



# NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 22 - December 2008

P.O. Box 2, St Julians STJ 1001 - [www.adhdmalta.org](http://www.adhdmalta.org) / [info@adhdmalta.org](mailto:info@adhdmalta.org)

Editor's Word & Point of View : The aim of ADHD Family Support Group is to promote positive change in society. This is more so especially with regards to the lives of children, adults and families with ADHD. We all pass through various experiences in our lives. These could also be experiences of closed doors and hurdles to overcome. Experiences that quite frankly irk and instil in us feelings of frustration and anger. Our role is to harness this anger and turn it into energy, Positive energy. Just as we try to entice children and adults with ADHD to harness their energy. The group offers a place where we can vent our frustrations and feelings, more importantly helping us understand we are not alone. From then on we are to harness this energy and channel it towards proactive action. We have to make our voices heard but softly. No harsh manners will achieve what we have to achieve. We tend to offer our knowledge and personal experiences. We prepare and make ourselves available. We propose partnerships with professionals, administrators, schools, teachers, and everyone else in order to disseminate information about ADHD and to convince people that when all do their part ADHD becomes a plus. We are to channel our energy towards giving information to all who want to hear. Then we will move forward.

**What's in this issue** : We report on the Profs Cooper Seminar and the Barnardo's Train the Trainers Course organised in October and advise the group's activities for the coming months. You will find the second of a series of four articles regarding Sensory Integration and ADHD, this time focussing on The Sense of Movement (the Vestibular system). The final entry is the Library section of the group.

We look forward to be of service to all & to receive your feedback and contributions.

### Coming Meetings of the ADHD Family Support Group

2008	December	12th	- Open Meeting & refreshments for Christmas spirit
2009	January	9th	- What is ADHD from a Medical Point of View
	February	13th	- ADHD Child & Parent Relationships
	March	13th	- Practical Tips for ADHD (Education/School/Home)
	April	15th	- Annual General Meeting

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our members and everyone

# The Sense of Movement - The Vestibular System

GIANNELLA ATTARD SROT

## Location:

The vestibular system is located in the inner ear and is activated by movement or by changing head position.

## Functions:

- Automatically coordinates the movement of one's eye, head and body.
- Provides information about where our body is in space, whether we or the surroundings are moving.
- Important in maintaining muscle tone, coordinating the two sides of the body and holding the body and head upright against gravity.
- Tells whether movement is up, down, fast, slow, linear or angular.

## Application:

A child with poor modulation of vestibular information may have:

- Over-reactivity to movement stimuli and present aversive / emotional responses.
- Under-reactivity to movement stimuli and present poor registration of movement information or seeking big movement stimulation.

Poor vestibular discrimination may result in a child having trouble with:

- a. Postural-motor control
- b. Bilateral-motor coordination
- c. Body/spatial awareness or orientation

## **Postural-motor control:**

Postural motor control results in difficulties with balance. The child seems clumsy, uncoordinated and awkward. They may collide frequently with tables, chairs and other equipment at home or in the classroom.

Possible activities that can help:

1. Ask child to walk on a straight line backwards / forwards and sideways. Later move to curved lines.
2. Do animal walks.
3. Stepping stones: place a course of objects and mark each object with a right or left. Child is to follow the path.
4. Box game - Use two shoe boxes, one in front and one behind. Ask the child to walk into a box with both feet and to bend over to move the rear box to the front and move into that box. Continue the same.
5. Hoop game: twist hoop round the arms, legs, waist bounce balls in them, toss bean bags in them, step in and out.



6. Hopping: hop on one foot at a time. Alternate the feet while hopping. Hop in rhythmical patterns, left, left, right, right or left, left, right or right, right left.

7. Skateboard: lie on the stomach, kneel or stand initially on a flat surface. Later on you can move to a downhill slope.



8. Star jumps: jump, putting the feet wide apart while clapping hands above the head. You can vary activity by asking child to make quarter turns, half turns and full turns. Child can also jump to the left, right, north or south.

9. Ladder walk: Place a ladder flat on the ground. Have the child walk between rungs forward, backward and hopping.

## **Bilateral-Motor Coordination**

This is coordinating both sides of the body together at the same time. Coordination of the two body sides is an important foundation for the development of many gross and fine motor skills. Good coordination of the two body sides is an important foundation for writing with pencils and cutting with scissors. Children learn to coordinate their body sides when **they**

- Manipulate toys such as pop beads and legos,
- Skip, gallop, play rhythm games, jump rope, ride a tricycle / bike.
- Do animal walks
- Draw circles on the board with both hands at the same time
- Go on swings and jungle gyms.
- Build a play fort or hideout out of the cushions from the couch and some chairs. Put pillows inside and tie up sheets and blankets. Put a basket of toys and books inside for hand and finger play.
- Bounce on bouncing balls which help to improve balance and strengthen legs.
- Climb and crawl over and under large pillows, beanbag chairs, etc., on jungle gyms, rocks and trees, up stairs on hands and knees and through obstacle courses made of furniture are great.
- Jump on bouncy surfaces, such as a mini trampoline, mattress (adult supervision).
- Play in a sandbox as this is creative as well as good for improving strength in hands and arms.
- Finger-paint.
- Ball games



