



NEWSLETTER

Issue Number 25 - September 2009

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Editor's Word & Point of View :

September is the time that school is seen close by on the horizon. Many look forward to such time. Others might start to remember the hard times that school work and home work might mean. All look to the future and hope that things will be better than the previous year. Those starting the schooling adventure look forward to a new learning experience.

It is also a fact that children with ADHD usually face a harder time at school. However we are all to do our part in the situation. We all have to roll up our sleeves and do our jobs. With all elements to the interaction doing their part the school experience can be enhanced and children with ADHD can obtain the most out of the school learning experience, even arriving to utilise garner the strengths ADHD itself presents.

With this in mind in this issue of the newsletter we have an article relating to behaviour therapy. Behaviour is the main indicator/culprit in school scenarios. It is important to keep in mind that in ADHD behaviour modification works. We are all called to make it work. We all have to do our part. Knowingly, we are all encouraged to find how to increase our dosages of patience and perseverance.

What's in this issue: Can behaviour therapy Work? Find out along with seven tips and strategies. We then have the salient points from the ADDISS Conference held last April, Adult ADHD tips, and an article about the Parenting Skills Courses the Group is organising. Also short tips regarding ADHD. At the end with we have the regular Library Book Feature.

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	11 th September	Open Meeting – Topic “Back to School. Our Concerns”
	26 th September	ADHD Week Activity
	9 th October	Talk by Ms Charmaine Agius Ferrante
	14 th November	Role of GP in ADHD - Dr Tania Van Avendonk
	12 th December	Open meeting and Small Party for Parents and Kids

Can Behaviour Therapy Help?

Seven ADHD behaviour therapy strategies guaranteed to improve the attitude and self-control of your child with attention deficit.

The fundamentals of ADHD behaviour therapy are easy to understand and implement, even without the help of a therapist.

Have you ever given your child a time-out for talking back — or a heads-up before taking him someplace that is likely to challenge his self-control? Then you already have a sense of how behaviour therapy works in parenting ADHD children.

“A lot of behaviour modification is just common-sense parenting,” says William Pelham, Jr., Ph.D. “The situation is that none of us were trained how to be good parents, and none of us expected to have children who needed parents with great parenting skills and patience.”

The basic idea is to set specific rules governing your child’s behaviour (nothing vague or too broad), and to enforce your rules consistently, with positive consequences for following them and negative consequences for infractions. Dr. Pelham suggests these seven strategies for better ADHD behaviour:

1. Make sure your child understands the rules.

Telling a child to “do this” or to “avoid doing that” is not enough. To ensure that your child knows the rules cold, create lists and post them around the house. For example, you might draw up a list detailing the specific things your child must do to get ready for school. Make sure the rules are worded clearly. Go over the rules to make sure he understands, and review them as necessary. Stick with the routines until your child has them down.

2. Give clear commands.

First, say your child’s name to make sure you have his attention. Then tell him exactly what you want him to do. If you’re in the checkout line at the grocery store, for instance, you might say, “Steve, stand next to me and do not touch anything.” It’s not enough to tell your child to “be good,” because he may not know what that entails. Finally, state the consequences for disobeying the command, and always follow through.

3. Don’t expect perfection.

Strike a balance between praising your child and offering criticism. A good rule of thumb is to praise your child for doing something well at least five times as often as you criticize bad behaviour. You’ll only set your child up for failure if you expect immediate and perfect results. Instead, focus on rewarding small steps—and gradually work your way toward the desired outcome. If you notice that you are criticizing too much, lower your standards a bit. You’ll only drive yourself—and your child—crazy if you nitpick.

4. Use “when/then” statements to encourage good behaviour and reward your child.

If your child asks for permission to do a desirable activity before completing his chores or assignments, say, “Yes, when you finish cleaning the garage, then you can go out with friends.” With younger children, it’s important that the rewarding activity take place immediately after the chore or assignment is completed.

5. Set up a point/token system for rewards and consequences.

One effective system for encouraging your child to comply with your commands involves a jar and a supply of marbles. Each time your child does what you ask, put a marble in the jar. Each time he doesn’t, take two marbles out of the jar. At the end of the day, he earns a small reward based on the number of marbles that remain in the jar, and then starts over again.

