

January 2005

HELP WITH THE OVERACTIVE CHILD

Activity levels in children can vary greatly. Some children are very energetic with short attention spans. This can be frustrating for parents and teachers. Here are a few ideas to help calm things down.

1. Have a reasonable expectation. Some children are naturally exuberant, so set your goal to keep things under reasonable control. Don't try to force your child to be more quiet than they are able, which may make things worse in the long run.
2. Give an outlet for excess energy. Especially in the winter when kids are cooped up they can store up nervous energy that needs a physical outlet. Get them to use up some energy outside when possible, or schedule activities daily that will allow them an outlet.
3. Avoid over-stimulation. This includes limiting roughhousing and encouraging interactions that are calm and non-physical.
4. Don't let your child get fatigued. Being overtired makes people lose some of their self control. Put children to bed when they are tired, and help them organize themselves to fall asleep if necessary. This may mean singing to them, reading or just rocking together.
5. Keep a regular routine if possible, and keep voices down. Loud noises and yelling contribute to stress and increased activity levels.
6. Have a well thought out discipline plan and stick to it. Certain behaviors are intolerable (hitting, biting) and need immediate consequences such as a time out. Other times rely on a quiet but firm warning. Don't warn without following through with consequences.
7. When children are good, remember to let them know it. Reinforcing desired behavior is often more effective than punishment when they behave poorly.
8. Know that children often respond to stress in the family with acting out and increased activity levels. It's no surprise that they often pick the worst time to be out of control. When we understand that this is a natural way for children to deal with stress, it helps us to take a step back, calm ourselves down and help the whole family better adapt to stressful moments.
9. Remember, none of us are perfect, so when you feel yourself starting to boil over, take a step away, some deep breaths and then try to face the situation calmly. Escalating yelling and arguments makes things harder in the long run.
10. If you are having specific issues of behavior or hyperactivity with your child, please call us to discuss it. Sometimes a consultation in the

office can help to put things back on the right track, and rule out any medical conditions that can lead to hyperactivity.

ENJOY IN GOOD HEALTH!

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