

Pediatric Development Center



~ Newsletter ~
September
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We provide occupational therapy evaluation, treatment and consultation for children with developmental delays, autism/Asperger, cerebral palsy, Down's syndrome, sensory processing disorders, attention, behavioral concerns, handwriting, and other areas of weakness. Contact us for further information:

125 Presumpscot St. Portland,
ME.
(207) 699-5531

Good Resources:

The Organized Student by
Donna Goldberg and Jennifer
Zweibel

Driven To Distraction :
Recognizing and Coping with
Attention Deficit Disorder
from Childhood Through
Adulthood by Edward M.
Hallowell & John J. Ratey

Ten Tips on Structuring and Organizing the Life of the Child with ADD

By: *Edward M. Hallowell &
John J. Ratey*

1. Write down the problem. Sit down with the child—or the whole family—and write down exactly where the problem areas are—the dining-room table, the bedroom, the bathroom, wherever. It is good to define, and thereby limit, the problem instead of leaving it in the realm of the infinite.

2. Come up with specific remedies for each problem area.

3. Make use of concrete reminders like lists, schedules, alarm clocks, and the like.

4. Incentive plans are fine. Don't think of them as bribes, but rather as incentives. Children with ADD are born entrepreneurs.

5. Give frequent feedback. Kids with ADD often don't see what they are doing as they are doing it. Don't wait until the house is completely torn apart before suggesting that it be put back together.

6. Give responsibility wherever possible. For example, if the child is old enough to get up on his own in the morning, give him the responsibility for doing that. If he misses his ride to school, let him pay for a cab out of allowance or other earnings.

7. Make copious use of praise and positive feedback. More than most people, people with ADD blossom under the warmth of praise.

8. Consider using a coach or tutor when it comes to schoolwork. You do not want to give up your role as parent to an ad hoc role of supervisor-tutor-badgerer-teacher.

9. Provide the child with whatever devices he or she demonstrates can help. Ask the child what will help. Experiment with different plans and devices. One child organized his homework by setting his alarm clock to go off at twenty-minute intervals; he would plan out his homework in twenty-minute chunks. Another child found that a word processor made the task of writing immensely easier. Another found that studying with earphones on allowed for better concentration. Use as your guiding principle: whatever works (but isn't illegal or dangerous).

10. Always remember: negotiate, don't struggle.

Strategies for Middle and/or High School

By: *Kimberlee Wing, OTR/L*

Some students have significant difficulty with sensory regulation and internal organization, impacting their ability to adequately manage themselves in time and space. They are likely to become easily overwhelmed by touch, movement, visual and auditory input, reducing their ability to adequately adapt to changing demands of their environment.

Homework and Testing

An assignment notebook is a helpful tool to write all assignments and to plan out long term projects. When leaving class early it will be important to have a specific place on the board or in the room where the student can look in order to write down their assignments. It may be important to connect with their teacher to make sure they have gotten the assignment correct.

Homework assignments should be posted in the same location in each classroom. Classroom rules and expectations should be gone over and provided in writing. Different teachers often have different rules and expectations and these need to be consolidated as much as possible, making sure that they are understood.

It may be helpful to meet regularly with the guidance counselor, social worker or classroom aide to go over their assignments and for assistance with organization of their work.

Assigning a specific student for them to check in with may be appropriate.

Develop a strategy to insure the homework assignment has been adequately interpreted and followed up with. Teach the student to underline or circle the work that tells what to do, ie. write, look, learn, etc.

Develop a specific sequence to follow when writing down assignments and following them through to completion. Control confusion over directions:

provide simple, clear and concise directions whenever possible. Break down complex directions involving sequential planning into step-by-step directions. Present directions both verbally and in writing.

Develop a “checkout” system to make sure the student has gotten all assignments and materials necessary to take home. After each assignment make a list of materials to take home and encourage following this list rather than attempting to interpret directions at the last minute.

Once home, develop a routine of immediately organizing their backpack to take out all important papers from the day, including notes to parents and assignment book. Also organizing materials and the time needed to do homework.

Use specific organizational strategies for homework, such as using a calendar and breaking down assignments into manageable parts. Also, use of color coding such as specific colored notebooks for each subject, with matching colors for folders/poly sleeves/dividers and highlighters.

Highlight important information using different colors to indicate the type of information read or the level of importance, etc. For example: yellow for facts/data, blue for examples, green for history, orange for characters, pink for what is not understood, etc. Put highlighted information into an outline.

The student may require more time to understand and organize

what they are doing. Therefore they will not respond well to timed assignments and tests, resulting in poor processing speed compared to their peers, and displays of anxiety.

Provide encouragement and be observant of signs of anxiety or confusion, asking the student if they need assistance by providing a quieter environment, simplified directions, a reduction in information on the page, more time, help with organization, etc.

Present information meaningfully, adjusting for deficits in language and memory, and modify assignments and testing to address the student’s need for freedom from distraction and additional time.

Determine the student’s most successful method of indicating what they know and provide alternatives or choices for them to demonstrate their knowledge. Assessments and tests need to be based on the student’s ability to indicate what they know, ie. verbal, fill in the blanks, true or false, short answer, etc.

Teach mnemonic devices or association to help with memory. Assist with visualization techniques to remember information. Sing spelling words, develop acronyms for sequences of facts, picture things to remember as ornaments on a Christmas tree, etc.