

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-medical 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.



- Maximum class size of seven students.
- Weekly access to therapeutic sessions with licensed professionals.
- Documented 'Individualized Education Programs'

Occupational Therapy

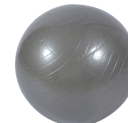


Weighted Vests

- Articles of clothing with additional mass sewn into them.
- Provide constant stimulation to the central nervous system.
- Relax the body's urge for consistent arousal.

'Bouncybands'

- Rubber bands attached to the front legs of a desk.
- Allows students to bounce their feet and release pent up energy during instruction.
- Were observed to alleviate students' urge to stand and walk during class.



Stability Balls

- Lightweight rubber balls typical of yoga studios and gyms.
- Provide an increased range of motion while sitting.
- Theoretically improve task focus by allowing the release of energy.
- Recommended by teachers, though literature shows inconclusive results.

Target Behaviors

- Target behaviors are those that teachers or therapists focus their attention on affecting.
 - Professionals may seek to increase or decrease their frequency.
 - Completing assignments without asking irrelevant questions.
 - Interrupting classmates when having their turn to talk.
- The most common way to influence these behaviors is through the use of a reward system.
 - Typically involves earning points towards an incentive.
 - Candy
 - Small Toy
 - Failure to earn enough points or a decline in performance can lead to the removal of positive stimuli.
 - Allows teachers to track individual progress and recognize incremental improvements that may otherwise be overlooked.
 - Students at Sage Day had target behaviors listed in their IEPs that were regularly revised by their therapists to fit their current standards.

Age (year)	Target behavior	Meal	Behavioral level	Other diagnoses	Medication
2 to 4½	Self-enjoy head banging; destruction (throwing objects)	"Please" sign	Developmental delay severe to profound?	Visual impairment; autism	None
3 to 5	Self-enjoy head banging; eye pressing; intrusions	Two-word phrase "want ___"	Moderate to severe; normal communication	Cerebral palsy; epilepsy	Diphenhydramine ¹
2 to 2½	Distraction (throwing objects); non-compliance	"Think" sign	Developmental delay moderate to severe?	Severe language delay	None
3 to 5	Self-enjoy head banging; hand hitting; destruction (throwing objects); non-compliance	"Think" sign	Developmental delay severe to profound?	Visual impairment	None

This is an example of a sheet tracking target behaviors that instructors may use.

Additional Management Strategies

- Certain methods of management currently being employed at Sage Day School have not been extensively explored by the literature
 - 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 combatting 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-medical treatment of ADHD and similar behavioral disorders

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

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.
- Students are often given checklists to refer to throughout the day allowing them to keep track of their own progress.
- Research suggests that students using self-monitoring strategies complete their work faster and more efficiently.
 - This is due, in part, to an active awareness of destructive behaviors and distractions they gave way to.

Sample Daily Report Card

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Stayed in my area	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___
Hands to self	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___
Used kind words	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___
Complied with teacher directives	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___	Yes ___ No ___

Comments:
