

TIPS FOR ATTENTION AND REGULATION

at school



Children who struggle with inattention, hyperactivity, and self-regulation can appear to present with stubbornness, “selective listening,” lack of organization, or difficulty following through on simple tasks and expectations. By making simple classroom changes, you can create a supportive environment that empowers your student to thrive and improve independence. Here are some strategies to consider:

PROVIDE ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE

Clearly and consistently outline routines and expectations for various activities or times of day. This will decrease confusion and help a struggling brain to remain engaged (e.g., consistent seating arrangement, daily visual schedules, clearly defined expectations for transitions, etc.)

“CHUNKING” WORK

Whenever possible, help the student(s) break their work down into smaller chunks (e.g. use a small whiteboard or paper with steps 1-3). This technique translates verbal instructions into visual information to avoid overwhelm and improve ability to problem-solve

DO NOT REMOVE RECESS/GYM

Ensure the child is allowed access to all recess/playground/gym/P.E. activities. They should not be required to stay in for recess to complete assignments or for behaviors relating to inattention/hyperactivity. Allowing this time to unwind and move their body is imperative for improving classroom success and self-regulation

ALTERNATIVE SEATING

Work with the child’s occupational therapist to determine if alternative seating would be appropriate (e.g., beanbag chair, therapy ball, wiggle seat cushion, weighted lap pad, fidget foot/chair band, etc.). Do not offer wiggle cushion/ball if child has poor core control, as it can contribute to difficulties in attention. Allowing the child to stand at his/her desk may also be helpful.

MOVEMENT BREAKS

Not only will an unfocused student benefit, but the whole classroom will benefit greatly from periodic and consistent “Brain Breaks” during classroom time. This can be as simple as standing up and completing 10 jumping jacks or “cross crawls” before continuing on with a task

UNSTRUCTURED BRAIN BREAKS

Sneak in more movement breaks and allow downtime from cognitive tasks. For example, give the student small “jobs” to complete – passing out glue sticks, erasing whiteboard, gathering everyone’s homework, carrying objects down the hall, or delivering assignments to teacher’s desk

USE TIMERS AND WARNINGS

Use a visual timer (e.g. Time-Timer®) to encourage on-task behavior for short periods of time and to improve understanding of passing of time. Provide “warnings” before transitions (i.e., 5-minutes, 1-minute) so the child is not caught off-guard or in the middle of something when required to transition.

CHECKLISTS

Checklists (on wipe-off board for reuse) may help the student be more organized and independent. They may check off each task as it is completed prior to moving to the next task