



Accept – don't reject

**Christmas Greetings
from the Attention
Deficit & Hyperactivity
Support Group of
Southern Africa.**

Merry Christmas

Christmas 2003

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We wish you all
Compliments of the
Season, a well-earned
break, and safe
travelling.

To our Christian friends,
a Merry Christmas.

To our Jewish friends,
a Happy Channukah.

And a Wonderful New
Year to all our Muslim
friends.

May it be a Peaceful,
Happy and Joyous
Festive Season for all
our Readers.

Have a Jolly ADD-free Christmas

For many the looming Christmas school holidays are a time of great passion... for some the relief of the end of the school year, for others the beginning of the nightmare called kids at home for six long weeks! "Help!" I hear you scream ... rather than panic lets look at how you might be able to survive this time with your little angels. **"kids at home for six long weeks"**

First truth! There is no such thing as free time. Every day needs to be meticulously planned for and executed with military precision.

The advent of holiday times usually means that the child you dragged out of bed every day of the school term is now up and going at the first peep of light over the horizon. Be prepared, be very prepared. It is better to also be up early and to supervise the cooking of breakfast than to clean up after-



wards! Perhaps the first plan of action is to hold a formal consultation of what your children want to do with the holidays. Write down every suggestion meticulously or be accused of not really listening.

Cont. page 2

RITALIN vs. DIET - what is the story?

The Ritalin controversy has raged for years however, doctors continue to prescribe it and parents continue to give it to their children because

it frequently produces the results that parents want. Most doctors regard Ritalin as being the safest medication for a child with Attention Deficit disorder or Hyperactivity but many

mothers feel guilty about using it because of the stigma attached and so they are almost relieved when a different medication is prescribed for their child.

Cont. page 3

Cont. a jolly ADD-free Christmas

Scan the newspapers and radio waves for things to do, outings on offer and the like. Invest in a large print map of the greater area around your home and look for interesting places to go and things to do. This does not mean heading for the nearest movie house or amusement centre – save those outings as a special treat or for a rainy day. Kids labelled with the ADD tag would usually be out and about exploring, touching, feeling so perhaps it is best to head for the wide open spaces, a picnic in the middle of a rugby field, fishing expeditions along a river bank, a visit to a nature reserve.



“look for interesting places to go and things to do”

The idea is, of course, to give them enough space to tire them out – even if it’s just for an hour or so. Children also have an innate curiosity which can be easily harnessed. Have a stone collecting day with prizes for the most colourful, strangest shape, oddest design, etc. and the next day ... turn them into pet rocks with lots of washable paint being splashed around!

The secret to surviving the ADD child lies very firmly in the maintenance of the basics: keeping to strict routines, regular feeding, and the continuance of medication. ADD children have a chronic condition – there cannot be a

thing such as a drug holiday. If the child needs medication to help him through the day, don’t set him up to be a target by taking it away simply because it is holiday time. Likewise, keep to food routines. No cola, chips and sweets means just that – period. There cannot be any

“ag shame” moments, it just sets up a delightful kid for failure. Discipline too needs to be carefully monitored. Right is right, there are no holiday compromises even though dad really doesn’t feel like it today. This also implies that the person most out of regularly disciplining the kids may need a quick refresher course on what works and how it’s going to be. Sometimes people slip into holiday mode and allow the child to get away with murder – only to wonder why he pushes the limits so the next day. The secret is a consistent and steady hand all the time in tone of voice, in mannerisms, in expectations and in firm and fair dealing with the child – from both parents! Wild fluctuations simply create disharmony.



“keeping to strict routines”

visit places which cost the earth. Look back to your own childhood and introduce them the simple things in life. Soon that “boring” game of marbles becomes fun, the tree climbing exercise takes on a whole new meaning, the dressing-up morning becomes a nativity play. As parents, we owe it to our children to break them out of the TV and Play station mold and to encourage the imagination to take flight – remember the boxes on the front lawn – they became castles, boats, trains

The cooking lessons with old fashioned dough that squished through your fingers, the lop-sided mince pies that tasted so good fresh out of the oven.

A happy, busy child will be a joy and delight during the holidays. A happy busy child who keeps to bedtime routines is an even better child. Look to the rules of your home during term time, apply those to the rest of the child’s routine and the Christmas holidays will not be a nightmare of constant disasters... and of course, when all else fails.... Send them to granny!!! Happy holidays!

Terry Wilke
Psychologist

and of course, when all else fails.... Send them to granny!!!

At the end of it all, children expect to have some time out. It is not necessary to always

Cont. RITALIN vs. DIET - what is the story?

