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Attention Disorders

Every child has their moments but when there is persistent behavior such as the inability to focus, unable to concentrate, lack of attention, irresistible impulse or hyperactivity, then your child may have an attention deficit disorder. In the attention realm, it may be difficult to focus on one particular task, unless it is something they really enjoy. Homework may be a real challenge, even just getting it into the school bag. These are usually bright kids but organizing and completing tasks can be too overwhelming to even start. Their impulse may be to act or say something inappropriate before thinking. They have a very difficult time grasping consequences and waiting their turn. Activity wise, they are on the go and want to touch everything and anything. This is appropriate for a toddler but observation is more prevalent in elementary school. With a 4:1 ratio of males to females, ADD or ADHD is present in 3-5% of elementary and preschool age children.

Often children will present with something else such as an ear infection, visual problems, nutrition problem or even twitching. Often teachers may suggest an evaluation for attention disorders. Standard of care is medication which may or may not help take the edge off some of the behavior. It is usually a trial and error process since each child reacts so differently. It is hard to say which med might actually work. There are four main types: stimulant drugs which can be short or long acting, alpha agonists, antidepressants and non-stimulants. They all work on different neurotransmitters or receptors and their actions. Behavioral and educational intervention is usually part of the plan and can be very helpful if they are offering real tools for connecting with the child.

It is crucial to rule out some of the more common causes of attention disorders. Vision or hearing problems are at the top of the list. If the child cannot or hear or see properly, the coping style may look like a behavioral disorder. Learning disabilities can also cause behavioral changes. A social change, abuse or a traumatic experience can also manifest in this way. As unique as we are, some children manifest stress physically, others behaviorally. There is a seizure disorder that looks like inattentiveness. Thyroid dysfunction or a nutrition deficiency can cause both hyperactivity or inattentiveness. Medications that a child may be on for another condition can cause side effects that can include hyperactivity or such. There are also a number of neurological disorders or ways of irritating the nerves that can also cause behavioral issues such as food intolerances.

Finding the underlying cause can go a long way in finding answers for children who may have trouble with attention, impulsivity, or hyperactivity. Behavioral problems, I find, is often a sign of not feeling well but little bodies may still be learning how to express what their bodies are experiencing. It is even more challenging to express when they have always felt unwell. It is not unusual for parents or kids to not realize that there is pain until I do a physical exam such as feeling their back or knees, doing an exam on their belly. One such child had a smoldering infection in her belly. We were able to resolve many behavior issues within month by focusing on the cause. Another child in my practice was still responding to a shock to his little system years before. Homeopathy did wonders for this child. Naturopathic medicine is very powerful when it comes to attention deficit disorders in both adults and children. It offers a healthy, natural way to heal that lasts.