

Factsheet 112

Over-excitabilities

Over-excitabilities tend to be particularly evident in individuals who are highly or profoundly gifted although many children can show traits and characteristics associated with over-excitability. It is well known that some overexcitability behaviours can easily be misinterpreted as part of a diagnostic syndrome, e.g. a child who is physically overexcited could easily lead to the misdiagnosis of ADD/ADHD (Hartnett, Nelson & Rinn, 2004). A child's excitement about new information and eager curiosity can lead him to blurt out the answer in class or ask a question that seems completely irrelevant because he may be thinking of ways it may apply to other situations. Although a child may be jiggling, foot tapping, fidgeting or drumming while learning, this will not necessarily mean he is off task, lacking in concentration or not listening. These behaviours may disturb others but will not impair his own learning but often can lead to a misdiagnosis or a label of being a disruptive or badly behaved individual. If a child is bored in class due to the fact he already knows the material being taught he then may be off task and this can further reinforce the misdiagnosis of ADD/ADHD. Some children and young people focus better when their hands or mouths are busy and some teachers now recognise the benefits of using props in the classroom, e.g. squeeze balls placed on desks for the children to keep their hands busy and thus less distraction to others. Other ideas for keeping a child engaged is a smooth pebble to hold, a piece of satin ribbon, doodling. Remember being attentive does not always mean being immobile and forced immobility can interfere with attention in some cases especially the overexcitable child. Some children's intensity and strong willed behaviour can often lead to a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD). These traits can often be displayed in longer attention spans, better concentration and motivation in areas they are particularly interested in which can be obscure topics and subject areas, e.g. the planets, dinosaurs, the Greeks, numbers and trucks, trains and cars. Remember children who need to move constantly may be wiring a certain area of the brain, this is normal in some children. These children may need to be outside and run more than others.

<p>Physical</p> <p>Your child may...</p>	<p>Have lots of energy Need to move Love movement Love fast games Talk a lot Not be able to sit still Fiddle Constantly fidget</p>	<p>Encourage fast games or sports preferably outside to burn off excess energy; design an exercise plan; encourage walking/cycling to school. Encourage your child to help the teacher or a friend in class; run errands. Have a worry/fiddle object so long as it doesn't distract from the lesson or others. Talk with friends so long as they want to talk and it's not running up a huge phone bill!!</p>
<p>Senses</p> <p>Your child may...</p>	<p>Love to touch things Love food Love to eat playdoh/white tac Love music/hum/sing Love sunsets Love shopping Hate labels in clothes</p>	<p>Encourage a feely box and beautiful feeling clothes and/or accessories. Cook and shop together for your child's favourite foods but in moderation especially if not so healthy. Encourage listening to favourite music but again in moderation; find a space that is quiet and considers others needs; choose music to relax to and encourage quiet times. Enjoy looking at sunsets/bright lights but not when needing to rest or concentrate!! Shopping is ok in moderation, we do not always need to buy; window shopping can be fun too. Remove irritating labels from garments, ask for assistance if necessary.</p>

Factsheet 112

<p>Imagination</p> <p>Your child may...</p>	<p>Picture things vividly Have a great sense of humour Like to invent things Love fantasy Worry a lot Like to stretch the truth</p>	<p>Encourage the use of positive/productive imagination; when things become too intense encourage quite/relaxation time. Enjoy their quirky sense of humour but teach appropriateness, a time and a place. Encourage their inventiveness and let them make things/take things apart as often as possible, who knows what the future holds? Let them fantasise (as long as they know what is real) encourage extensive writing, artwork and/or computing in a variety of forms. Encourage children to share worries with someone safe or write them down in a safe place. Encourage positive thoughts and solutions wherever possible. Know the boundaries of half truths and lies; never hurt someone with lies.</p>
<p>Knowledge</p> <p>Your child may...</p>	<p>Be very curious Love to read Love learning Want everything to be fair Be able to concentrate for long periods Always want to be right</p>	<p>Encourage the use of positive curiosity; research topics of interest and use them in a variety of ways. Encourage reading and build this into the day, e.g. bedtimes, nevertheless don't neglect friendships or other areas of interest. Keep learning balanced and encourage a wide curriculum or subject area and encourage patience in areas that they are not so good at or subjects not so enjoyable. Remember life isn't always fair and sometimes we have to loose out to others but that doesn't stop us having opinions or doing our bit for a cause close to our hearts. Knowing when to take a break from something is also important so teach and role model this skill and encourage consideration to friends and what they're interests are. We all like to be right, but sometimes we get things wrong, or make mistakes; the important thing is to learn that it's ok to make mistakes and what to do for the next time.</p>
<p>Feelings</p> <p>Your child may...</p>	<p>Care a lot about other people Love animals Be very sensitive Try to be and do their best</p>	<p>Encourage children to be realistic about what they can physically do for others; try not to let them worry about things they cannot change or influence. Encourage caring for a pet if viable; encourage work with animal charities and clubs; encourage pet sitting and/or walking</p>

Factsheet 112

	<p>Be easily frustrated Be shy and nervous sometimes</p>	<p>a friend's dog etc. Be aware of your child's sensitivities and encourage responsibility for them. Some children are perfectionists so encourage and role model mistakes and their positive learning outcomes. When frustrated by mistakes/failure discuss solutions; keep a sense of humour and learn to laugh together and at each other!! Remember its ok to be shy; even the most confident are sometimes shy or nervous. Teach skills and strategies for overcoming and plan ahead for what might go wrong.</p>
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