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

# Keeping up with ADD

October 2004

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**Counselling hours:**  
Wednesdays and Fridays  
08h00 to 13h00  
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## IT'S EXAM TIME!

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For most families exams are the most difficult time of the year and stress levels are high! The child has to know his work because his results can be a deciding factor for him to pass, or stay in the same grade for another year. Sadly many of our ADD/ADHD children, although bright, have learning difficulties which put them at a tremendous disadvantage in the examination situation - especially if they are very slow workers or have other difficulties with writing.

### SUPPORTING THE CHILD

At this time of the year you, as parents, can make a tremendous difference to the learning experience of the ADD/ADHD child, and how he manages to cope with the extreme stress of the situation. Just recognising that the child is really struggling to hold himself together and giving him a little more space than usual, can make a tremendous difference. Ignore minor misdemeanours, in other words, don't sweat the small stuff!

Try to understand his high levels of frustration and, if possible, ignore his outburst when he can't (for example) solve a maths problem. Rather say something like: "I know it's difficult, but let's see if we can work it out together." As always, don't do it *for* him, but rather do it *with* him. If the child doesn't want your help, consider if it would be better for you to soothe his ruffled feathers or to leave that space until he has settled down again. Your decisions will be influenced by your child's personality as well as the kind of relationship between the two of you.

Whatever you do, avoid losing your temper and shouting at or beating him! This doesn't solve any problems and only makes things worse. Stress levels are pushed up even further which make it more difficult for everyone to settle down again.



### CLOSED FOR HOLIDAYS!

The National Office of the Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Support Group (ADHASA) will be closing on **3 December** for the Government School holidays and re-open again on Wednesday **12 January 2004**.

For **urgent advice** during the holidays they can try Sandy on (011) 793-2079, or Clare (011) 462-2857.



## ORGANISING SKILLS

ADD/ADHD people often have poor organizing skills. This impacts not only on their abilities to keep their bedrooms tidy, or to be on time, but it can also affect their ability to plan a study schedule or, if there is one, to stick to it. They generally need encouragement and assistance (rather than nagging) to meet the intermediate goals, and eventually the final goal. A few weeks before the exam help them to work out their study schedule, breaking the work down into smaller chunks which are to be finished by certain target dates, but don't do it all for them.

It may also help to divide the study sessions into smaller segments, like a half hour at a time depending on the age of the child and his ability to sit still and concentrate. Some young children can't last for much more than five minutes! Follow each session with a short break which could be for as little as fetching a glass of water, to ten minutes of physical activity..



## HEALTHY EATING HABITS

The Support Group has always stressed the importance of avoiding synthetic colourants, synthetic flavourants and anti-oxidant preservatives, and this is probably more important at exam time than at any other time of the year! For the few weeks of exams (and at least a week before), it is most important that all unsuitable foods are avoided because one wrong thing can affect a child's behaviour, concentration and everyone's stress levels for the next 72 hours!

However, if you have never really excluded these additives from your child's diet, then exam time is definitely not the time to start – especially if the child is not too keen on the idea! He is already stretched to the limit as far as his stress levels are concerned, and it could be counter-productive to suddenly start making a whole lot of changes with which he may not be able to cope. Just make sure that a variety of vegetables are served with the evening meal (if he eats them) and that plenty of fresh fruit is available for day-time snacking.

On the other hand, if the child is keen to make the change then take out the additives, but don't go overboard if either of you are not coping. Choose a less stressful period when you can build on the basics of taking out the remainder of the undesirable additives, but also have the time to find the healthier alternatives in your area.

## BREAKFAST FOR SUCCESS

Breakfast plays a vital role: some breakfasts supply a slow, steady stream of glucose (i.e. fuel) to the brain helping children to concentrate, while others don't help much at all.

If there is too much or too little glucose being supplied to the brain concentration is affected; therefore a balanced meal is essential.

This would keep a child going, and help with his best concentration for the first few hours of the day.

A balanced snack during the break will keep him going till lunch time.

