

ADHD, the disorder that tends to effect more boys than girls: is it over diagnosed as a result of poor parenting? Is the child who can't sit still in class simply disobedient or did he have too much sugar or other food additives?

Some teachers still believe that ADHD is a made-up disorder; an excuse for parents and teachers to use medication to manage discipline problems in the classroom. In fact, ADHD is a very real, very frustrating disorder that affects more students than we probably realize at this time.

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Teaching a child with ADHD is difficult. Parenting that child is even more difficult and being that child is the most difficult. It is important to remember, first of all, that the child is not choosing to misbehave or be inattentive. In fact, the very act of focusing or attending to a task may be nearly impossible for the child.

A child with ADHD has trouble focusing. When told to go pack his backpack at the end of the day, he may get lost and find himself over by the pencil sharpener, not sure what he was supposed to do or where he was supposed to be going. This same child may have trouble writing down assignments, completing a simple task or following a class lesson while the girl behind him keeps tapping her pencil on her desk.

Ironically, this same child with ADHD probably does not have trouble focusing in some areas of life. Video games may hold his attention for hours on end without taking a break. This does not lessen the validity of his disability, though, as this is considered a high interest activity.

To jump into the mind of the child with ADHD a teacher has to attend to every sound around her at the same time. She has to also plan dinner, think about what she will do after dinner and day-dream about going for a walk in the woods at the same time. There is a lot going on in the head of a child with ADHD and the ability to shut out individual thoughts is simply not there.

Remembering this when working with a student who struggles with ADHD may help the teacher have little more patience.

Tips for Teaching a Student with ADHD

When a child with ADHD becomes over stimulated, he may become upset and will exhibit many of the classic symptoms associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Learning how to prepare activities, give directions and appropriately praise and correct students with ADHD will allow them to be successful in the classroom.

Preparing Activities for a Student with ADHD

Teach to all learning styles at once. Whenever possible, provide an activity that provides hands-on, audio and visual stimulation. This way, whether the child is an audio learner, visual learner or tactile learner, the child will still be learning. Focus on bringing out the child's strengths during these activities as well.

*Focus on bringing out
the child's strengths*

When the child becomes fidgety, won't stay in the chair or can't pay attention any longer, have a plan that you can put in place right away. Designate a "thinking space" or "hedgehog space". This can be where the child can retreat whenever needed. It is not a punishment place and should never be used as such – it a place to go to calm down. The child needs to choose to go to this

space and not be sent there.

Reducing unnecessary noise, movement and clutter in the classroom will help prevent over stimulation leading to the use of this space.

If the child is restless, let him stand to do his work. Purposefully transition the child between activities. Give a warning that the activity will be over in 5 minutes. Then allow for a quiet time such as reading a book or drawing before attempting another activity. This will allow the child to slow down some and prepare for a quiet activity that requires focus, and is especially helpful when transitioning from a more active period.

Teach organization. Show the child how to put things away and where things belong in the classroom. Label places if necessary. Color code binders and folders and consistently use the colors. Have the student keep an agenda to organize assignments and to communicate with the parent.

Giving Directions to a Student with ADHD

Make directions clear and short. You will most likely need to repeat them several times as well. An example of an appropriate direction: Put this paper in your book bag right now. Require and expect an immediate response to directions, and remain close to the student to immediately redirect any off task behavior.

Break a task up into small steps. For example: Bring me your book bag. Get out your binder. Get your completed homework out. Put the completed homework in the bin. Be ready to provide the next direction quickly.

Appropriate Praise and Correction for a Student with ADHD

Praise correct and appropriate responses. A child with ADHD is corrected over and over each day, so take time to specifically praise something he does. For example: instead of saying “good job” say “Yay! You followed all the directions!” Understand that the child will have difficult days and help him through each day as it comes.

Prompt often. Prompting refers to the gentle verbal reminders to start, continue or complete an assignment. Often a child with ADHD will need several prompts to accomplish any number of tasks throughout the day. When the child does become distracted, do not get angry, instead, redirect or prompt him back to task.

When working with a student who as ADHD, much thought should be put into the planning of activities to help maximize instructional time and minimize excess stimuli. Patience when giving appropriate directions, praise and correction will allow for a more successful school experience for the child.

Prepare Activities

- Teach to Learning Styles
- Have a plan for restlessness
- Plan calm-down activities
- Teach organization

Giving Directions

- Clear and short
- Repeat several times
- Break tasks up into smaller chunks

Praise and Correction

- Praise often
- Prompt often
- Realize bad days will happen