

COPING WITH AN ADHD CHILD WITH CONDUCT DISORDER IN AN ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

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ADHD, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder, has often been defined as a condition of inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity. Conduct disorder, which often accompanies ADHD, is defined as “a disorder characterized by overt, aggressive, disruptive behaviour or covert antisocial acts such as stealing, lying, and fire setting.” (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2003, p.226). Children with ADHD have difficulty in school where teachers demand their attention and a great degree of self-control. However, with appropriate learning strategies presented by a knowledgeable educator, the ADHD child can succeed in school.

A CASE STUDY

Jacob came into class in September like a whirlwind: bright, full of energy, and constantly on the move. Within the month of September, Jacob had accumulated 10 major incident/behaviour reports written by various teachers regarding his defiant behaviour. Observable negative characteristics were:

1. Disruptive behaviour to the point where the teacher could not teach – yelling, crying, throwing objects, kicking furniture.
2. Compulsive lying and blaming others for his behaviour.
3. Refusing to complete assigned work – destroying pencils and assignment.
4. Rude, defiant, and aggressive behaviour towards students and teachers – kicking, biting, chocking.
5. Tantrums when he could not get his own way.
6. Verbally insulting others and teachers.

Strategies were used to cope with Jacob’s negative behaviour, but we found that they did not always work. We used:

1. Time-Out Chair in classroom.
2. Isolation outside the classroom.
4. Taking away privileges.
5. Behaviour modification – stickers on a chart to track good behaviour.

By the end of October, a professional psychologist diagnosed Jacob as ADHD and suggested strategies to assist us in coping with Jacob in the classroom. Some strategies worked while others were doomed to the recycle bin. Feeling unprepared for the task at hand, I decided to do some research for myself and found other strategies that helped.

STRATEGIES AND SUGGESTIONS FROM RESEARCHERS

Increasing student time on task:

1. Promote and reward time on-task rather than time off-task. Rewarding the behaviour you want is better than rewarding the behaviours you do not want.
2. Provide a minute timer for the student to use when working. The student tries to complete work before the timer buzzes. Reward small accomplishments.

3. Large assignments overwhelm the ADHD child. Break work into smaller segments and allow frequent breaks to move around. Never take away recess and gym periods where they have opportunity to run and play. They need this outlet.
4. Present most demanding tasks in the morning rather than afternoon when the child is tired.
5. Check on the child as much as possible when working with other students.
6. Use physical touch and eye contact in keeping the child's attention on tasks.

Improving social skills:

1. Since ADHD children interact and play better with children younger than themselves, allow the child to have a buddy from a lower grade.
2. Use cooperative small groups for learning and tasks. This encourages sharing, cooperation and responsibility.
3. Make a behaviour plan for success and review it. Allow the child to self-monitor his/her behaviour and compare results to yours.
4. Do not discipline the child in front of the class. This will only increase negative behaviour. It is suggested that non-compliant behaviour be always disciplined but not by withholding recess or gym periods.

Increasing compliance in classroom:

1. Provide a safe environment – love, respect, caring, do not belittle in front of peers. Foster a good relationship with the child by praying with and listening to the child.
2. Provide a structured and predictable classroom – ADHD children do not handle changes well.
3. Help the child find his areas of strength so that he can build self-esteem.
4. It is important to pair verbal praise with a reward.
5. Instead of confronting your student continually on activities/behaviours that are inappropriate, point out the alternative choices that are available.
6. Use behaviour modification techniques where the child can monitor his behaviour and see improvements.

The ADHD child has as much right to this kind of education as the regular child. Educators must encourage the ADHD child, help him to recognize his strengths and develop them in a safe, loving, and nurturing environment.

Resources:

- www.ADDinSCHOOL.com
- www.theteachersguide.com/ADDBriefingPaper.html
- www.atozteacherstuff.com/Tips/Classroom_Management/ADHD/index.shtml
- www.newideas.net/treatment.htm
- Hallahan, D.P. & Kauffman, J.M (2000). *Exceptional Learners*, (9th Ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.