



Accept —
don't reject

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



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December 2004

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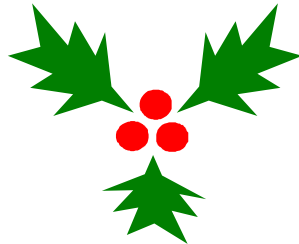
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Counselling hours:
Wednesdays and Fridays
08h00 to 13h00
ADHASA National Office
Delta Park School, Blairgowrie
Phone: (011) 888-7655

Going to High School Next Year!

Our child is going to High School next year and we can't help worrying because we hear so many disturbing High School stories! What can we do to help him?

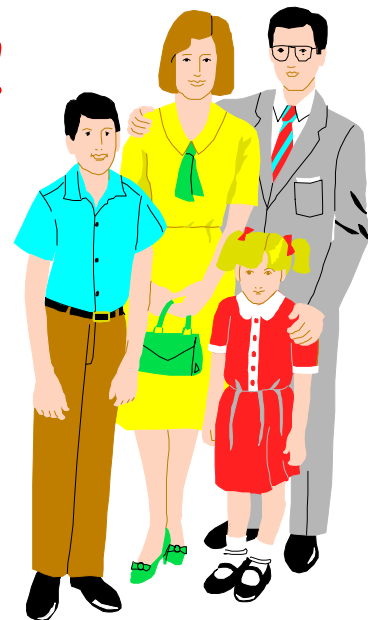


Just moving up a class in the same school can be difficult for any child as they struggle to come to grips with the new teacher, new work and new children who have replaced their friends now in different classes. For the ADD/ADHD child who struggles with change this move can be quite traumatic, and the struggle to adjust far greater – but changing schools is so much worse! He desperately needs your support and understanding which will help him much more than you telling him to 'grow up and settle down!'

There are a few practical things which can be done to help smooth the transition:

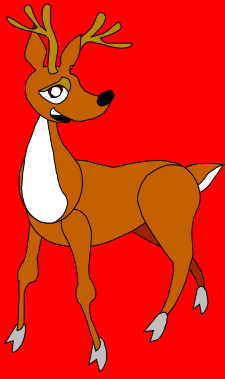
Finding his way about the school: Concentration for a lesson can be totally destroyed if the child arrives late and stressed, because he couldn't find his way there. It could be a good idea for mum, dad and the child to go to the new school a day before the new term starts. If you know a child already at the school, ask him to come with you and show you around. This will help your child see the general layout of the school and, in particular, learn where the toilets and tuck-shop are. Find out the time that school starts, time of breaks as well as time to go home.

School rules: It helps your child if he knows and understands the new school's rules. New children at the school often receive an information package which contains the school's Code of Conduct - go through this with your child, explaining anything he doesn't understand. (If you don't receive the Code of Conduct or the School Rules, contact the office and ask them for a copy).



Homework: Find out if the school provides homework diaries – if not, get one for him and insist that he records all homework and projects (including due date) in it.

Tone it Down: Parents are often more excited about the new school than the child himself. Tell him about the new school, its advantages, and why you chose it, but try to be low-key about it all. Avoid becoming over-excited as this only serves to make *him* over-excited and lose what little self-control he may have. It could also make him far more anxious than he already is.

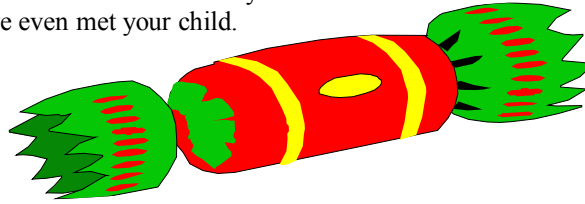


Don't label the child:

You don't know the teachers, their approaches and attitudes, so you don't want to give them any preconceived ideas before they have even met your child.

Avoid rushing in on the first day to explain to her that he has ADD or is hyperactive. If he is coping (with or without medication) it may be best to leave well alone

until the teachers pick up that there may be difficulties which they will want to discuss on Parents' Evening. Avoid early intervention with the teachers however, don't leave things too long if your child is drowning. In the same way, the child should avoid declaring himself to be ADD unless he really can't cope.



