ADHD & Frustration
Tolerance: Practical Interventions
William Allen, Ph.D.
CHEROKEE HEALTH SYSTEMS
6350 WEST A. J. HIGHWAY
TALBOTT, TN 37877
(865) 587-7337
BY THE TIME I THINK ABOUT WHAT
I’M GOING TO DO,
I’VE ALREADY DONE IT!

D. T. MENACE
A CHILD WITH ADHD MAY BE:

- INATTENTIVE
- IMPULSIVE
- HYPERACTIVE
ADHD

- Hyperactive
- Distractable
- Impulsive

- Energetic
- “Eagle Eyes”
- Quick to Decide
A CHILD WITH A SLEEP DISORDER MAY BE ...

- IRRITABLE
- INATTENTIVE
- FATIGUED
- HYPERACTIVE
A CHILD WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY MAY BE ...

- IRRITABLE
- INATTENTIVE
- FATIGUED
- HYPERACTIVE
A CHILD WITH EMOTIONAL STRESS MAY BE ...

• INATTENTIVE
• IMPULSIVE
• HYPERACTIVE
• DISTRACTIBLE
A CHILD WITH DEPRESSION MAY BE ...

- INATTENTIVE
- IRRITABLE
- HYPERACTIVE
- DISTRACTIBLE
A CHILD WITH HIGH ANXIETY MAY BE ...

• INATTENTIVE
• IMPULSIVE
• HYPERACTIVE
• DISTRACTIBLE
A CHILD LIVING WITH TRAUMA MAY BE ...

- INATTENTIVE
- IMPULSIVE
- HYPERACTIVE
- DISTRACTIBLE
A child with inconsistent discipline may be ... 

- Inattentive
- Impulsive
- Hyperactive
- Distractible
A child with a chaotic life style may be...

- Inattentive
- Impulsive
- Hyperactive
- Distractible
A child with a chaotic life style may be...

- Inattentive
- Impulsive
- Hyperactive
- Distractible
A CHILD WHO DOES NOT GET PRACTICE WITH FRUSTRATION MAY BE...

- INATTENTIVE
- IMPULSIVE
- HYPERACTIVE
- DISTRACTIBLE
ATTENDING SKILLS  \rightarrow  FRUSTRATION TOLERANCE  \rightarrow  SELF CONTROL  \rightarrow  ATTENDING SKILLS
The development of attending skills is undermined by:

- Reduced opportunity to practice frustration tolerance
- Lenient discipline that does not promote behavioral and emotional self-control.
Attending Skills, Frustration Tolerance, And Self-control May Develop With Intervention.

Firm, consistent discipline

- Quick response to alerting cues
- Balance of nurturance and limits
- Firm
- Consistent
"Brief goals" are developmentally appropriate doses of attention and frustration:

- At 5 or 6 years of age, 1 to 5 minutes more that the child initially tolerates
- At 15 years of age, 20 to 30 minutes more that the child initially tolerates
- Brief frustration reactions follow appropriate challenges
Attending Skills, Frustration Tolerance, And Self-control May Develop With Intervention.

Praise based on effort promotes persistence and self-confidence:

- “You tried hard”
- “I’m proud of the effort you put into this”
- Academic Power Award from the Tennessee Association of School Psychologists
Attending Skills, Frustration Tolerance, And Self-control May Develop With Intervention.

Positive self-statements help build self-monitoring skills, coping skills, and persistence:

- Used daily, in the same form
- “I’m proud of working hard”
- “When I try hard, I do my best”
Attending Skills, Frustration Tolerance, And Self-control May Develop With Intervention.

Auditory alerting cues help develop self-monitoring and attending skills:

- Covert signals to attend, in place of explicit directions
- Cues to use productive self-talk
- Used throughout the classroom to minimize problems related to social stigma
Attending Skills, Frustration Tolerance, And Self-control May Develop With Intervention.

“Guided recall of forgotten instructions” can help guild self-monitoring and attending skills:

- Gentle, helpful “teaching tone” of voice
- Hinting until the child recalls forgotten steps in directions
Brief, focused behavioral intervention for families with ADHD

1. Plan a one-to-one bonding activity. Be specific. Avoid competitive play or other play that might lead to conflict.

2. Develop a positive behavioral intervention. Consider a compliance chart or other reward system.

3. Teach time out for calming. See the handout in the CHS booklet “Helping Children Learn to Mind,” or the CHS video on time out.

4. Review progress and determine the need for mental health treatment or further behavioral work.
ADHD & Frustration Tolerance:
Related Resources

- Taking Charge of ADHD, by Russell Barkley
- The Optimistic Child, by Martin Seligman
- The Prepare Curriculum, by Arnold P. Goldstein