Behavioral Classroom Management in Treating Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

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Research Question

What is the optimal strategy for treating ADHD in children?

Abstract

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in children is becoming increasingly treated with medication as parents and teachers struggle to cope with the afflicted behaviors. These figures often lack a fundamental understanding of the ailment, causing tension between the two parties as there is a conflict of interest. In experiencing these manners first-hand at Sage Day School in Mahwah, as well as reading through literature based in the subject, a natural conclusion can be drawn. While medication has proven to be effective short term, the optimal strategy for dealing with issues associated with ADHD is behavioral management, as it seeks to mitigate habits at the core. Instead of attempting to alter brain chemistry and numb students to their innate inclinations, there are a myriad of teachers who are taking a vastly superior approach looking towards accommodation. Tools such as occupational therapy where students experience deep sensory stimulation to relieve them of restlessness and target behavior lists allow these children to develop self-monitoring skills in which they essentially help themselves. Similarly, intense structure that does not allow time for distractions or hyperactivity provide results akin to other non-medicinal methods.

Research Site

Sage Day School in Mahwah, New Jersey is a private learning institution largely dedicated to providing a quality education for middle school students that cannot regularly attend public schools.

Occupational Therapy

- **‘Bouncybands’** - Rubber bands attached to the front legs of a desk.
- Allows students to bounce their feet and release pent-up energy during instruction.
- Typically involves earning points towards an incentive.

- **Stability Balls**
- Lightweight rubber balls typical of yoga studios and gyms.
- Allows students to establish a balance between strict rule following and independence.

- **Target Behaviors**
- Target behaviors are those that teachers or therapists focus their attention on affecting.
- Professionals may seek to increase or decrease these target behaviors.
- Competing assignments without asking irrelevant questions.
- Allowing students to display a more responsible and focused work ethic.
- Target behaviors and distractions they gave way to.

- **Self-Monitoring**
- The most common way to influence these behaviors is through the use of a reward system.
- Typically involves earning points towards an incentive.
- Professors may seek to increase or decrease their points frequency.

- **Self-monitoring**
- Self-monitoring is the capacity to take responsibility for prioritizing work and staying on task.
- Teaching students how to self-regulate provides them with the tools to become more independent in their futures.
- In contrast to the previous strategy, self-monitoring puts the management in the hands of the student.
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- **Additional Management Strategies**
- Words of affirmation to positively reinforce desired behaviors.
- Subtle classroom competition to foster intrinsic motivation.
- Structured environments provide routine which allows students to establish a balance between strict rule following and independence.

Discussion

- Behavioral classroom management is an effective tool in combating the symptoms of ADHD when introduced properly in conjunction with an educated support system.

- In the future there will likely be more emphasis placed on non-medicinal treatment of ADHD and similar behavioral disorders.

- Behavioral management is not effective alone; alternative strategies like parental intervention need to be implemented as well.