Teachers

We expect the teachers to understand and meet the needs of our children but they too sometimes need support. They have a heavy load of work and, on top of it they're expected to keep up with the latest developments in ADD/ADHD. If you suspect that your child's teachers don't sufficiently understand the challenges of ADD/ADHD and how they affect the child, you could (if the teacher is willing to listen) try to explain some of the basics to them, or lend them a book that has been particularly useful for you. Consider sponsoring the teacher most important to your child to the 2005 Support Group Seminar.

If possible take time out to build a good relationship with the school and become involved – in that way you'll have a better chance of ensuring that they know and understand your child as an individual rather than an 'ADD diagnosis'. It will also be easier to explain your concerns about your child's difficulties and ensure that they are addressed.

Self Esteem is Important

Parents worry more about their offspring mixing with the 'wrong crowd' at high school than at any other time. Often temptation is put in their path and they will have to make choices ... but the foundations for the choices they make are usually laid many years previously when the child's self esteem and confidence levels were established. If he has a low self esteem, it is never too late to start actively building the child, but don't expect results overnight. It could be a slow process for both parent and child but rewards will be well worth the effort.

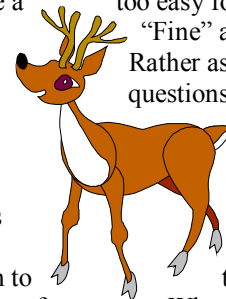
He is probably all too painfully aware of his difficulties and disabilities. Help him to define himself in terms of his abilities and strengths. While he has to work on his weaknesses, find ways for him to enjoy and build on his strengths.

So often we tend to think that a child going into high school is old enough to fend for himself, but this is not the case – especially if he has ADD/ADHD. He might not even realize it (and as a rule won't admit it) but usually he still needs

your support! Give him the message that all you really want for him is to be the best that he can. If he comments, acknowledge that school might not always be the easiest place for him, but that you believe he will ultimately succeed in whatever it is that he decides to do.

Talk to him, Listen to him

Get into the habit of talking to your child on the way home from school. Don't say "How was it?" It's all too easy for him to say "Fine" and then clam up. Rather ask specific questions such as "What did you learn in Science today? What part of Science do you enjoy the most? Who is your favourite teacher?"



There is often a dip in the child's all-round performance as the new school year starts – support your child and let him know that you are always there for him. Listen to him carefully and discuss his difficulties in a supportive manner. Whenever you can, discuss things with him when he comes to you, rather than telling him to

**Talk to him —
LISTEN to him!**
Ask questions that
elicit a story like
"What was 'it'
about?"



come back later when you've got more time.
Chances are that he won't.

If you choose to discuss something that you're unhappy about, choose your time carefully and not when either of you are angry and ill-tempered. Avoid the High School Finger Wags accompanying the "Thou shalt not ..." rules, as this becomes a clear command for the child to go and do it.



Avoid moralising if he has had a terrible day – rather empathise with him and discuss the difficulty. Ask him what did he do ... what went wrong ... how could he avoid the experience the next time? Acknowledge his difficulties and empathise with him. Give him the opportunity to feel comfortable about discussing his challenges with his parents. Hopefully, as he gains confidence in himself, he'll start to experience school as a happier place.

Attitude is important

Explain to him that there are certain choices that he will have to make and that his choices can have far-reaching effects on his life. Point out to him that he will admire some of his new teachers and dislike others. Let him understand that he cannot expect to like everyone he meets but that it is important to be polite and treat them all with respect. His attitude is important and will, to a large extent determine his experiences. It is up to him to choose his attitude. In the same way, if a senior commands him to do something, he should do it with a smile and he will earn their respect.



School Proofing your Child

At the new school he will meet new kids, some of whom will be good, decent people, but there will be others who cannot conform and have adopted an attitude of confrontation with authority. It might seem attractive to be part of their group where they do silly things and experiment with substances and unfortunately the ADD/ADHD child often finds it easier to impress this group than anyone else because he too can be aggressive, and seeks excitement. He can compete on their grounds if he chooses (even though he might not be too comfortable about the activities); but the greatest so-called benefit to him is that he can be accepted as part of a group!

Explain to him that such a group would happily push him into further risk behaviour. Point out to him they can be quite persuasive and exert a lot of pressure on him to go further than he knows he should, promising him that they will be there to support him every step of the way – but don't believe all the things that they say. If things go wrong they will happily sit back and watch while he takes the consequences for everyone. Joining a group of children like this could change his future in a way that is not going to be very good for him.

