolkit shows how you can help, whether you have 30 minutes a week or five hours.

Simply talking to a family member, friend or coworker can help raise awareness and build support. Getting people to understand the issues may seem like a small victory. But it's a great first step toward big and lasting change.

Use this guide as a way to start engaging people in your own circle, in your child's school and in your community. The toolkit provides:

- Help on telling your story—we all have a story of why we are here and why we use Understood, and this toolkit has a guide to help you tell your story
- Ideas for talking to your child's teacher
- Resources to help you spread the word, educate and connect with people

Personal story

Your child with learning and attention issues has a unique story to tell. So do you—the story of being a parent of and advocate for a child with learning and attention issues. Being able to share your stories with others—family, friends, teachers and other parents—is a key step to becoming a strong advocate for your child, modeling for your child how to eventually be a self-advocate.

Storytelling is a powerful tool. It can help you connect with other people in your child's life who can offer support, information and helpful strategies. It can provide hope to other parents. It can also help you build and connect with a community of parents like you. Together, you can work to educate your community about learning and attention issues, support your child and *all* children in recognizing their strengths, and work collaboratively to help them find success in school and life.

Breaking down stereotypes and stigma

You may have learned a lot about learning and attention issues. But many people might have no idea what your child or other kids with these challenges experience.

They might never have heard of dyscalculia, or known a child with ADHD. That can lead them to have misconceptions about what learning and attention issues are, or how they impact kids.

With more knowledge, these people might be able to have a positive impact on your child and on other kids with learning and attention issues. Building a community of understanding might also help you achieve positive change in the schools or in the community.

Telling your story to people who may not have much understanding is a great way to build awareness. It can also dispel myths and break down stigma around learning and attention issues.





Writing out your story

The idea of taking all you've been through and shaping it into something you can share can be daunting. But once you do it, you'll have a powerful tool to inform and motivate others.

The trick is to start small. Focus on one story—an event, a person, a decision. Think about the challenge, the choice and the outcome of this story. While there are always positive and negative stories, it is helpful, when building awareness and community, to focus on positive, solution-based stories.

- What did you learn?
- What's the takeaway that will help others understand the issues or take their own action?

Write out the answers, and then use them to craft what you want to say that will help you and your child in different situations. Say your story out loud, and see how long it takes. Your spoken story shouldn't be more than two to three minutes. But it's not a scripted speech, and it won't be exactly the same every time you tell it.

Storytelling Worksheet



You may not think you have a story. Or you may think your journey with your child isn't compelling enough to share. But every parent of a child with a learning and attention issue has a valuable and important story to tell.

Answering these questions for yourself can help you start shaping your personal story.

Why are you telling your story?

Challenge

How did you find out about your child's learning and attention issues?

Did you have any challenges at school as a child? How did that make you feel?

Do you have a learning or attention issue? What did you experience as a child?

How did you talk with your child about his/her challenges?

Did any friends or family members struggle in school? Do they talk about it?

Choice

What was your first reaction to your child's challenges?

Where did you go for information?

Did you talk to anyone about it? Why or why not? Did anyone offer or give you support?

Did you involve your child in any of these decisions?

How did you talk with the school/your child's teacher?

Outcome

What lessons did you learn from these choices?

What choices didn't work?

Ask

What are you asking of the person listening to your story?



Practicing your story

Now that you have the building blocks of your story, find a spouse, friend or family member you can practice with. See how natural it is for you to say your story out loud. Which parts do you feel confident about? Which parts do you struggle with? Ask your story partner for feedback.

Your story will change as you tell it more and more and as your journey progresses. What will stay the same is the passion, the emotion and the message of your personal journey with learning and attention issues.



Why I Stopped Saying “Have a Good Day” to My Son

Amanda Morin, parent advocate and Understood expert

“Have a good day at school!” is something I used to say to my son Jacob, years ago, when he was in early grade school. But every time I’d say it, he would shrink before my eyes. His little shoulders hunched over, his eyes glazed over with tears and his chin wobbled as he shook his head, “no.”

No, it wasn’t fun being singled out by a teacher who didn’t understand he was trying his best. No, he couldn’t live up to the expectations I didn’t realize I was conveying every time I said it and sent him into the big, bad world of “people who don’t get me, Mom.”

