



Accept – don't reject

Greetings from the Attention Deficit & Hyperactivity Support Group of Southern Africa. (ADHASA)

Keeping up with ADD

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These situations often cause much chaos in the life of an ADD/hyperactive child, however they also affect many non ADD/H children and the solutions are for everyone!



Back to School

As we move into the New Year and leave the Christmas season behind, life resumes its normal hectic pace. The children are back at school and, while some love it, it is a nightmare for others. Grade One can be particularly traumatic for an ADD or hyperactive child because areas of difficulty which were never a problem at

home suddenly become major stumbling blocks at school.

So if your child shows reluctance to go to school, dig deeper! The chances are that he is not just being difficult but that he is genuinely struggling. Awareness that he is not coping, and tackling his difficulties before they overwhelm him, may prevent

them from undermining his self confidence.

In this issue we will be tackling three common school-related problems which cause much upheaval on the home front. Recognising and understanding the underlying problem could give clues to his challenges in the classroom!

DRESSING FOR SCHOOL - THE CHILD THAT TAKES FOREVER

A flashpoint in the mornings leading to much family upheaval with frustration, anger, yelling... and not enough time left for breakfast, Sound familiar?

Once again this could be linked to unseen difficulties such as poor co-ordination, or distractibility (forgetting what they are supposed to be doing), or zero organization skills (and they really don't know the order in which they should put things on, they're overwhelmed and so do nothing). Many children dress quickly and easily for other occasions, but not for school – this could be a silent

message telling you that he is not coping at school.

Doesn't everything become so much more difficult when we're upset and unhappy?

It may help if you put a series of stick figures on his wall showing the different steps in dressing: first the child with underpants on; then with shorts added; then with shirt etc – these pictures could be a blessing for a highly disorganised child. Alternately have the child dress with mum or dad and have everything become a race in which they put their clothes on in basically the

same order. If necessary help him with buttons and shoelaces. Ensure that the child wins often enough to keep him excited about the 'competition'. Rewards could be material such as a small toy or a gold star on his chart which leads to a video or a trip to the movies or they could be a smile, a hug or a few words of encouragement! Approval and recognition for results, or even just effort, can build enthusiasm for life and self confidence for the future.



NOT EATING BREAKFAST

Many children don't have breakfast because they fiddle around for such a long time that there is no time left for them to eat. Speeding up the early morning dressing (and eliminating the time spent shouting at the child) could make more time for breakfast and also have the child in a better frame of mind to sit down and eat. Sometimes parents themselves don't want to eat anything so early in the day and the children decide breakfast is not important - and learn to 'make do' with next to nothing. This is a pity because a balanced breakfast is essential if a child is to be able to concentrate at school. It is equally if not more important for a child taking Ritalin to have a decent breakfast because the medication may suppress his appetite leaving him not wanting to eat anything else for the rest of the school day! Examples of a reasonable breakfast are:

- ◆ Poached egg on toast with a slice of tomato.
- ◆ Rolled oats porridge cooked for a short time only in water or milk, with honey (raw unprocessed is bet-

ter), and a slice of fruit.

- ◆ Leftover stew/meat from the night before, on toast or with pasta or potato.

People who prefer not to combine carbohydrates and protein could serve a fresh fruit salad with a combination of tropical and deciduous fruit, possibly with some citrus added. Add a tablespoon or two of freshly grated nuts and a teaspoon of

Note: Don't give your children any of the above-mentioned foods if they react to them!

raw honey.

To maintain concentration throughout the day, breakfast should be followed by a healthy mid-morning snack followed by a balanced lunch. This will be covered in a later email, as well as another devoted entirely to these fussy, picky eaters or children who tend to avoid eat-

ing in general. (Should you want further information, have a look at my book "Hyperactivity and ADD – caring and coping" pages 97, 98 and 70).

Hyperactivity and ADD-caring and coping is available through the Support Group 011-888-7655; or the Publishers who are Wits University Press 011-484-5910, or Horizon Library Services 021-706-0949 ext 213 or ext 232; or you can get it from myself Heather (011)886-7668

Don't forget to give your children their Essential Fatty Acids and a good multi-vitamin and mineral supplement - and at all times avoid the synthetic colourants, flavourants and anti-oxidant preservatives used in so many of our foods. To make life easier for you, the Support Group offers a detailed list of foods (all brand-name products) which are free of these additives. Contact them for details.

ALWAYS LOSING THINGS

Put his name on everything!!!! Blazer, jerseys, shirts, underpants, satchel, pens, pencils, rubbers ... anything that goes to school! ADD and hyperactive children are well known for being disorganised and not being able to keep track of their possessions! They also don't manage to take the right books or things for sport to school. As a result, some children get

into trouble so often that they choose to lug *everything* to and from school *every day!* A satchel that is too heavy could cause back problems in later years.

In a supportive manner, help the child to sort out what he needs for the next day and watch or help him put them into the satchel. Often they need this extra assistance long after their younger broth-

ers or sisters no longer need help. Harsh criticism can kill enthusiasm and bring out much sullen or aggressive defensiveness - while loads of encouragement whilst going through check lists and helping them sort things out (but not doing it all for them) can eventually teach them organization skills while building their belief in themselves.

AND FINALLY

Helping a child cope with the smaller things in life teaches him how to tackle the larger challenges that come later. It was once said that the worst legacy of an ADD or hyperactive childhood was the low self esteem and lack of confidence by the time the child reaches his adult years. Parents and teachers are powerful people and can change the future of a child by building him as he works his way through school – difficult sometimes, especially when you are ready to tear your hair out, but the rewards are well worth the effort.

By Heather Picton



'He' is often used rather than 'she' simply because little boys seem to be affected more frequently than little girls

