



FaithWorks Counseling
Dr. Debbie Harnois
2901 University Avenue, Suite 17
Columbus, GA 31907
706.366.9691
www.FaithWorksCounseling17.com

HELPING MY BRAIN LEARN

Why taking away Stars eventually fails.

For a child with ADHD:

- Loss > Gain emotionally (negativity bias)
- Public loss = shame + panic
- Once dysregulated → executive control collapses
- Meltdown = nervous system overload, not defiance

By the time she loses 3–4 stars, she's likely already in fight-or-flight.

1) Change the Reward System (No Star Removal)

★ Earn-only model

Start at 0 stars each day

Earn stars for:

- following directions
- keeping body calm
- raising hand
- staying in seat for X minutes

No stars are ever taken away.

⌚ Micro-rewards

Instead of all morning:

- 10–15 minute “check-in blocks”
- One star per block for effort

This matches ADHD attention span.

2) Replace Rule Violations with “Reset Supports”

Instead of punishment, use:

Behavior	Teacher Response
Leaves seat	“Let’s do a body break”
Talks out	Visual cue + whisper reminder
Won’t follow directions	Choice: “Do you want help or try again?”
Meltdown	Calm corner + co-regulation

3) Visual + Movement Supports

- Visual schedule on desk
- Rule icons (not words)
- First–Then cards
“First worksheet → Then Lego break”
- Wiggle tools:
 - resistance band on chair
 - textured seat
 - fidget ring
- Movement every 20–30 min

4) Emotion Regulation Tools (Prevention > Reaction)

Teach before dysregulation:

- “Smell the flower, blow the candle”
- Feelings chart on desk
- Calm corner with:
 - weighted lap pad
 - soft timer
 - visual breathing card

5) Immediate, Specific Praise

Instead of:

“Good job!”

Use:

“You kept your body calm when you wanted to move — that was strong!”

Aim for 5 positives for every correction.

6) Teacher Script for Rule Breaks (Non-shaming)

- “Oops, your body needs help. Let’s reset together.”
- “You’re not in trouble. Your brain is still learning.”
- This preserves dignity and prevents escalation.

7) Home–School Alignment

Daily note should include:

- One win
- One support used
- One goal for tomorrow

No loss-based reports.

8) When Meltdown Happens

It is a stress response, not misbehavior.

Teacher should:

1. Lower voice
2. Reduce language
3. Offer calm space
4. Stay nearby
5. Avoid consequences in the moment

Problem-solving happens after regulation.

9) Optional Classroom Plan Title

“Helping My Brain Learn” Plan
(not a behavior chart)