6. Tweak your discipline techniques as your child gets older.

Certain measures, including time-outs, may not work as well with teens as they do with younger kids. If your secondary schooler breaks a rule, you might give him a five-minute chore -such as straightening up the family room- rather than a five-minute time-out. With older children, it’s useful to negotiate the terms and rewards for good behaviour. For example, your child may request access to the family car or time spent with friends if he is helpful around the house and does well at school.

7. Ask your child’s teachers to set up a similar behavioural system at school.

One of the best tools for parent-teacher cooperation is the daily report card. Meet with the teacher to determine desired classroom behaviours—“completing assignments within the designated time” or “contributing to discussion.” At the end of each school day, the teacher can fill out a quick evaluation of your child’s adherence to these behavioural goals, and send the document home with the child. Reward him for a good day at school with time to play outside or control over the car radio.

If your child is in middle school or high school, ask his guidance counsellor to discuss a daily report card with all of your child’s teachers. Use pages in her assignment notebook for the daily reports.

Many parents incorporate these strategies into family life without professional assistance. If you are having trouble achieving the results you seek, consider signing up for a parent-training program. A typical program consists of two-hour sessions, in which a therapist works with parents—typically in a group setting—to give them the support and guidance they need to cultivate good behaviour.

Suggested Reading for ADHD Behaviour Therapy:

Behaviour Modification: What It Is and How to Do It, by Garry Martin and Joseph Pear (Prentice Hall)

Parenting the Strong-Willed Child: The Clinically Proven Five-Week Program for Parents of Two- to Six-Year-Olds, by Rex Forehand, Ph.D., and Nicholas Long, Ph.D. (McGraw-Hill)

Your Defiant Child: Eight Steps to Better Behaviour, by Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D., and Christine M. Benton (Guilford)

Homework Success for Children with ADHD: A Family-School Intervention Program, by Thomas J. Power, James L. Karustis, and Dina F. Habboushe (Guilford)

An Amazing Brain!!

Vivienne Portelli

On my return from the 9th International ADDISS Conference in London, 30th March/1st April 2009, I was asked to write an article for the NEWSLETTER, something which I gladly accepted and which will I hope be of some interest and insight for our readers.

The ADHD brain is an Amazing Brain!!! I am sure most of you will agree to this statement. It is also like a FAST RACING CAR however with only *Bicycle Brakes*. But we must not let this trait in ADHD persons have a negative effect on us. We must be POSITIVE, and think POSITIVE! Here are a few examples to help us adopt this attitude toward ADHD persons.

When a child feels enthusiastic about something this will lead to a service of becoming Good, Fantastic and Great, whatever it might be. Let us not hinder them and dampen their spirit. Let us use the model of Hope, Excitement and Energy too in the quest of helping them achieve their goal. Let us promote the good works of Hyperactivity – let us reward distractibility instead of punishing it – let us call it curiosity instead! The same goes for Impulsivity – let us say it is their Creativity instead and promote it! I do not think that great ideas were born out of saying ‘*Oh, ok its 10 o’clock now, let me lay my creative idea!*’ I am sure we all agree that IDEAS almost always actually ‘*POP out!*’ of intelligent minds! So again let us not hinder that! And what about HYPERACTIVITY – why can’t we look at it as Extra Energy!

These traits that ADHD persons have, if of course helped to focus, can turn into something wonderful if treated positively!! What is the better idea here, is it to be negative toward the ADHD person who is full of ideas, energy and intelligence, or should we reward it with our *attention, respect and positive* energy? And which attitude would you think would positively affect the ADHD person? By changing our perception and how we look at ADHD will from the day of diagnosis programme which way the child is going to go. Are we going to burden the child with our heavy handed manners / orders / reprimanding or are we going to give them a gentle push, ‘*sponge!*’ them down, and help them on their way, in whatever they might want to do and achieve in their lives.

