

14_ADHD

Welcome to the Inclusive Education course.

This module deals with inclusive education for students with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Teaching children with this condition can be a real challenge.

This tutorial consists of 3 parts:

an introduction

the main symptoms of ADHD,

and typical situations that can often occur during lessons and ways of coping with them at school.

Let us start with the introduction

What exactly is ADHD?

ADHD is the most prevalent behavioral disorder among children and adolescents, especially among school-age students.

It is a persistent and chronic pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning at school, at home, and in the community.

Often at school, teachers or parents have the following false opinions about ADHD:

The first false opinion is that ADHD does not exist.

ADHD is a real medical condition. Research shows that ADHD is hereditary.

Moreover, studies show differences in brain development between children with ADHD and children who don't have it.

The second false opinion is that ADHD is a problem of laziness.

ADHD isn't a problem of motivation. Telling people with ADHD to "just focus" or "try better" is like asking someone who's nearsighted to just see farther.

The reason they struggle with attention has nothing to do with attitude.

The third false opinion is that all children with ADHD are hyperactive.

The stereotype of kids with ADHD is that they can't stop moving.

But not all kids with ADHD have hyperactivity as a symptom.

One of the ADHD subtypes is that with a predominance of inattention.

It is more common in girls and often goes untreated because such a child is "polite" and does not disturb the environment.

The label "capable but lazy" is often synonymous with students with ADHD.

The fourth false opinion is that ADHD is the scientific name for naughtiness and that ADHD is the result of poor parenting.

ADHD is caused by neurodevelopmental differences in the brain, not by inappropriate parenting.

But if adults do not support the child with ADHD, or punish the child for symptoms,

then it can interfere with the functioning of a child and form a vicious circle: punishing for ADHD symptoms leads to weakening self-esteem, and finally to the secondary intensification of disordered behaviors.

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What are the main symptoms of ADHD?

ADHD has two broad symptom clusters.

The first is inattention, which includes behaviors such as being easily disorganized, lost, and forgetful.

The second is hyperactivity and impulsivity, which means behaviors like reacting without reflection, having difficulty sitting still, or having difficulty waiting for a turn.

The student with concentration difficulties often fails to give close attention to details, makes careless mistakes, has trouble holding attention to tasks or play activities, does not seem to listen when spoken to directly, does not follow through on instruction, fails to finish schoolwork, has difficulties organizing tasks and activities, avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period and loses things necessary for tasks and activities.

To sum up, the student with inattention symptoms is easily distracted and forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactive and impulsive students are often physically restless, fidget with or tap hands or feet, or squirm in their seat, leave their seat in situations when teacher expects remaining seated; runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate; is unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly; is "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor"; talks excessively; blurts out an answer before a question is completed; has trouble waiting for a turn. Such sudden and thoughtless behaviors frequently interrupt others.

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The symptoms of ADHD pose a great educational challenge.

The method of teaching must be adapted to the student's abilities.

Otherwise, children may manifest serious additional educational problems, and even disrupt the lessons of the whole class.

Therefore in inclusive education, it is important to support them to learn, play, contribute and participate in all social aspects of life at school.

We will now describe four areas of functioning, in which it is crucial to assist students with ADHD:

support focus,
support proper behaviors,
support social interactions among all students in class,
and support positive self-image of students.

When inattention is the main symptom, it is important to avoid the distraction of the student with ADHD.

There are many ways of supporting a child's focus.

Firstly, it is necessary to limit the number of stimuli in the classroom.

The range of distractors should be attuned to the students' ability to process information from the environment.

If the student is easily distracted by peers' activities, it can be helpful to choose the right place in the classroom: away from the window, close to the teacher (at the first or nearby desk), and with a calm student.

Providing short breaks between tasks can also be very helpful to stay focused.

However, a student with ADHD takes boredom very badly.

Because of that, the most effective method of support attention is to use all kinds of instruments to interest the child with the educational material.

These may include:

- using interactive teaching methods,
- involving a student in lesson presentation;
- telling a joke at the end of a lesson,
- using various tools like audiobooks, computer programs, or phone applications (e.g. ClassDojo).

The teacher can also ask the student to plan the following activities can develop the ability to pay attention to task organizing.

