



# NEWSLETTER

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**Editor's Word & Point of View :** This is the first issue of the newsletter after the AGM. During the AGM we looked at what the group did during the previous year and gave ourselves targets and ideals to work on in this coming year. The new committee was elected at the AGM and has now been composed with the relative roles assigned. We welcome Ms Christine Ellul Bonici on the committee. Rest assured that the work started and continued in earnest as usual.

We are all conscious that Summer is just round the corner with all such time brings. Kids look at the bright side of being off from school, even though this us preceded by exam time. Parents look at the side that the kids will be home with all that this entails in the endeavour to promote the notion that children could make the best constructive use of all the resultant time on their hands. So the focus on activities, play, exercise, and an effort to hopefully insert somewhere in the busy schedule some time to expend on reading and keeping in touch with school subjects.

**What's in this issue :** You will find the fourth article from the series of articles regarding Sensory Integration and ADHD, this time focussing on The Tactile System. An article bringing us back to keep in mind siblings of children with ADHD and the importance of sharing our attention equally. Two article focussing on the impending summer months and summer holidays. These articles refer to play, activities and summer fun, referring also to ideas of what one can organises to keep ADHD kids on the go, even though this would mean that parents would then need an even bigger break. Finally the regular Library Book Feature.

As a group we run down the activities in the summer months, however we would be also preparing for the months to come. At the same time we always remain available for members of the group. Do contact with any queries and requests for information that might crop up. As always we look forward to be of service to all & to receive your feedback and contributions.

## Coming Meetings of the ADHD Family Support Group

2009	June	12th	Latest Issues – Information from ADDISS Conference
	July / August		No Meetings are held however contact can be made through Email, Telephone and Post as per letter head.
	September	11 <sup>th</sup>	Open Meeting
	September	26 <sup>th</sup>	ADHD Day – part of ADHD Week (20 <sup>th</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> )
	October	9th	Ms Charmaine Agius Ferrante

# Tactile System

GIANNELLA ATTARD SROT

The Tactile system or the sense of touch is due to the receptors found in the skin. This sense is very important as it contributes to the development of body scheme that is the different parts of our body.

A child with poor modulation (that is regulation) of tactile information may have difficulties with

## **Over-reactivity (that is being over reactive)**

such as being touched by objects and/or individuals. This is not a problem in the interpersonal skills of the child but it is tactile defensiveness- that is an exaggerated, out-of-proportion negative reaction to touch.

Due to this, the child might

- ❖ Have difficulty standing in line between children during assembly/line up etc...
- ❖ Have difficulty coping with messy activities such as finger painting and playing with plasticine.
- ❖ Be very choosy regarding the type of fabric for his cloths.
- ❖ Be very sensitive to labels on cloths.
- ❖ Have difficulty wearing polo necks /turtle necks/long sleeves / tying the top button on the uniform shirt
- ❖ Have difficulty having his hair cut

## **Under-reactivity (having poor registration of tactile sensation).**

This is a situation which cannot just be overlooked. An individual with such poor tactile discrimination

- ❖ May be hurt (ex. burning finger ) and not realise it
- ❖ May know that he was touched and will not be able to pinpoint exactly where
- ❖ May not even realised that he dropped things he was carrying
- ❖ Cannot discriminate objects by just touching them.
- ❖ Can be having a bath with very hot water and not realise
- ❖ May be feeling very cold in his fingertips but never complain

Activities which can help:

*(Do only what the child would tolerate. Tolerance develops gradually. Only give the child what they can tolerate pleasantly. Over stimulation results in aggressive behavior, crying and an increased activity level.*

*Repeat sections 1 and 2 on the extremities until the child tolerates all activities well.)*

One time a day do one of the following activities for at least 5 minutes.

- Soak hands and feet in warm water.
- Rub hands / arms or legs / feet with lotion, powder, wet washcloth or dry washcloth.
- Finger paint with paint, shaving cream or pudding with hands or feet.
- Rub hands / arms or legs / feet with satin, cotton, netting, brush, eraser, wool, foam, or carpet.
- Crawl on carpet squares, set out in a pattern, or walk barefoot on carpet squares.
- Wrap up in a blanket and rock back and forth.
- Blow hot air from a hair dryer or a hand dryer in the bathroom onto the arms and legs.
- Squeeze hand grippers.
- Pick up various small objects and drop into a smaller container (Cheerio's, popcorn kernels, coins, pegs)
- Feely boxes – find objects in boxes that are hidden in the following items: marbles, popcorn, paper pieces, cotton, gravel, straw pieces, putty or sand.