## Body/spatial awareness or orientation:

This is the awareness of oneself in space. Body image activities are designed to help the child develop accurate images of the location of parts of the body and the function of these parts:

### **Possible Activities that can help improve body/spatial awareness:**

- Pointing to body parts - ask child to point to various parts of the body. This can also be done in front of the mirror. When task is acquired, try doing the same with eyes closed.
- Have the child draw in different parts of the body on an outline of their body.
- Have the child crawl under, over, and through an obstacle course.
- Cut pictures of the body into two pieces and then into several pieces and have the child reassemble them into the whole.
- Give partially completed drawings and ask child to draw in the missing pieces.
- Ask child to locate the direction of an object from self (front, back, sideward, under, above)
- Imitate body positions.
- Arrange objects according to specific instructions example put the ball under the chair, put the rubber in the top drawer.



### **Barnardo's Train the Trainers Course 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

Six people have attended the 2day training course. The course was a means of training the participants in running Parenting Skills Courses aimed specifically for parents of children with ADHD.

Our next step is to organise parenting skills courses starting in January 2009. Those interested contact the group on [info@adhdmalta.org](mailto:info@adhdmalta.org).



## **Profs Cooper Seminar – 24<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> October 2008**

ADHD family Support Group and Malta Union of Professional Psychologists on 25<sup>th</sup> October 2008 conjointly organised a one day Seminar "Understanding and Supporting Children with ADHD". The Seminar was addressed by Professor Paul Cooper – University of Leicester U.K. The Seminar was attended by over 120 professionals from various fields, which is a good indicator of the interest in the subject of ADHD, and an increase in awareness of the Subject – ADHD.

The main aim of the Seminar was to encourage all, particularly professionals to Understand the individual child with ADHD, to Support in an individual manner every child with ADHD, to collaborate together as Professionals in seeking to address the needs of children and young people with ADHD, and to involve the parents and family of the child with ADHD in all steps of the process.

Another point seminar aimed to address is that professionals and parents alike realise the need for effective and professional diagnosis. The aim is should not be to get, or obtain, or whatever, the most for the child, maybe in an overzealous spirit. The aim is always – what is best for the individual child.



(Parents Meeting – Friday 24<sup>th</sup>)



(One-Day Seminar – Saturday 25<sup>th</sup>)

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of October Professor Cooper addressed Parents' meetings both in Gozo (in the morning) and in Malta (in the evening). The events were very well attended. The parents meetings started from a short explanation of what is ADHD, the importance of accepting the situation and looking forward in adapting in order to manage and get the best potential from ADHD.

ADHD Family Support Group expresses its thanks to Malta Union of Professional Psychologists with whom the seminar and parents' meeting were conjointly organised. We look forward to future collaborative similar experiences.

Further to the above experience the group was also honoured to have Dr Lesley Hughes address the parents meeting of the 14<sup>th</sup> November. This was made possible through the intervention of Dr Carmel Cefai as part of the Research Institute of the University of Malta. Dr Hughes addressed the meeting on her research experiences and observations of the interactions between children with ADHD and their teachers, parents, professionals and school Administration. The main point that struck was the importance of communication between all the people involved in the process.

## Parenting and ADHD – Dr David Coghill

Parenting a child with ADHD has more pitfalls than parenting the average child. You'll need to experiment to find out what works best for your child. Also, because a child with ADHD is unpredictable, what works one day might need a different approach the next.

### You and your child

Your style of parenting affects your child's behaviour. Just as good habits can be learnt, there are things that can increase the likelihood of misbehaviour.

- **Your experience as a child.** If you were told off all the time as a child, you might do the same with your own children - or go the opposite way and never tell them off.
- **Parents disagreeing on rules.** This confuses your child, who won't know what he's supposed to be doing so his behaviour will deteriorate. You're also setting yourself up for 'divide and rule', where if one parent says no, he'll ask the other and act on a 'yes'.
- **Lack of energy.** If you've had a hard day at work, you're feeling low, you're not getting enough help or you're coming down with a bug, it's easy to let discipline slip. One-off occasions won't hurt, but if it continues for a long time, your child may start behaving badly to get some attention from you.

With behavioural problems, there's also a lot of potential for rows. You can feel that you spend all your time nagging your child, so you need to make sure you have good times together. Set up special times to spend with your child doing things you enjoy together and just playing.

### Rules and parenting

Rules and boundaries are important because they help us get on with other people. If everyone knows what's acceptable, what's not and the consequences of doing something that's unacceptable, everyone will get on.