One thing we must NOT do is to make them feel that they are not capable of reaching their goals – just because they have ADHD. And even though you might NEVER openly say or show that you think they might be a failure in life your ATTITUDE towards them might be enough for the child to grip on to that idea that “I am a failure”, and that will be the beginning of a long, tough road of low self-esteem ahead of them. We must change our perspective on ADHD and reframe the ADHD symptoms in terms of a ‘MIRROR TRAIT’ which I would like to present to you below and look at it everyday so you may **always see the positive side of ADHD!!**

Negative Trait Associated with ADD > Accompanying Positive Mirror Trait

Hyperactive, restless	>	Energetic
Intrusive	>	Eager
Can't stay on Point	>	Sees connections others don't
Forgetful	>	Gets totally into what he/she is doing
Disorganized	>	Spontaneous
Stubborn	>	Persistent, won't give up
Inconsistent	>	Shows flashes of brilliance
Moody	>	Sensitive

On a last and very important **note** I wish to stress the most vital ingredient every person, but especially ADHD persons, must have. This is a healthy amount of the **magic ingredient of Love!** Nothing comes close to the positive connection we receive from those closest to us, in this case the parents to the child. It is such ingredient that will be carried into their adulthood, into a positive energy which will help them come through and shine in their accomplishments – and this all on account that when they were growing up they were given the crucial element of love & connection from those around them. So remember:

*LOVE TRANSFORMS TO POSITIVE ENERGY &
POSITIVE ENERGY PROMOTES AVAILABILITY OF LIFE!!*

Let us also remember: *‘no brain is the same and no brain is the best!’*



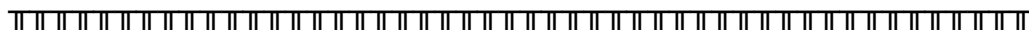
Behaviour Treatment for Adult ADHD

Adult ADHD may be treated with one or more of the following:

- Individual cognitive and behavioural therapy to enhance self-esteem
- Relaxation training and stress management to reduce anxiety and stress
- Behavioural coaching to teach strategies for organizing home and work activities
- Job coaching or mentoring to support better working relationships and improve on-the-job performance

A number of Questions you might wish to ask Your Doctor About Adult ADHD

- 1- What can I expect to happen if I go to a psychologist or psychiatrist for treatment for adult ADHD ?
- 2- What treatments are best for adults with ADHD? What are possible side effects of different ADHD medications?
- 3- Aside from adult medications, what else can I do? What about exercise and diet?
- 4- Are there any herbal supplements or over the counter drugs to take or avoid?
- 5- Where can I find emotional support for my family and me?
- 6- Will adult ADHD treatment stigmatize me?
- 7- How long must adult ADHD treatments continue?
- 8- Are ADHD stimulant drugs absolutely necessary?
- 9- How do I explain my diagnosis of adult ADHD to friends and family?



Parenting Skills - Group News

We have referred a number of times regarding the Parenting skills Courses that the ADHD Family Support Group is organising, as supported by the NGO Committee Fund. By means of this article we aim to give a brief resume of what happened in this sphere of the workings of the Group.

In October 2008, the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Family Support Group (Support Group) organised a course called “Train the Trainers: The Parent Factor in ADHD”. The course was supported and funded by the NGO Committee – Ministry of Social Policy. For this purpose contact was made with Barnardo’s Charity UK and two people were commissioned to come over to Malta and deliver the course. The aim was to have human resources trained to address the needs of families who have children with ADHD and who would require specific training after diagnosis. The course was run over two days by said professionals.

As part of the project the Support Group bound itself to organise Parenting Skills Courses. Since then, the Support Group has already offered two courses for parents having children with ADHD aged between six and fourteen. The parents were grouped according to their child’s age. This, as needs and difficulties vary depending on the child’s age. The Support Group is committed to organise further courses as the need arises, including courses aimed specifically for English speaking families.

The rationale behind these types of courses is that Parents of children with ADHD need specific training and more specific skills in attempting to understand better and adapt to their children. And it is with this in mind that these specific courses for Parents of children with ADHD were developed. The specificity of the skills also meant that the majority of parenting skills programmes do not necessarily address such specific skills, and so the need to develop such specific parenting skills programmes for parents of children with ADHD.