Then one day we saw a movie together and the mom in the movie said something different to her son: “Have a day!”

“Mom,” said my son. “Mom! That’s what you should say.”

“That doesn’t make much sense,” I said.

He told me it did. He said there’s no pressure in those words. They acknowledge that some days are going to be good and some days are going to be bad and some days are just going to be.

They mean, “I know you’re trying your best and I love you. I accept you for who you are and don’t blame you when things get too overwhelming for you to handle. Have the day you’re going to have and we’ll get through it together.”

So I started saying “have a day.” It became our shorthand for all of those things. And Jacob began to trust again that I had his back.

https://www.understood.org/en/my-account/sign-up

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Already signed up? Sign In

Sign Up

Personalize for you
Tell us a little about you and your child to get resources that help. We'll make it easy for you to find what you need.

Connect with parents
Trade tips and experiences with people who understand. Share as much as you want, or just browse. It's free and secure.

Daily access to experts
Get your questions answered in free expert chats and webinars. We offer daily opportunities to connect.

Get started

OR

Connect With Facebook

 Sign up with **facebook**

Actions you can take

Below is a list of activities you can do—either online or offline. We've tried to show what you can do with a certain number of hours a week. Even if you only have 15 minutes a week to help, there are so many activities and actions you can take that will help spread the word around the 1 in 5 and connect parents to the resources they need.

On Understood.org:

- Create an account on **Understood.org**.
- Personalize your account for you and your child.
- Choose or upload a community avatar and join secure groups.
- Find the Share & Save functionality at the top right of each page on Understood.
- Browse current conversations in your Understood Community groups (**u.org/community**). Introduce yourself!
- Check the Understood event calendar (**u.org/calendar**) for upcoming happenings that may interest you.

Looking for more ways to get involved? **u.org/takeaction**

5–15 minutes

Online:

- Like all of our active social media platforms:
 - Facebook: [Facebook.com/Understood](https://www.facebook.com/Understood)
 - Twitter: [Twitter.com/UnderstoodOrg](https://twitter.com/UnderstoodOrg)
 - Pinterest: [Pinterest.com/UnderstoodOrg](https://www.pinterest.com/UnderstoodOrg)
 - YouTube: [YouTube.com/UnderstoodOrg](https://www.youtube.com/UnderstoodOrg)
 - [LinkedIn](#)
- Invite friends to like/join Understood on social media platforms.
- Share/retweet:
 - A post about the 1 in 5
 - A post you found helpful this week
 - “This Week on Understood” calendar of events (pinned to the top of Understood’s Facebook and Twitter pages)

15–30 minutes

Online:

- Explore the Through Your Child’s Eyes tool (u.org/tyce) and share your experience on Facebook or Twitter.
- Search for an app, website or other assistive technology in Tech Finder (u.org/techfinder).
- Write a social post inviting people to sign up for emails from Understood.
- Watch an Understood video with an older child.
- Comment on an article or blog post on Understood.
- Forward an Understood email newsletter to a friend or family member.

30–60 minutes

Online:

- Promote or invite people to a webinar or chat that you're interested in.
- Participate in #LDchat on a Wednesday from 12–12:30pm ET.
- Watch an Understood video chat and engage in the chat box while it is streaming.
- Participate in one of the threads in the Understood Community.
- Watch an archived chat on Understood's YouTube channel.

Offline:

- Ask a fellow parent to join you for an expert chat.
- Have a family friend sit down and experience a Through Your Child's Eyes simulation.
- Print an Understood fact sheet and share it with your child's teacher.
- Mention Understood to your child's teacher, IEP team, pediatrician or tutor.

1–2 hours

Online:

- Engage with Understood members online during a chat.
- Share a best practice with Understood members.
- Read and share a “deep dive” from Understood.org.
- Give advice in the Understood Community.
- Reply to and repost an Understood social post on Twitter or Facebook.
- Gather information to give a presentation on a topic of interest to a parents' group or your child's school.

Offline:

- Talk to a good friend/family member about the 1 in 5.
- Write out and practice your story.
- Ask a friend or family member to listen to your story.
- Ask your local library/community center/pediatrician's office if you can leave some materials for people to take.
- Bring Understood materials to an activity your child participates in:
 - Little League game
 - Dance recital
 - Concert
 - Church activity

Talking to Your Child's Teacher