1. One time a day do one of the following for at least 5 minutes.

- Putty exercises or play with clay or salt dough.
- Play with toy boats in water.
- Dress up in clothes of different fabric. .
- Make no bake cookies, ice cream, milk shakes etc.
- Wash dishes.
- Sort coins.
- Throw bean bags into box.
- Sand a wood project.
- Sort shapes of different textures by touching if possible.
- Tactile collage, use different fabrics.
- Make a jack – o – lantern and scoop out seeds with hands.
- Plant seeds.
- Glue glitter on pine cones.
- Clean blackboard.
- Wash desk / counters.
- Theraband exercises. (ask an O.T. for help)
- Play ball with balls of different fabrics.
- Suggest that the child wear clothing of a variety of textures.

### *Try This Tip - Rhyme Away*

Rhymes can be a creative way to boost your child's reading skills. Rhyming helps them become familiar with the sounds, patterns and structures of written and spoken language. - Make story time fun by reading rhyming books and nursery rhymes with your child, and have him point out the rhyming words.

## Sharing Your Attention Equally

**Expert advice for making sure that your children without ADHD also get the time and consideration they deserve.**

by [Laura Flynn McCarthy](#)



Avoid falling into a cycle in which you constantly criticize everything one child does and always praise the other child.

If you're the parent of a child who has attention deficit disorder (ADD/ADHD), you probably spend a big chunk of each day trying to see the world through that child's eyes. But what if you also have a child or children who don't have ADD? How much time do you devote to meeting their needs? Perhaps not as much as you should, experts say.

As a parent, you want all your children to grow up healthy and happy and to reach their full potential. You want to give them equal attention and afford them the same advantages. But it's an inescapable truth that a child who is impulsive, distractible, or hyperactive demands a lot of your time and energy. It's easy to become so focused on that child that you shortchange the rest of your brood - even though they need you just as much. In fact, there are times when a non-ADD child needs you even more. After all, having a "spirited" sibling can cause a range of painful emotions: embarrassment, exasperation, guilt, and even fear.

How can you give each of your children the attention he or she needs without causing the others to feel neglected? Listen to what your non-ADD kids say to you. Here are some common complaints of children who have brothers or sisters with ADD - and the smart way for parents to respond.

**"She gets all the attention..."** - The number-one complaint of non-ADD siblings is that a brother or sister demands so much attention from their parents that there's little left over for them. As a parent, you may think that your non-ADD child is doing just fine with the status quo. Don't be so sure. Signs that a child feels neglected can be subtle, although there's usually *something* you can pick up on. "Some kids will complain directly to their parents, saying, 'You only pay attention to him,'" says Fred Grossman, Ph.D., a psychologist with the public-school system. "Others may withdraw and feel jealous or resentful. Other children will act out themselves as a way to get more attention."

That's what happened in the Plainview family of Connecticut. Soon after her eight-year-old sister, Sarah, began seeing a therapist for her ADD, seven-year-old Addie, who does not have ADD, started throwing tantrums and exhibiting the same behaviors that Sarah had shown. "She cried and said how hard it was to have a sister with ADD, because she got all the attention," says the girls' mother, Lisa Plainview. "We made an appointment for Addie to see Sarah's counselor, too, and after a couple of sessions, things calmed down considerably. By seeing Sarah's 'special doctor,' Addie felt special, too."

The first step in closing the attention gap, experts say, is to acknowledge your non-ADD child's feelings. "Just knowing that you're aware of the situation and want to improve it can help your child," says Dr. Grossman, who runs sibling workshops for kids with ADD. "Spending time alone with each of your children every day is also important."

Extra attention for Nicole has certainly helped things in the family. "I grocery-shop every Sunday morning, and I alternate which of my girls I take with me," says the mother. "We go out to breakfast first and talk. It's a special time. Nicole is always well-behaved when it's just the two of us."

**"I feel sorry for him..."** - Seeing a brother or sister get more attention doesn't always trigger jealousy in non-ADD siblings. Sometimes it triggers guilt or pity. Though she may never admit it, she does love her sibling. Hearing him criticized can make her feel guilty - especially if she sees herself as her parents' "favorite."

"Avoid falling into a cycle in which you constantly criticize everything one child does and always praise the other child," says Linda Sonna, Ph.D., a child psychologist in private practice in Taos, New Mexico, and author of *The Everything Parent's Guide to Children with ADD/ADHD* and *The Everything Parent's Guide to Raising Siblings*. "The one thing parents should never say is, 'Why can't you be more like your brother or sister?' Comments like that can alienate children."

## **Summer Activities for Kids : Making Wise Choices**

As summer vacation gets closer, are you trying to decide between improving your child's academic study skills or developing your child's talents? Perhaps you'll want to do a little of each. Here are some ideas to discuss with your child.

### **Basic Academic Study Skills**

Summer allows your child a chance to learn in a less structured setting where individual needs can be addressed in unique and creative ways. Computer keyboarding, for example, is an important skill for all young kids to develop.