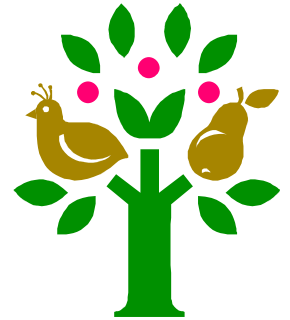
Let him understand that everyone (including yourself) wants to feel that they fit in and belong but it is most important for him to be himself. He doesn't have to show off or be aggressive to impress anyone, because he would only impress the wrong people.

A confident and secure child is far more capable of saying "I don't want to go there" because he doesn't need to be involved with risk behaviour for acceptance.

Explain that if he is not sure about what to do, he can find a teacher that he can trust and ask for advice. Remind him that he can always ask you, his parents, for advice. Reassure him that you will always be there for him. Even in cases where the child has gone overboard and seems to be on a one-way road to nowhere, without exception the miracle cases are where the parents are positively involved and believe in and accept their child.

Building a supportive loving relationship with your child is something that starts in early childhood, supports them through the difficult years and ultimately supports you in the future. It is never too late to start, whatever the circumstances. It is one of the most precious gifts you can give to your child and yourself.

Heather Picton
With thanks to
Terry Wilke



"Building a supportive loving relationship with your child is something that starts in early childhood, supports them through the difficult years and ultimately supports you in the future."

Season's Greetings



Support Group News



Several members of the public have approached us after hearing a rumour that ADHASA has been sold!!

The Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa or ADHASA (our registered name) has not been sold, nor is it up for sale! It is a Section 21 Company Not for Gain and it is written in our Constitution that, should the Support Group ever close, all assets would be handed over to another charity. Therefore ADHASA cannot be sold.

We have been active for over 15 years dedicated to improving life for people with ADD/ADHD and the Support Group is moving to a stronger footing than ever before so that we can offer more services to our public! If we are taking our time, it is because we are building and training a strong team to provide a solid foundation for the future. The National Office of ADHASA is in Delta Park Remedial School, in Johannesburg.

Our Board of Directors currently has eight members:

Shaun Anderson – His parents joined as subscriber members in 1990 and were among the first to do so. At the time Shaun was a desperately unhappy 17 year old but he is now a happily married family man and grateful to the Support Group for their help when he needed it the most.

Margaret Barry – She is currently working towards her Master’s Degree in Psychology.

Dr Norman Cahi – A Dentist who has a passion for ADD/ADHD people and helps so many.

Mrs. Sandy Cox – An ex-Banker who organizes the finances, does the bookkeeping, and keeps everything on track. She joined in the early nineties when she needed help for her children.

Heather Picton – Founder (1989) of the Support Group, Previous President, Previous Honorary Member and once more a Director of the Support Group. Author of “Hyperactivity and ADD – caring and coping”

Prof CF van der Merwe – 1989 onwards an Advisor to the group and a Director when the Support Group registered as a Section 21 Company in 1993. Due to bad health he recently resigned his position as Acting Dean of the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) but is still the Head of the Gastro-Enterology Department.

Cynthia Van der Merwe – Joined the Group in Nov 1989 with a tremendous interest in complementary medicine. Had a short break but now back as a fully fledged Director. (Not related to Professor van der Merwe).

Terry Wilke – An Educational Psychologist who has had much involvement with the Group since about 1991. He previously was a member of the Advisory Panel and is also a Parish Priest.



This edition of “Keeping up with ADD” kindly put together for us by Lori Lea (Coach, also specialising in AD/HD) of



Mind Focus cc
Mind Focus

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We’re very proud of our highly qualified and capable Board of Directors and we thank them for their ongoing support.

Next month we’ll be introducing some of our valuable Support Group Helpers. Please remember that we always need additional helpers – each person brings their own uniqueness which not only complements but also adds to the life changing work that we do, and services we offer.

On this note,



We wish you

Happy Holidays

Sandy, Margie and Heather



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Can you help us?
No experience needed—we offer full training.
One morning a week of your time enables us to provide a better service to the ADD/ADHD community.
As you help others, you inevitably gain greater skills for helping your own family.
Can you afford not to come?
Please contact Sandy at (011) 793-2079