STOWELL
Learning Center

Understanding and Helping Kids Who Don't Pay Attention

Attention challenges will affect learning.

Learning challenges will stress attention.

Good attention and efficient learning depend upon a solid foundation of underlying learning skills. Attention challenges in the classroom may be due to an attention deficit or may be a symptom or outcome of weak underlying skills.

Problems (in spite of increased motivation):

1. Missing something
2. Confusion
3. Frustration
4. Stress due to realizing they are behind

Key Understandings about Attention Challenges

1. Not a motivation problem - Loss of attention is not intentional
2. Lack of attention awareness and control
3. Processing problems will stress attention

Strategies

1. Prime for success - Increase oxygen to the brain by increasing blood flow
2. Deep breathing combined with "movement minute" prior to the task
3. Water *(especially good for energy, test taking, productivity)*
4. "De-stress" the task: think about how it is presented, learn how to visualize and think about the instructions
5. Getting Started Questions/Cues – Make a list of the first three things that the student needs to do to get started (i.e. 1. What materials do I need? 2. Did I put my name on my paper? 3. Where is the first set of directions?).
6. Thought Box: Have the student visualize a special box where he will put his thoughts/ideas/things he wants to say when it is not the right time to share them. This validates that what the student is thinking is valuable and isn't being thrown away or forgotten, but that this is not what he needs to be focusing on right now.

7. PRACTICE using the thought box (best done one-to-one) and then devise a cue between the teacher and student that will be used to help the student begin using the thought box in class. Specify a time during the day (and eventually perhaps just once a week) when the student can share something with the teacher out of his thought box.

Attention Activities

Five-Count Breath

Student inhales slowly through the nose and counts five counts on fingers. Without holding breath, student begins to exhale slowly through the mouth in five counts as he puts his fingers back down.

- Repeat 3 times.

Deep breathing immediately forces oxygen into the brain which improves thinking and encourages muscles to relax as they are flooded with oxygen rich blood. This supports clearer thinking and learning

Cook's Hook-ups *(diffuses stress, establishes positive orientation and focus)*

1. Cross legs at ankles. Cross arms over chest. Sit this way for one minute, eyes closed, breathing deeply.

2. Uncross legs, and put finger tips together, breathing deeply for another minute

Cross Crawls *(activates the brain for reading, writing, and spelling; very helpful when student is getting disoriented or flustered and making many errors; helps fluency)*

Touch hand to opposite knee; alternating moving one arm and opposite leg.

Arm Swings Loosely swing arms from side to side across hips. Breathe in as arms swing left and right Breathe out on next left-right cycle. Repeat 3-5 times.

Drink water *(especially good for energy, test taking, productivity)*