



A WAY OF BEING WITH CHILDREN

Helping High-Energy Children

We all know that children are full of energy! Sometimes, we wonder where all that excitement, momentum, and enthusiasm comes from. But some children are on the more intense end of the energy spectrum and they can be tiring to interact with and sometimes frustrating to manage.

High Energy vs. Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

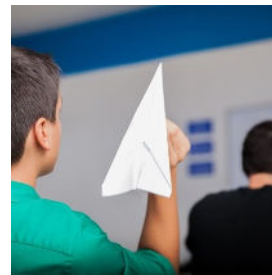
High-energy children operate at high (but age-appropriate) activity levels. They are still able to focus/concentrate on necessary tasks and can calm themselves down when they receive enough activity, although they may need an adult's help. Generally, their higher energy levels do not affect their ability to function normally in daily life.

ADHD is a chronic condition that involves inattention, distraction, hyperactivity, and impulsive behaviors. Children with ADHD have difficulty processing information and maintaining normal relationships with family and friends as well as coping with daily routines. Symptoms occur before 12 years old and last for at least 6 months.

Are You Living with a High-Energy Child?

Does your child consistently:

- Move around all the time?
- Have a hard time sitting still at the dinner table or waiting patiently for something?
- Have difficulty during long car trips?
- Move all over the bed while sleeping?
- Love sports that require a lot of movement?
- Move all over the place rather than standing in one spot during regular daily activities and tasks?



Why Pay Attention?

High-energy children may face issues because their disruptive behavior can result in learning difficulties (due to their inability to focus) and the fact that they can sometimes be labeled as 'difficult' or 'challenging'. This may result in lowered self-esteem. High-energy children can also encounter social problems because they struggle with the structure of group activities.

Why is Your Child High-Energy?

There may be many reasons why your child may demonstrate high-energy behavior:

- Stress
- Boredom
- Emotional problems
- Sensory processing
- Lack of exercise
- Lack of sleep
- Limited executive function



Strategies to Help High-Energy Children

- Acknowledge your child's temperament.
- Understand their activity level as simply part of their temperament.
- Recognize that some of the high-energy activity is out of your child's control.
- Allow time and space for their movement.
- Find opportunities for them to exercise physical movement.
- Use positive words to describe your child's behavior.
- Teach your child self-regulation skills.
- Use early intervention to mitigate escalating behaviors.
- Encourage children rather than punish them.
- Redirect your child to more appropriate activities.
- Set limits, when needed, to protect and empower your child.
- Learn to work together towards alternatives/solutions.
- Send messages that will help your child appreciate their uniqueness.



High-Energy Children in the Classroom

- **Brain Breaks:** Intersperse learning activities with periods of activity/movement gives children a break to expel energy. You can also introduce other media like videos and even stretching and breathing exercises.
- **Strategic Helping Jobs:** Assign helper jobs to students who find it challenging to stay still. Giving them some responsibility will allow them an energy release.
- **Selective Seating;** Place high-energy children where they have more space to move about or sit on their knees without disrupting others.
- **Visuals and Tactiles:** Create multi-sensory activities to keep students' attention or remind them of rules such as giving them a token to hold to remind them to raise their hand.
- **Fidget Control:** Remove the extra supplies/materials that tempt children to play instead of focus.
- **Pick Your Battles:** You can't correct everything. Address those things that truly matter to the classroom environment.
- **Model Behavior:** Children learn by seeing. The more you can demonstrate the skills you are teaching through your actions, the more children will learn and implement those tools too.
- **Buddy System:** Enlist a peer to provide helpful reminders as needed; sometimes this helps children feel as though it's a friend helping instead of a reprimand from the teacher.
- **Signals/Cues:** Together, create an agreed upon secret signal or cue that you will provide the student when improvements are needed.

Games/Activities for High Energy in Children

- Sports & Musical Instruments
- Martial Arts
- Nature Play
- Scavenger Hunt
- Balloon Volleyball
- Hallway Hopscotch
- Water-Bottle Bowling
- Dance Party
- Self-Control/Direction Games
e.g.: Simon Says



Get more resources at: www.centerforchildcounseling.org/awayofbeing