

This Issue:

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

It seems that everywhere you turn, there is a new book or article about ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder could be considered the “disorder of the decade.” But what is the truth about ADHD? What are the facts? Why does it seem so much more common than before? Is ADHD increasing? What can a teacher do with students who have attention deficit difficulties? Is medication really the answer? How can you tell if problems with inattention are really ADHD or just a difficult behavior?

The focus of this edition of The Red Apple is to provide you with the answers as a teacher, provider or mental health professional in dealing with the perplexing issues of attention deficit disorders. You will find information here about how you can best recognize, manage, and accommodate for the individual with ADHD while making your job easier!

Attention Deficit Disorder Is..

Impulsivity

The inability to inhibit impulses, physical, verbal, social, and cognitive processing. This is the person who will state quite frankly that you look like you are having a bad hair day, and does not understand the meaning of “tact.”

Inattention

Characterized by having an extremely short attention span, and an inability to finish tasks, having a significantly decreased “persistence of effort.” This is the person who has a number of projects going at once and never finishes one without going to another.

Hyperactivity

Characterized by being in constant motion. Wiggling, humming, talking, playing with things, pestering others. This is the person who has a “motor running” but appears to be going nowhere or accomplishing anything with the expenditure of energy.

FACTS About ADHD

- FACT** The prevalence of ADHD is actually only evident in 3 – 11% of the general population.
- FACT** ADHD has a hereditary connection of 66%.
- FACT** Over two-thirds of people with ADHD have a learning disability as well.
- FACT** 75% of people who are diagnosed with ADHD in childhood continue the disorder into adulthood.
- FACT** Many medications that are effective for calming hyperactive behaviors are stimulants.

Also In This Issue:

- Pseudo-Attention Deficit Disorders
- Behavior Management Tips for Teachers
- The Number One Strategy for ADHD

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Behavior Management for ADHD

Establish planned positive communications with parents.

Clearly and fully teach the behavioral expectations of your classroom.

Focus on the student's strengths rather than shortcomings.

Consider a token economy system or response cost program.

Give the student a preset timer and when it goes off, have him record whether or not he is on task.

Have the student graph on-task behavior and reward for increases.

Give the student a set number of "I-need-a-break" cards. Gradually diminish the number of cards so that the student is able to maintain attention for longer periods.

Tips for Accommodating the Needs of Learners with ADHD

Get full attention first – use the person's name and obtain eye contact.

Provide most important information first.

Lessons and directions should be brief, interesting and explicit.

Check for understanding.

Provide frequent short breaks.

Provide for opportunities to move around, whether it is running errands or activity based learning activities.

When testing students with ADHD, provide a quiet, distraction-free environment.

Encourage parents to limit video games at home.

Provide computer-assisted learning for rote tasks (e.g. math facts)

Keep close communication with the student's home and doctor.

Children that have hyperactive behaviors tend to concentrate better when standing.

Offer the student different options for demonstrating his or her learning.

Encourage students to keep and use a day planner.

Reward attentive behaviors with a token economy system.



THE Truth ABOUT MEDICATION

Brain chemistry is deficient in an area of the prefrontal lobe of the person with ADHD. Stimulant medications such as Ritalin increase the efficiency of these chemical impulses. By stimulating this area of the brain, behaviors that were once necessary to "keep the brain awake" calm down.

Medication does not solve the problem of learning new ways of dealing with the behaviors. It only provides a "window of opportunity" for attention to new learning.

Almost anyone feels better and more focused taking a stimulant. Children that have ADHD and are not medicated have a tendency to medicate themselves with illicit drugs such as marijuana and alcohol.

When properly diagnosed and prescribed, medication for ADHD is not addictive.

Teach the
ADHD
individual
to STAR!

The STAR Strategy

STOP

Stop before proceeding to any action or verbalization.

THINK

Think about a pro-social, proactive strategy

ACT

Perform the action or make a statement

REVIEW

Evaluate the situation and solution for future planning.

Read On!

Three pages
in this issue
of
The Red Apple

**Individuals that have
hyperactive behaviors
tend to concentrate
better at
cognitive tasks
when standing!**

Pseudo Attention Deficit Disorders

If ADHD is true of only 3-11% of the population why does it seem like we are seeing such an increase in children who exhibit attention deficit problems?

We live in a very fast paced world, with instant access to almost any of our needs for information, communication and stimulation. To respond quickly in a fast world is often rewarded socially, economically and with opportunity. Children of today have grown up with this cultural standard, and may be developing impulsive, hyperactive responses as a way of responding to the demands of the world.

The method of entertainment for many children is video games. What could be more reinforcing for quick, impulsive, hyperactive behaviors than pushing a button and getting an immediate reward for this behavior? Hours spent on video games may train the brain to respond only to this type of stimulation. This stimulation is very different than that of a classroom environment, hence, the student is inattentive in class, expecting buzzers and bells and getting reading and lecture.

The level and type of stimulation that our fast-paced society is creating and demanding is brought to us in the form of buzzers, bells, lights, music, flashes of images... all of which are highly stimulating and attention grabbing to a sluggish brain. We get accustomed to this type of stimulation and then become bored or less stimulated by things that used to provide that stimulation for us.

When you see students more hyperactive after a long weekend of video games and calm down as the week goes on, chances are these inattentive, hyperactive, impulsive behaviors are not indicative of a clinical attention deficit disorder, but a culturally created "pseudo-ADHD."

Think about it – when was the last time you saw a child sit down and read a book if the option of television, computer or video games were also offered?