A few suggestions for breakfast are:

- \* Egg or baked beans on toast and some fruit.
- \* Muesli made with rolled oats, served with milk or yoghurt
- \* Pronutro whole-wheat (original flavour) meets our requirements because it is free from synthetic colourants and flavourants, AND IT IS LOW GI. Serve with milk/yoghurt and honey.

☺(See "Keeping up with ADD" June 2004 for further information about stabilizing blood glucose levels, or read "Eating for Sustained Energy" by Gabi Steenkamp and Lisbet Delpert.)

## SUPPLEMENTS

If your child isn't already taking supplements, this is a good time to start – right now! Choose a multivitamin and mineral supplement that is free of synthetic colourants and flavourants. Add the omega 3 and omega 6 supplements. Phone the Support Group for further information. (Details on page 4)



## A TIME TO PAINT?

Please don't decide to start building operations, paint your house, varnish your woodwork, or fumigate just before or during exams!!! Not only does the upheaval unsettle the child, the powerful fumes can (like food additives) interfere with concentration and ultimate achievement in the exams. If you've already started with the alterations, put the children onto vitamin C to help modify the effect.

**A CHEWER?**

It is infuriating when your child is forever chewing his pens, pencils, sleeves, collars etc but now is the time to ignore it. Often the child's most irritating habits are in fact his best attempts to cope and this is a prime example. Rather than breaking his chain of thought by demanding that he "STOP CHEWING!!", give him objects that he can chew such as a chunk of biltong, a piece of sugar cane (not a sugar block), honeycomb, a toy or even a teething ring! The chewing may be calming him and enabling him to concentrate better. In the same way, fiddling with hair or a piece of string could also be calming mechanisms.

**COMFORTABLE**

Even before he sits down to work, ensure (with as little fuss as possible) that he has the right equipment and materials needed.

Keep him in his chair by making him more comfortable – tie a cushion onto the seat so that it's not so hard (important if the child is sensory defensive) and put a box under his feet (if they don't reach the floor) and he will be less likely to swing his legs. Children with low tone are likely to fidget – try to ignore the fidgeting unless it becomes excessive.

**LEARNING STYLES**

There is currently a lot of interest in

learning styles with children being visual learners, auditory learners, kinaesthetic learners, or a combination of the above. Students usually cope far better if they are able to use their own particular style of learning. Speak to your child's teacher for further information.

**WHEN DO WE STOP?**

ADD/ADHD children invariably need extra support with their homework or studying for years longer than their classmates – and this could be up to Matric Level! Assistance in a supportive manner during the school years can reap rewards for many years to come. The key is to do it with the child but not for the child!

**CHANGE TOO SUDDEN**

Bear in mind though that it would not be wise to institute any major changes overnight. None of us like change, and we cope with it even less when we are stressed – even if the changes are for the better. So, for the parents, it could be a matter of finding a way of being far more supportive to the child but without going overboard to such an extent that the child can't understand what is happening and becomes uneasy.



These are just a few thoughts to help you over the examination period. Initially you may feel that they place

even greater stress on you - however using these principles could also make a difference to the regular homework sessions. This alone makes the effort worthwhile.

Heather Picton

*If you have all earlier copies of Keeping up with ADD, look at the February, March, April and June issues – they can give further insight.*

**SUPPORT GROUP HAPPENINGS MEETING**

Our Sat 16 October meeting was well attended by husbands, wives and parents of adult ADD people. After a short introduction into the world of coaching by Lorí Lea of Mind Focus, Terry Wilke gave us a keen insight into the world of the adult ADD, their strengths and difficulties. Various interesting points were raised, including ways of making your future partner in life aware of some of the challenges you face and how they could be affecting them.

Many people at that meeting have indicated that they would like to be a part of our Adult ADD Club and most decided that meetings should start early in the new year. As we would like to tailor the club to your needs, please fill in the attached form and return it to us.

Recordings of Terry Wilke's talk are available from the office at R20 each.

**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

This edition of Keeping up with ADD kindly put together for us by Lorí Lea (AD/HD Coach) of



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SIBLINGS: (Names & Ages)

1 ..... 2 .....

3 ..... 4 .....

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- 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.