For example, if a child knows he has to keep his hands to himself, he won't punch or hit other children in the playground. If he doesn't know the rule or ignores it, other children will get hurt and they'll avoid him. He might also end up getting hurt.

### Communicating rules

It used to be thought children shouldn't speak up, and it was OK to hit them when they'd broken a rule.

Nowadays people realise that children respond better if you make them feel loved, secure and important, and you give them attention when behaving well. If children only get attention when they behave badly, they'll behave even worse to get more attention.

For children with ADHD, it's better to praise the good behaviour (ie the one you want to see more of) and ignore the bad behaviour as much as you can. Negotiate rules with older children so they'll have a say in what happens.

When it comes to rules, you need to be consistent in your approach.

**A** - State the rule: homework before TV.

**B** - Remind your child of the rule when he challenges it, and what the consequences will be: homework first or no TV for the rest of the evening.

**C** - Enforce it: take the fuse out of the plug, if you have to!

## **Ways to encourage good behaviour**

- Get his attention. Use his name so he knows you're talking to him and won't switch off. Try to maintain eye contact, but don't force it.
- Give simple, specific instructions. Be clear and positive. Tell your child what you want him to do, rather than what you don't, eg 'keep your hands in your pockets' instead of 'don't touch things'. Be specific, eg 'stay next to me in the shop', rather than the vague 'be good'. Keep it brief, or your child will tune out. Give instructions in a quiet area where there are no distractions.
- Give specific praise. Catch him doing things right, tell him that you're pleased.
- Set boundaries. Be clear on what is acceptable and what isn't, eg how much TV he can watch. Be consistent.
- Have clear routines. Your child will then know what to expect. Tell your child when something is going to change and give warnings, eg 'we're going out in three minutes... in one minute... now'. Plan your days so you do something noisy, something energetic and something quiet.
- Play with your child. He will respond to the attention.
- Use rewards. Make sure they're small and immediate - children with ADHD can't wait for things to mount up! Rewards don't have to be material, eg a hug or kiss, an extra bedtime story or extra time doing something they like. Star charts are best for a maximum of three things you can measure easily, but children with ADHD quickly lose interest in them.
- Try to avoid punishments such as loss of privileges. If you use punishments, keep them short and in proportion to the rule he's broken.
- Look at what's really important. Save the battles for the big things.
- Give your child a choice. This helps them be responsible for their own behaviour. Say what you want him to do: 'If you do it, this will happen; if you choose not to do it, this will happen' - and be consistent about it.
- Stay calm. Use counting techniques: state the rule, count quietly to five, then act. Use time out: either you or your child go to another room for 5 or 10 minutes - a visible timer helps. Reduce the noise level.

## **Sources of help**

- our child's teachers - they've dealt with similar problems at school and may have some suggestions. You can agree together on how to deal with behaviour issues, a consistent approach at home and school will help your child.
- Support groups such as ADHD Family Support Group, ADDISS or Adders.

# LIBRARY CORNER

By - Marlene Chetcuti Ganado



Dear members of the ADHD Support Group,

As I promised you in the last newsletter, today I shall be giving you some information regarding one of the many books available in our library. The book in question is called “FROM CHAOS TO CALM” by Janet Heining, Ph.D., and Sharon Weiss, M.Ed. Janet Heining is herself a mother of two children, the younger of which is a boy with ADHD, whilst Sharon Weiss is a behavioural consultant, as well as a founding member of ADHD Professional Group.

The book is basically about what Janet, together with her husband Jamie, go through to control their son Theodore. This couple is living a life of hell, until Theodore, at the age of six, is diagnosed with ADHD and within three years, under the guidance of Sharon Weiss, they manage to turn their household from that of daily chaos, to a fun-loving, calm, family atmosphere.

The first chapter opens with a typical chaotic morning scene, with Janet doing her best to get Theodore out of bed, and ready to go to school. As a person who has their own ADHD child at home, reading through this episode, one cannot help but nod and smile, (or even maybe shed a tear), as one can vividly imagine what is happening, since as we know, all families with an ADHD child go through the same chaotic routine themselves daily.

However, as you read through the book, you learn:

- how the family was encouraged to seek professional help;
- the medication aspect for these challenging children ;
- ways how to discipline the child ;
- common traps that parents fall into ;
- how one can change a child's behaviour by using incentive guidelines rather than punishment ;
- understanding why these children must be taught social skills which others pick up automatically as they grow ;
- a set of rules which parents and children must follow ;
- (and last, but not least) how you can bring calm into your chaotic household, and manage to maintain it.

This thoroughly practical book, offers three important points of view – that of the parent’s, the therapist’s as well as the child’s. It is very casual reading, and I’m sure it will be of great help to all those who are in any way in contact with ADHD children. Allow me to remind you that if you need to borrow any books, you may enter the website [www.adhdmalta.org](http://www.adhdmalta.org) where you will find the link “resources”, and there you can view a list of all the books we have available, as well as my contact address.