The teacher can ask: What are you going to do now?

Perhaps in the future, the same child will ask the question in mind: What should I do?

Teachers should find out what are the so-called Islands of Competence.

These are the areas of the child's functioning, which are a source of personal satisfaction

Examples are:

- Using the child's area of interest in reading exercises
- Preparation of presentations about interesting topics
- Overview of hip-hop songs to learn foreign language
- Carrying out a physical education warm-up

How to support focus and regaining the ability to concentrate?

The teacher can focus the already distracted attention of the student by
frequent recalling
pointing
short comments
encouraging with a private signal
providing something tactile and quiet to support focus

How to support behaviors?

The teacher can
develop a system of rules
target behaviors
and reward and verbal praise

Students with ADHD require clear and consistent rules, precise time management, clear formulation of expectations they have to meet, and known and expected consequences in correcting their behavior.

The teacher can ignore impulsive and hyperactive behavior that does not disrupt teaching [ignoring minor inappropriate behavior];
anticipate and prevent the possibility of impulsive and hyperactive behavior occurring
and frequent recall the rules system in place, especially when undesirable behavior occurs.

Target behaviors are the appropriate concrete behaviors the teacher wants the student to practice.

They are listed in a simple and positive way.

For example, rather than "No running in the halls" the teacher might simply use "Walk" as a target behavior.

The behaviors will vary depending on the student's abilities and expectations.

Some students may need a system set up for one behavior, while others may have a checklist of things they are working on throughout the day.

It is important that the target behavior is clearly established.

It is disadvantageous to reward the child's random behavior.

The following list includes some examples of target behaviors.

Turn work in on time;

Complete work;

Raise your hand;

Follow directions.

The teacher should try to always provide a reward for a student with ADHD.

This should be:

an attractive reward to the student

a feasible to realized reward for the teacher

the rewards system should applied to the entire class

the reward should adjusted to the individual student

the reward is given when the target behavior occurs

What also can be a reward?

Any small awards in the area of freedom from learning; granting the privilege for a short time; small material rewards.

Verbal praise is very simple and specific praise

praise delivered as soon as possible or even while the expected behavior is ongoing

"You finished your whole task, great job."

"You waited for your turn, great!"

"I like the way you listen to others"

description of the behavior and name of the feature:

"Books on the bench - this is called preparation!"

"You wrote down the topic - that's called accuracy!"

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The teacher should support social interactions and class integration

The teacher can:

- create a set of rules with students that will govern everyday life in the classroom
- discuss and establish the rights of the students' team, rules regarding respect and acceptance in everyday contacts, and the range of tolerance towards different behaviors
- develop mutual understanding and trust
- establish group rules that regulate conflict situations
- organize group classes, aimed at getting to know each other among children, communicating, and creating opportunities for positive relationships
- organize class meetings with established rules aimed at considering problems currently occurring in the class
- provide support to students who cannot cope with various school situations

The teacher can strengthen the position of a student with ADHD in a class team

- create opportunities for students with ADHD in the role of a classroom expert (alternating with other students)
- assign special responsibilities to the student in presence of peer group
- create situations when children can accumulate positive social experiences - prevention for the students with ADHD
- hold a group meeting about how peers can support the student with ADHD
- and discuss possible causes of improper behavior and ideas for supporting students with ADHD while the student with ADHD gives suggestions for peer actions that could help correct improper behavior.

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How to support positive self-image?

The teacher engages in:

- complimenting positive behavior and schoolwork (positive feedback from peers and teachers)

- giving opportunity to act in a leadership role (building confidence as experts, allowing their peers to see the child with ADHD as successful)
- providing regular opportunities for students with ADHD to demonstrate and utilize strengths and talents

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In summary

Creating an educational environment friendly to students with ADHD can be guaranteed if their teacher

- understands their psychosocial situation at school,
- is aware of the need to support them,
- is open and empathetic,
- and can perceive and appreciate the achievements, abilities, and talents of the students.

It is vital for setting norms and standards, to allow children for social and educational functioning in school environment, while at the same time respecting safety regulations for the whole class.

In practice that means matching the educational methods and forms of teaching to the actual abilities of the students with ADHD and realizing their full potential.