The course programme covered in the Parenting Skills Courses aims:

- To increase parents’ knowledge of ADHD, its causes, signs and symptoms and possible ways of dealing with such behaviour;
- To give the parents an insight into how it feels to be a child with ADHD;
- To give parents ideas on how to promote a more positive relationship with their child;
- To educate parents on strategies for effective behaviour management.

In order to achieve this, the course is run over nine consecutive weeks with a two hour session per week. The maximum number of participants is normally limited to ten as this allows for better interaction between the participants.

The sessions address the following topics:

1. A pre-group;
2. Providing relevant information on ADHD;
3. Identifying the different tasks in being a parent;
4. Identifying different parenting styles;

5. The importance of good communication;
6. The importance of feelings;
7. The education system;
8. Different ways of seeking attention;
9. Conclusion.

Based on this the parenting skills course aims to empower parents by giving them the information about their child's disorder and about managing the core symptoms which their child will always display, despite any intervention. Together with this, the programme explores how parenting behaviours, styles and interactions can have a positive impact on behaviours which are not core to the disorder.

A very positive aspect of the course experience is that parents find the space to share their experiences and strategies amongst the attendees. This provides for further enhancement to all the group members. Feedback provided from parents who have attended the course has been very positive. Simple strategies and basic knowledge shared in the course, helps parents to deal with their child's behaviour in a more efficient and practical way.

The Support Group would like to encourage those who have children diagnosed with ADHD to contact the group in order to be able to join one of these courses as surely it would be beneficial for all the family. Contact can be made through group's website www.adhdmalta.org and through the group's email– info@adhdmalta.org

Suggestions to Start the School Year Right

Steps to a calmer, more organised, more productive school year for your child with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

- Step One** - Talk with your child, and accentuate the positive.
- Step Two** - Ask your child about his friends.
- Step Three** - Help your ADHD child learn to appreciate the teacher.
- Step Four** - Meet with the teacher.
- Step Five** - Talk with your child's doctor.
- Step Six** - Talk with other parents.
- Step Seven** - Talk with your family.
- Step Eight** - Revisit past successes — ask yourself tough questions.

LIBRARY CORNER

By - Marlene Chetcuti Ganado



Dear members of the ADHD Support Group,

Having your kids around for the long summer months will no doubt have somewhat caused more stress both on the parents, as well as on the children themselves. All children, most especially those with ADHD, are inclined to get more stressed out during this time of the year, since their daily routine is upset, and the long holidays can, in fact, become quite boring after some time, even for the kids themselves.

With this in mind, I thought of taking the opportunity to introduce to you some books which are suitable for children to read. In fact, a good way to help children to pass away the time, is to encourage them to read. So this time I have chosen some books which are very child friendly and I'm sure your children will enjoy reading themselves, or, if they are too young, they can be read to by the parents or an older sibling.

Dr. Adolph Moser has written a set of books for children, some of which we have in our library. - "Don't Pop Your Cork on Mondays!"
- "Don't Tell a Whopper on Fridays"
- "Don't Be a Menace on Sunday"

These books are written in simple text, easy to read and understand, and very cleverly illustrated. They deal with everyday problems that a child encounters, which can cause so much trouble for the ADHD child and his family. The books show (in very simple language), how these problems can be tackled in order that the child can help himself to keep out of trouble. Problems like stress, truth-control, and violence are approached in a practical way.

These books are not only informative, entertaining, witty and easy to read and understand for the children themselves, but parents, as well as teachers and counsellors, will recognize these books as a valuable tool for guiding children in positive ways of reasoning.

Besides this set of books, we have, of course, a number of other child friendly books written by various authors. These can be read by the child himself, and he/she can understand better what their condition of ADHD is all about, how to cope with it, and that he/she is not the only odd one out.

By reading through the books the child learns of practical ways how to deal with their condition, and that they, too, can get on in life, and reach their goals.

Hope to meet you all at the next meeting in September. This first meeting of the year should be interesting, as it gears us back to a new scholastic year.

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.