There is currently tremendous interest in Atomoxetine or Strattera which is a new medication on the horizon for children with Attention Deficit Disorder or Hyperactivity (ADHD). It differs from methylphenidate (Ritalin) in that it is not a central nervous system stimulant.

Medication is not the only controversial issue in the treatment of ADD/H children: There is an ever-increasing groundswell of people using diet and supplementation to help their ADD/H child with vitamin and mineral supplements often being touted as 'replacements for Ritalin' - but this is an incorrect claim - no wonder the medical profession are up in arms as soon as 'diet' and 'vitamin supplementation' are mentioned!



Some people have had tremendous results using just diet or just supplementation however they yield the best results when they are used in combination with each other. Depending upon the extent to which the diet/supplementation program meets the needs of the child, it helps to build and improve general functioning of the body. Improvements have been noted in learning ability, impossible and inexplicable behaviour,

social interaction, health, co-ordination etc

Ritalin, on the other hand, is a stimulant which makes certain calming neurotransmitters, such as dopamine, more available in the brain - the child calms down often becoming less impulsive, distractible or active. Concentration usually improves, sometimes dramatically. The result is that Ritalin has become the solution for millions of children around the world.

When my own son was on Ritalin he had the most awful and lasting side-effects which made me determined that my child would never use it again, nor other medication. But he was severely affected by ADHD and eventually, in desperation, we eliminated colourants and flavourants from his diet ... with amazing results. A few months later I added supplementation and he improved even more! As a result I started a support group through which I could share the information which was making such a difference to our lives. This group started off as the Transvaal Hyperactive Support Group (1989) but rapidly grew and is now The Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa. It was founded on the basis of dietary intervention however recognizes that there is a role for medication as part of a multifaceted approach to the condition

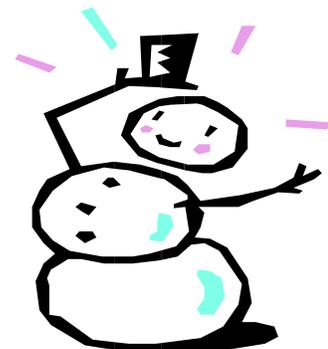


of ADD/Hyperactivity.

Over the past five years my Support Group activities

have given way to private consulting. This in depth interaction with my clients has taught me many new lessons and in the process shown me that dietary intervention and supplementation is sometimes all that is needed, but it generally needs to be combined with other therapies, including medication! It had also reinforced my belief that Ritalin by itself or combined with other drugs may not be enough either. As far as I am concerned, the best results are often found when the child has the healthiest diet possible (including supplementation) and all other therapies are built on this foundation.

It is also important that parents understand why their child behaves the way he does.



“people have had tremendous results using just diet“

Cont. RITALIN vs. DIET - what is the story?

Their greater understanding of their child, and the world as he sees it, helps them tremendously in coping with him and in turn they can better help him to cope with the world around him.

The following case history illustrates how dietary intervention changed the life of a two year old child who was not on medication:

Case History 1

Lettie phoned me in total desperation. Her two year old son Siphov was impossible and on the go all the time. He blasted into action every morning running, climbing, clawing, falling, screeching, screaming and crying, as if driven by a motor. He touched everything he could reach. His mother eked out a meagre income by taking in sewing jobs and she could only work while the child was tied onto her back to control him. Her neighbours declared that he should be thrashed until he learnt how to behave, and no one was prepared to risk letting this aggressive, noisy and impulsive little brat near their own children. He was also very cruel to animals. It was usually approaching midnight before Lettie fell into an exhausted sleep, and it was only then that Siphov woke up as soon as mother stirred.

Lettie was desperate enough to try anything – even the dietary approach. She stopped buying foods containing colourants, fla-

vourants and antioxidant preservatives and out went the fruit cordials, biscuits with colour icing etc. She also undertook to give him supplements. Siphov had a range of other difficulties which required ongoing medical atten-

tion however the few dietary changes soon made a tremendous difference to the quality of his everyday life:

A couple of months later she phoned to thank me and then went on to say that Siphov had been happily playing in the yard with his neighbour's two children for at least a half hour; she also said that he had befriended a large tabby cat with which he spent many hours each day. She added that Siphov's sleep patterns had improved dramatically and that he was going to bed very much earlier and sleeping soundly 10 to 12 hours each night.



“help parents see the positive impact of dietary intervention“

In addition, the neighbours were investigating a playschool for Siphov to attend.

These changes were dramatic.

However, when he ate the wrong foods, there was an equally dramatic change as he reverted to previous patterns of behaviour! After eating the wrong foods it would take at least 72 hours before he could settle down again.



Sometimes these rapid reversals are most valuable because they clearly illustrate the effect of eating the wrong foods and really help parents see the positive impact of dietary intervention.

