

Hyperactivity



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What is hyperactivity?

It is a state of excessively stimulated activity where the child is in a constant state of 'over stimulation' and their whole system seems to be permanently 'on the go'.

There are many suggested causes that include parental pre-birth smoking, some food additives and environmental factors such as lead levels in the air. There seems to be a link in some cases between hyperactivity and families with a history of 'allergies', asthma, or hay fever.

Living with hyperactivity.

In some cases simple adjustments in diet can significantly limit the effect.

An individual who is hyperactive will appear to be in a constant state of over excitement, be on the go the whole time, be restless, unsettled, wanting to move about, and run instead of walk.

This inability to keep or sit still can have consequences for the child's schooling and can be especially wearing for all adults who are in contact with them. In severe cases the state continues until the child is tired out by its own activity, yet still unable to relax. Any extra excitement can quickly trigger the hyperactive state.

The hyperactive child tends to need less sleep than others, the late nights and early mornings create further stress on the tired adults.

Practical tips

You need to create a safe and orderly environment within your regular meetings with a safe and supervised 'time out' spot, to enable the individual space and time to calm down when you need to remove them from an escalating situation.

Ensure that during meetings, outings or camps you do not inadvertently provide any triggers in the form of food or drink!

Many individuals who are hyperactive display extreme attention seeking behaviour, such as defacing or destroying another person's possessions. Although these need to be recognized as undesirable removing attention rather than prolonging has proved to be effective in the long term.

Some situations such as large crowds or noisy places, can provoke an unpredictable reaction either creating more excitement or frightening the individual into a subdued inward state.

What else do I need to know?

Particular attention needs to be paid to safety wherever you are. Although an individual who is hyperactive may understand simple precautions such as road safety rules, they may not be able to carry them out.

You will need to ensure that the safety aspects of your activities have been examined. How easy is it for example for an individual to run out of the door and onto the road? Or for one young person to push another into a campfire?

Patience is a key word, therefore it is important to keep calm.

Further Information

Discuss with the individual and/or their parents the extent to which help is needed and learn any practical tips they have to offer, including finding out if there are any known triggers.

Some young people may be diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD or ADD). This is a particular condition needing careful, expert diagnosis and you will need to be aware if this diagnosis has been made. Just

because someone is over or hyperactive does not mean that they have ADHD. You will need to be careful of mixing up ADHD and general over/hyperactivity, although there are some techniques and ways of working that can be of help in both cases. You may also want to see if some simple behaviour management ideas can improve the situation rather than rushing for such a diagnosis.

See also:

FS322100 Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD or ADD)

FS185090 Managing Behaviour

Support Organizations

The Hyperactive Children's Support Group is a registered charity, which has been successfully helping ADHD/Hyperactive children and their families for nearly 30 years.

<http://www.hacsg.org.uk/>