### **Physical Activity**

Physical activity is very important for good health and energy. If your child is well coordinated and likes team sports, he/she may enjoy programs organised by local entities. Group activities may also strengthen social interaction skills. If your child doesn't like to compete or follow team rules, he/she may be more comfortable with individual sports, such as swimming, hiking or cycling.

### **Arts and Sciences**

By participating in art, drama, or music classes, your child may discover and use special talents and build self-esteem. Look to your local entities for class offerings. Understanding his/her special interests can guide you in planning summer outings to enhance learning. Consider taking your child to museums, libraries, art galleries, aquariums, concerts, and plays. Your backyard and local neighbourhood open up a world of possibilities for science activities. Public library resources offer suggestions, as well.

### **Instruction**

One of the biggest problems parents face is whether to continue basic instruction during summer vacation. Your child may need a break right away but could use a "jump start" a few weeks before school begins again. On the other hand, if he/she has just started making progress in a specific area when school lets out for the summer, it may be wise to continue instruction. Your child's teacher can give you suggestions for fun activities to strengthen such skills.

### **Reading**

If your child struggles with reading, there are many ways you can help build skills at home. Take advantage of summer and create reading programs. Whatever activities and programs you chose for your child, remember to read to her to build vocabulary and instil a love of reading. Older kids may enjoy listening to books on tape. Time should set aside for him/her to read, as well. The teacher or local library staff can help you find books or magazines of interest written at your child's independent reading level. Since reading aloud is one of the best ways for kids to improve reading skills, encourage them to read to younger children or older relatives.

### **The Choice is Yours**

Your final decision should be based on a variety of factors, including family schedules, time, cost, and your child's feelings. Remember that summer should also be a time to enjoy your child, so find time to laugh and play together.

Adapted from GreatSchools Inc.

## Let the Games Begin: Treating ADHD with Summer Fun

### *Outdoor activity ideas that will help your child with ADHD build skills during the summer vacation.*

by John Taylor, Ph.D.



Play is important “work” for children, especially for those with ADHD.

After the school year ended, a child with attention deficit disorder (ADD), announced he was bored (already!) and asked his mom, “So what’re we doing today?”

Mom’s solution? Create a safe playground in the backyard, where her hyperactive child could exercise with playmates.

They had their best summer ever: Mom didn’t have to think of something new to do each day, and her ADHD child made friends and slept better at night.

### The “Work” of Play

Play is important “work” for children, especially for those with ADHD. It strengthens muscles, improves stamina, and sharpens coordination, and it provides a host of mental and social benefits.

Games, sports, and make-believe encourage a child to feel and express emotion, and to develop skills, like getting along with others and problem-solving, that are essential in school and at home.

Studies also show that kids with ADHD who spend time outdoors in a green setting — a tree-lined street, park, or grassy backyard — feel calmer and more focused than those who spend hours at the computer or on an asphalt playground.

If you’re looking for age-appropriate play ideas for your active child or young teen this summer, here are a few that will raise the fun quotient while providing some other important benefits.

### The Young ADHD Child

A hyperactive child needs two things for productive playtime: enough space to tumble, explore, run, jump, and burn up his energy and a physical barrier to keep his curiosity and fearlessness from getting him in trouble or danger. A fenced-in yard or playground fills the bill.

Fun options for your backyard include creating a cave or tunnel by draping sheets over large cardboard boxes, chairs, or a card table. One boy I worked with liked his make-believe cave so much that he played happily through the summer, by himself and with playmates, without direction from his parents.

Playing follow-the-leader is also a winner. When you’re the leader, include skipping, jumping, crawling, twirling around, tunnelling under a picnic table, and hopping on one foot in your routine, so that your child exercises different muscles.

At the playground, try a game of tag or a stint on the slide and swings. In the park, add interest to a long walk by asking your child to count trees, bushes, and dandelions along the way.

Younger children often have difficulties with sensory-motor function. One way to sharpen this skill set is by exercising their equilibrium with an easy-to-make balance board. Place a piece of wood—at least 1 1/2 inches thick and about two-feet long—on top of an empty plastic bleach bottle or another cylindrical object. Ask your child to balance himself by placing a foot at each end of the board. This game is sure to elicit hoots and hollers.

### The School-Age ADHD Child

Playtime possibilities should include outdoor toys, using equipment that is durable, safe, and inexpensive. Buy items that a child can throw, fling, or glide. Plastic discs, and hollow plastic baseballs and footballs are fun for children of this age, and will minimize the risk of injuries.

If your child is looking for something more rough and tumble, hang an inflated inner tube or stuffed duffel bag on an outdoor wall, and let him pummel it with fist and foot until he's tuckered out.