Case History 2 illustrates that medication and diet can work together:

Marianna (11 years) was a pupil at a leading remedial school, taking 15mg Ritalin a day, and her parents were concerned! She had made tremendous progress at this school but they feared that it would not be sufficient for them to place her at the school of their choice when she entered grade 8. Homework was still an uphill battle with parents having to sit her down each day and ensure that it was tackled.

Her parents decided to try the dietary approach ... out went the margarine, chips, precooked meals, fizzy drinks and MSG, they

Cont. RITALIN vs. DIET - what is the story?

and they were replaced by healthier alternatives and supplementation. Within a few weeks Marianna was coping far better in the classroom and being recognized for improvements in just about every facet of school life. Family stress levels had gone down considerably because Marianna had taken responsibility for doing her homework soon after returning from school.

She had settled at school and was happy - until the day she found a brightly-coloured fruit squash in the refrigerator and had a glassful before leaving for school. That day the Head of the school

phoned her parents to find out why her behaviour had changed so dramatically, as she had been sent to the office several times for insolence and aggression. This incident finally convinced her parents that diet had made a significant difference ... even though their daughter had been (and still was) on medication.

Medication was continued and the diet tightened up even more. When Marianna left the remedial school her parents were able to enroll her at a top academic school where she is now in grade 10 and coping well.

This case shows that dietary intervention and medication are not exclusive and that there does not have to be a choice between dietary intervention and Ritalin. Many people do and will continue to use the one or the other, but there is no reason why any particular therapy should be considered as the only way to go. Understanding of the condition of ADHD combined with informed use of the therapies available will undoubtedly yield the best results.

Heather Picton

Please feel free to forward this E-mail to others.

Make it a Happy Christmas

Christmas is a time of peace and joy, a time to share with our loved ones and relax – at least that’s the theory! The facts are that we spend so much time, energy and money to make sure the day will be perfect ... that stress levels rocket! We try our very best to do it all, but then over-excited and out-of-control fighting children make us wonder what’s wrong with us and why can’t we cope? It’s always helpful to know that you are not alone and here are a few thoughts and ideas which could make life easier:

(a) Have you ever been angered by adults who cannot handle the excitement of special occasions? As the special day approaches they become increasingly diffi-



cult and, on the actual day they’re totally impossible! Many ADD or hyperactive children over-react to situations because they cannot control their excitement – and there is so much commercial hype about Christmas that these children are already in a major state when they wake up on Christmas morning. Some don’t even fall asleep the night before and spend the day being exhausted and ratty.

Try to minimize this by sharing the run-up to Christmas with them. Take them to see Father Christmas, let them help with baking Christmas cookies etc but, and this is the tricky part, **be as calm and laid back as possible.** If you can prevent

them from becoming over-excited in the period before Christmas, it will pay dividends on the day.

(b) Food can play a crucial role in increasing or decreasing stress levels – depending upon what you serve and when you serve it.

The first step is to avoid the synthetic colourants, flavourants and anti-oxidant preservatives! If you are already doing so,

you have probably already seen the benefits so will avoid letting things slip. You will know that the convenience of using something more readily available is usually not worth the hassle of the arguing and aggression that may follow. If your child reacts

“Christmas is a time of peace and joy, a time to share with our loved ones”

Cont. Make it a Happy Christmas

strongly to a dietary infringement, remember that the reaction period usually lasts 72 hours!

On the other hand, if you haven't previously tried to avoid these additives in your foods, this is hardly the time to start. Learning to recognize which foods are suitable and which are not, is stressful especially during the first week or two and one does not want to add any extra stress in the approach to Christmas. Rather make it your New Year's Resolution to tackle the diet as the New Year Starts and you will be able to take advantage of the assistance offered by the Support Group. In the meantime you could start building your child's system by introducing a good multivitamin and mineral supplement.

Stable Blood Glucose levels are most important if a child is expected to be in control of what he says and does. Rapidly fluctuating Blood glucose levels can cause irritability, aggression, weepiness, even dizziness – wouldn't Christmas morning be so much easier if these symptoms were reduced or even eliminated.

One of the most important principles to help maintain stable blood glucose levels is to serve a balanced breakfast – and so often breakfast is skipped so that we can get on with preparing the main meal to be served at midday or soon afterwards. This is a recipe for disaster!

If there is sufficient time for the family to sit down to breakfast, egg on toast would be the first prize. Or you could serve fresh

fruit salad and yoghurt. But if you can't here are a few other ideas: Warm up some leftovers – a slice of pizza (no salami), spaghetti bolognese, chicken stew on toast etc. Wholewheat pronutro with plenty of milk or yoghurt would also do.

