

Child Development Paediatrics

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SUGGESTIONS FOR ASSISTING THE CHILD WHO HAS ATTENTION AND CONCENTRATION DIFFICULTIES

These suggestions may assist your child in both the classroom and home environment. A trial and error approach is required and as a parent you will instinctively know what works best for your child.

- 1) Often these children are easily distracted by extraneous noise or visual input. Therefore it is best to have the child sitting near the front of the classroom, relatively close to the teacher so that the teacher can give the child a cue, verbal or visual, when it becomes obvious that he/she is not attending. This does mean that the child needs to sit in the first row, as this might not suit some students.
- 2) It is sometimes helpful that the child sit at a desk alone, to avoid distraction from their peers. Alternatively having the child sit with another child who has good attention and task application skills is preferable.
- 3) A positive and encouraging approach should be used with the child. Where it is clear that they are trying their best they should be praised for their efforts.
- 4) The child should not be allowed to "get away with" bad behaviour. Expectations should be clear but accept that the gains may be minimal in the beginning. These children function best when there are clear limits and guidelines for behaviour.
- 5) These children cope better with routines and generally dislike changes in their routines. They may need to be forewarned, but not too far in advance, if events are going to occur that they may find worrying. They are likely to ask a lot of questions and they are also likely to need more reassurance than most children.
- 6) Children that have poor attention skills often also have poor organisational skills. They may need to carry a diary as a reminder about books to bring to lessons or about projects that need to be done. If left to memory they are inclined to forget and this could be incorrectly interpreted as non-compliance.
- 7) In view of their distractibility it is best that their worksheets be kept as simple as possible, and this especially applies to the young child. Too much written information on a page may make the child feel overwhelmed and inclined to "give up" on the task before attempting it. Small subsets of work that are achievable and then moving on to more difficult tasks, often leads to better results.
- 8) These children are very sensitive to failure and are mostly keen to please their teachers and parents. Thus, it is important to give them the opportunity to achieve, so that they can be genuinely praised, rather than allowing dependency to set in due to repeated failure.
- 9) The child's day could be divided into blocks of work interspersed with periods of physical activity (such as errands or jobs in the class). The length of time of these work blocks will depend on the child's concentration span initially and can be increased slowly over time.
- 10) In the home, never assume that your child has received the message first time. Try to keep requests simple, make eye contact with your child and even touch him/her to ensure that your message is received. Avoid yelling requests from one room to your child in another room, as they are unlikely to "tune in".