A game of hopscotch or basketball (with the hoop and backboard set at the right height) is entertaining, and either develops hand-eye coordination.

Water play invites endless variations to keep boredom at bay. Running through a sprinkler or squirting a hose at friends on hot days is a perennial source of fun. Water fights with squirt guns will satisfy a hyperactive or impulsive child's need for excitement.

### For Young ADHD Teens

While some hyperactive teens thrive in team sports, others prefer solo activities, like running, swimming, rollerblading, hiking, strength training, or mastering the climbing wall. Individual sports are free of teammates to disappoint, and there are no opponents to become angry at or to feel inferior to.

Jerry is a hyperactive 14-year-old who lacked the coordination and team skills needed for basketball and baseball. His parents suggested he try long-distance bicycling as part of a large group. He enjoyed the rapid movement, the novelty of riding to new places, and the energy of being with others. His self-esteem got a boost when he won an award for completing an extended bike tour to neighbouring states.

If you have the room and an available tree, build a tree house together. It gives your teen a sense of accomplishment, as he learns to use tools and sees the structure take shape, board by board. You can help draft the plan, select the wood, and supervise the project, but make it a joint effort.

The finished product will provide endless hours of entertainment, and will be a proud reminder of skills learned for many years to come.

### Excuse Me, Please

Teaching your ADHD child how not to interrupt.

Interrupting while another person is talking is a typical ADHD behaviour. Although the child does not do this on purpose, it is poor social skills and impulse control. Interrupting others often causes adults and other children to view the ADHD individual as being rude.

Discuss this with your child. Remember that your child does not realize he is doing this so it is your job to point this out to him to help him become aware of it. If your child interrupts you while you are speaking to him be certain to stop him immediately and explain what he just did and how that made you feel. Ask him how he feels when people don't let him finish a thought. Now combine stopping him verbally with a hand signal. Say "Excuse me but I was speaking and you interrupted me" while placing your index finger under your lips and looking him directly in the eyes. When you are in public this is going to be the hand signal you use to show him he is interrupting another person. By using a simple hand signal you will avoid embarrassing your child. This signal provides him with a non-verbal cue so he can recognize what he just did, apologize to that person and allow the person to continue speaking.

You must teach this directly. You must practice this communication skill. Most importantly you should positively reinforce him when he does NOT interrupt. Direct teaching is an effective way of learning to improve this behaviour.

# LIBRARY CORNER

By - Marlene Chetcuti Ganado



Dear members of the ADHD Support Group,

This time I shall be introducing you to a book called “The HIDDEN HANDICAP” written by Dr. Gordon Serfontein, a paediatric neurologist, who studied in Cape Town and at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, Canada. Besides working at the Royal Alexandra Hospital for Children in Sydney, Australia, he also has a large private practice working as a physician having dealt with over 8000 children who suffer from this “Hidden Handicap” known as AD/HD.

Dr. Serfontein writes that for most children growing up is tough. However, for certain children growing up is even more difficult than for normal children. These are the children who suffer from a 'hidden' disability, i.e. a disability which is not visible to the average person. At school, these children have trouble with their learning, they disrupt their classes, and frustrate their teachers. At home, they drive their parents mad. These are children who are often inattentive and impulsive. They can also be clumsy, and at times become aggressive. These are all symptoms of AD/HD.

Despite the growing number of children suffering from AD/HD the condition is often ignored by some sections of the community – especially by the educational and medical professionals. Since there is no physical handicap visible, the children are often considered to be inappropriately taught or disciplined.

In his book “The HIDDEN HANDICAP” Dr. Serfontein's aim is to support and inform parents, teachers and doctors by giving them a better recognition of the development difficulties of children with AD/HD, and goes on to present options that will lessen the impact of other behavioural disorders and learning difficulties such as dyslexia, which often go part and parcel with AD/HD itself.

In the 'foreword' of the book Dr. Christopher Green, head of the Child Development Unit in The Children's Hospital – in Camperdown, Sydney, Australia writes :  
*“Dr. Serfontein has come up with a brilliant book - Despite educational awareness, many of today's children are struggling through school problems that cause pain, yet still pass unrecognised. It is an unfair world that makes one child have to work twice as hard to experience half the success of his mates. To make matters worse, the child's only reward may be: being branded lazy, unmotivated, anti-social or a behavioural problem”*

As parents, and members of the AD/HD support group, we know how true the above quote is. Yet, we sometimes have to suffer in silence, since so many are still unaware of the “HIDDEN HANDICAP”.

*Books may be borrowed from our library either during our monthly meetings, or by contacting me on Mob. 99403804, or by sending me a mail at: [chetgan@onvol.net](mailto:chetgan@onvol.net).*