Before they pop the first sweet into their mouth – and this is usually long before they have breakfast - on Christmas morning, children need to have a "balanced snack" to help keep blood glucose levels stable. Interesting and tasty snacks in the Christmas Stocking could set your child's emotional tone for the day. Wrap them individually or put them together in a pretty packet in the stocking, ready for eating as soon as your child wakes up:

Suggestions for early morning snacks this list does not exclude salicylates or dairy products – choose, ideas that are suitable for your children:

*A muffin made with lots of grated or finely chopped apple or pear. Buy them from your health shop or make ahead of time and freeze.

*Make a batch of oat crunchies using rolled oats, butter and honey. Coconut and/or tiny chocolate pieces can be added to the mixture.

*Nut Biscuits made with oat bran replacing one third of the flour.

*Popcorn plain home popped

*Mysteries of the Mountain Juice (Ceres)

*Pure (diluted) fruit juice in an attractive plastic container: apple, pear, peach, apricot, pineapple flavours. If container is suitable, freeze the juice so that it will still

be cold in the morning.

*Full cream Jungleberry Flavoured Milk (Woolworths)

* A **small** bunch of grapes,

*A few fresh cherries or a couple of strawberries add colour.

*Trufruco plum, apricot and mango dried fruit bars

*A mini Milo Bar chocolate

* A couple of squares of TriStar Chocolate

Presentation plays an important role!!! The bottom line is that a combination of the above could prevent blood glucose levels from soaring first thing in the morning leaving the child unable to control himself as they continue to fluctuate.

Admittedly, having the right foods available takes extra time and effort but its well worth it if it makes Christmas a happier time for all. God Bless you all in this very special time.

The Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa.



Support Group News

After a few years in Pretoria, National Office of the Support Group has returned to Johannesburg – why don't you visit us and meet the team!

The National Office of the Group is at Delta Park School, Standard Road, Blairgowrie, Johannesburg. Pop in to say hello, see the products we have available, and find out what we have to offer. We are open from 8am to 1pm on Wednesdays and Fridays during Government School terms. Tele no 011-888-7655.

Email us at: rscox@icon.co.za or marinavzyl@yahoo.com – for the subject matter please put “ADD matters” or “ADHD matters”.

Should you wish to join the group see membership form on next page.

In case of an ADD/ADHD related emergency during the holidays, contact Sandy at 011-793-2079 or Marina at 011-805-7899.

We need volunteers! Please contact us to find out how you could donate some of your valuable time and energy to help us improve the lives of families with ADD and ADHD. Volunteers have often commented that helping in the group has been a major factor in learning how to handle ADHD in their own families. Please phone Sandy at 011-793-2079 for further details.

There is to be an exciting Seminar for parents, teachers, therapists and anyone

who would like to know more about ADD, hyperactivity and related conditions. Book the dates 29 May and 5 June on your calendar. Read our next newsletter or phone us for further information.

In the New Year we will be sending out a regular page to people who would like to be on our mailing list. If you would like to keep up to date with the latest information, have confusing ADHD issues cleared up as they arise, and receive hints and tips which help coping with the condition so much easier, please forward your email address to rscox@icon.co.za For the subject matter, please put “Keeping up with ADHD” . This is a free service.

Odds and ends for Christmas.

Comment from the mother of a young Hyperactive Adult:

“My son still needs affirmation of his efforts at home and in the work place. This means that he also appreciates feed back from his boss”

Can you help?

We are trying to find a piano teacher who can teach an ADD adult. A keen knowledge and understanding of ADD is essential!

Contact Details

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Fax: (011) 793-4790

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Christmas Greetings from the
Attention Deficit &
Hyperactivity Support Group



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Jhb. & Pta.



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Delta Park School,
Blairgowrie
Tel: (011) 888-7655

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION FORM - Annual Subscription R85-00 PLEASE PRINT

NAME:

POSTAL ADDRESS:

.....CODE:.....

TEL: (h) (.....)(w) (.....).....CELL.....

FAX NO: (.....).....E-MAIL.....

NAME OF CHILD/MEMBER:.....

DATE OF BIRTH:/...../.....

SCHOOL:

SIBLINGS: (Names & Ages)

1 2

3 4

OCCUPATION: Mother

Father

SIGNATURE: DATE:/...../.....

For confirmation of application kindly deposit into ABSA Sinoville Branch, Saving Account No. 907-161-3544.

- Please make all cheques payable to: ADHD Support Group – National Office (Jhbg)
- Cash payments can also be made into this account
- Please complete the deposit reference blocks below your signature with your printed full name
- Please fax your application form together with the bank deposit slip to (011) 793 4790 or 793 2079.
- Alternatively, post this form, together with your remittance to PO Box 3704 Randburg 2125.