Difficulties Maintaining Focus and Attention

Children with developmental or learning differences, such as Attention Deficit–Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) or Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), frequently experience **focus and attention** challenges. Signs of **focus and attention** difficulties may include:

- Poor sleep quality
- Inability to block out distractions
- Daydreaming
- Difficulty following directions
- Excessive fidgeting or movement
- Forgetting what they are doing

These challenges can result in children not completing homework, not doing house chores, disruptive actions, poor grades, and difficulty making friends (to name a few).

If you think that your child may have difficulty with **focus and attention**, the first step is to document your concerns. Write down the signs that you observe and ask your child’s teacher to do the same. Contact your pediatrician to discuss the concerns (bring the notes you and the teacher made). Your child’s pediatrician and school can help determine what type of evaluation is appropriate. The outcome of the evaluation will guide the course of action to best help your child.

Tips to Help Improve Focus and Attention

- **Don’t procrastinate.** Delaying the start of a task may lead to a loss of focus or attention on what needs to be done.
- **Break down large tasks into smaller pieces.** A large task will have many components which can lead to divided focus. By breaking a task into smaller pieces, it can help a child maintain their focus and attention.
- **Use one-step or two-step directions when breaking down large tasks (put your dirty clothes in the hamper vs clean your room).**
- **Use a timer and provide breaks based on your child’s needs** (try 10-15 minute intervals with 5 minutes breaks).
- **Practice mindfulness techniques** (deep breathing, guided meditation, yoga) to slow down racing thoughts and drifting focus/attention.
- **Create a setting that best suits your child’s focus and attention needs** (use of tactile fidgets, music playing in the background, sitting on a yoga ball).
- **Use gestures, visual aids, or scripted phrases to get your child back on task.**
- **Encourage a healthy diet, sufficient sleep, and exercise.**

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**Upcoming Events**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date/Time</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 12/5 @ 9am &amp; Saturday 12/12 @ 9am</td>
<td>Building a Positive Relationship with Your Child (two-part series)</td>
<td><a href="https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/building-a-positive-relationship-with-your-child/">https://parentnetworkwny.org/event/building-a-positive-relationship-with-your-child/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday, 12/7 @ 10am</td>
<td>Meaningful Communication with Your Child’s School</td>
<td><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y3k5w7ne">https://tinyurl.com/y3k5w7ne</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Thursday, 12/10 @ 6pm</td>
<td>Transitions for Families</td>
<td><a href="https://tinyurl.com/y3bt9cj">https://tinyurl.com/y3bt9cj</a></td>
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</tbody>
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