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Fun Ways to Increase Children's Attention Span

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Title: Fun Ways to Increase Children's Attention Span

Problem researched: An often overlooked method to increase a child's attention span is to provide fun activities that allow the child to focus for extended amounts of time. This presentation provides examples of several useful activities.

Overview of Presentation:

One of the foremost problems facing children, teachers and parents over the last decade has been the increasing number of children being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. This problem has become widespread throughout society. Many parents and teachers are well acquainted with the symptoms that are associated with this disorder. Impulsive behavior, distractibility, hyperactivity, and short attention span are among the notable characteristics of the problem; depending on if it is the hyperactive or non-hyperactive form. Attention problems are the primary concern associated with this disorder.

Medication, behavior modification and other approaches have been the usual methods suggested to deal with this problem. An often overlooked resource that could be used is to provide the child with activities which will increase his/her attention span without the use of these other interventions. This presentation will provide examples/handouts of fun activities that are useful in helping to increase the child's attention span.

Fun Ways to Increase Children's Attention Span



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Fun Activities to Increase Children's Attention Span

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One of the foremost problems facing children and parents over the last decade is the increasing number of children being diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. This problem has become widespread throughout society. Many parents are well acquainted with the symptoms that are associated with this disorder. Impulsive behavior, distractibility, hyperactivity, and short attention span are among the notable characteristics of the problem; depending on if it is the hyperactive or non-hyperactive form. Attention problems are the primary concern associated with this disorder. Medication and other approaches have been the usual methods suggested to deal with this problem. An often overlooked resource is to provide your child with activities that will increase his/her attention span without the use of these other interventions. There are three methods which can easily be used by the home school parent to extend and improve their child's attention span.

The first approach that can be used to increase your child's attention span is to get the child involved in a high interest project such as creative arts or expressive arts. You could get the child involved in drawing, painting or sketching. This requires them to sit and focus for an extended time as they work on these activities. Additional options could include cross-stitch, latch-hook and sculpting. For those who are interested, putting together model cars or airplanes might be a fun activity. Other items could include woodworking, stringing beads or other similar activities.

The important aspect of these activities is to first of all gain the child's interest. An additional result is to extend the child's attention span as they maintain an interest in working with

these activities. This also provides the opportunity for parents to socialize with their child and to gain a further understanding of the child's interest.

The next approach that can be used to increase your child's attention span is to have the child listen to a recorded story and tell the story to you when they have finished listening to it. You can do this in a variety of ways depending on age and developmental level. If your child is older find a book they are interested in and get the book on audiotape. There are a great many audio books available at your local bookstore or online. Have your child sit or lie down with their eyes closed and quietly listen to the story. After each chapter have them retell the story to you. With young school age children you can personally record appropriate stories for the child to listen to. You record the story and follow the same procedure. Have them sit or lie quietly with their eyes closed. When they are finished have them tell you about the story. Gradually choose longer and longer stories to expand the amount of time they must focus. With preschool aged children; you can record nursery rhymes, or very short stories. Follow the same procedure and gradually make the stories longer.

Some considerations you need to remember in using this activity. When you first begin this activity make sure you have a quiet spot for the child to listen to the story. Also make sure the area is free from distractions. Be sure that they are not around the TV, stereo, or in a high traffic area of the house. Make a point to monitor this frequently when you begin using the activity. This is to make sure the child stays focused on the activity. Once they get into the routine it will become easier. An additional benefit of this approach is to give the parent and child the opportunity to discuss the story. This not only increases socialization, but it may give the parent an additional idea about the child's interests. If you see that the child likes a specific type of story; you can then find other stories of a similar style.

The third approach is to provide the child with a pet. Depending on factors such as space availability, and the child's preference as to the type of pet, this approach also has benefits in focusing the child's attention. For example, if you have the space, a dog, cat, or ferret could be a good companion for the child. When you first get the pet, have the child brush the animal for an extended time. This will have a soothing effect on the child as well as the pet. Once the child gets

into the routine of brushing and interacting with the pet on a daily basis this will become a part of their routine and they will do this consistently, and at the same time will help the child concentrate for an extended time. If the neighbors notice that you have a bald cat wandering the neighborhood you might want to make sure that your child isn't going overboard with the brushing. For those who have non-traditional interests or less space; hamsters, gerbils, mice, turtles, lizards, iguanas, and snakes all are possible pets. Although, we as adults may view this group of pets as being a little suspect (how many of us really want a snake in our house?) kids tend to enjoy these little critters. This may involve the child watching the pet play or move in some way. Regardless, it will help focus their attention. This would also provide an opportunity for the parent and child to socialize as they discuss the pet and its needs. They will delight in explaining that this is the hamster's way of playing, or that it is not such a terrible thing to have that snake in the house.

Having a pet is an especially fun way to help expand the child's attention span and in the process help encourage the child to take responsibility for caring for the animal. It also provides the child with a fun companion and the opportunity to discuss with Mom, Dad and grandparents about the benefits of owning the particular pet.

Although, Attention Deficit Disorder has been a major problem among children the last few years; there has been a tremendous amount of information available as to the causes and symptoms of the problem. However, there has been very little information available to parents as to how they can address the primary characteristic of ADD/ADHD, and that is the child's inattention. Three easy methods that can be used by just about any parent is to use recorded stories, art projects and the family pet as a method to improve the child's attention span. These activities are not only fun, but they also serve to stimulate social interaction between parent and child.

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Conclusion & Recommendations:

In order to make this information more readily available submit information on this topic for publication:

Paxton, J. *Fun Activities to Increase Attention Span*. Accepted for publication by Arizona Parenting, 2007/2008.

Paxton, J. *Three Fun Activities to Increase Your Child's Attention Span*. Home Educator Family Times. Sept/Oct. 2006.

Paxton, J. *Fun Ways to Increase Your Child's Attention Span*. Garden & Hearth Magazine. August 2006.