

Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder

A Pastoral and Parental Perspective



Ricki Lee Brooks

Is
your
child

a high-strung, wall-climbing ball of combustible excitement?

ATTENTION DEFICIT AND HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

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Sound Communication

A Division of West Sound Community Church

What is ADHD?

"A neurobiological disability, frequently characterized by inappropriate degrees of:

- inattention
- impulsiveness
- hyperactivity...

not due to other physical, mental, or emotional causes." And, we must add, not due to rebellion.

When left unidentified or untreated a child with ADHD is at great risk for:

- impaired learning ability
- decreased self-esteem
- social problems
- family difficulties
- potential long-term effects.

What are the diagnostic criteria for ADHD?

PostGraduate Medicine. Vol. 95/No2/Feb. 1, 1990/p. 154

- I. The problem lasts at least six months, during which eight or more of the following indicators persist:
 - A "Often fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in seat (in adolescents, may be limited to subjective feelings of restlessness)"
 - B "Has difficulty remaining seated when required to do so"
 - C "Is easily distracted by extraneous stimuli"
 - D "Has difficulty awaiting turn in games or group situations"
 - E "Often blurts out answers to questions before they have been completed"
 - F "Has difficulty following through on instructions from others (not due to oppositional behavior or failure of comprehension) (eg, fails to finish chores)"
 - G "Has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities"
 - H "Often shifts from one uncompleted activity to another"
 - I "Has difficulty playing quietly"
 - J "Often talks excessively"

- K "Often interrupts or intrudes on others (eg, interrupts other children's games)"
- L "Often does not seem to listen to what is being said to him or her"
- M "Often loses things necessary for tasks or activities at school or at home (eg, toys, pencils, books, assignments)"
- N "Often engages in physically dangerous activities without considering possible consequences (not for the purpose of thrill-seeking) (eg, runs into the street

II. Onset before the age of seven years

III. Does not meet the criteria for a pervasive developmental disorder

However, before we look at the probable cause...don't jump to conclusions.

- Restlessness
- Inattention
- Impulsiveness
- Hyperactivity

also occur with

- Children who are Gifted
- Children with Medically Significant Allergy Disorders
- Children with Medically Significant Metabolic Disorders
- Children with Specific Psychological Conditions
- Children with Abuse and/or Neglect Issues
- Children with Rebellion

*Exceptional Children. Vol. 60/No2/ Oct-Nov 1993/p. 183.
Authors: James T. Webb and Diane Latimer*

The Research

"Why can't Johnny sit still? Because parts of his brain are functioning too slowly."

“Dr. Alan Zemetkin and a team of researchers at the National Institute of Mental Health traced ADHD to specific and peculiar metabolic functions of the brain. Using a brain-imaging technique known as Positronic Emission Tomography, Zemetkin's team measured metabolic activity in the brain cells of 25 adults. These adults had been hyperactive since childhood and were each the parent of at least one hyperactive child.”

*U.S. News and World Report. Vol. 109/No21/Nov. 1990/
p. 18*

The Results

“Overall brain metabolism of the test group was 8% lower than a control group; and the largest metabolic differences were located in the pre-motor cortex and the superior prefrontal cortex. These regions of the brain are known to be involved in the regulation of both attention and motor control.”

*The New England Journal of Medicine. Vol. 323/No20/
Nov. 15, 1990/p. 136 Author: Alan Zemetkin*

A Pastoral Perspective

As a pastor, may I give you some insight from the Bible that may go a long way in your ministry with any child or young person, but especially with the cherub who endures ADHD?

I. First, consider the following four perspectives we gain from our Lord...

A. Our Lord's Attitude Toward Children

Matthew 18:1-6

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And he said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea."

B. Our Lord's Actions Toward Children

Mark 10:13-16

People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

C. Our Lord's Creativity Toward Children

Proverb 22:6

Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

What is *the way* referred to in this proverb? Pastor Charles Swindoll points out that the way referred to here is not a predetermined, narrowly defined set of rules. It is, instead, a "characteristic, manner," or "mode." He says, "In every child God places in our arms, there is a bent, a set of characteristics already established. The bent is fixed and determined before he is given over to our care. The child is not, in fact, a pliable piece of clay. He has been set; he has been bent."

The implications of this truth are simple. We cannot treat every child the same and we dare not compare children to one another since they are individually and uniquely created by God.

D. Our Lord's Expectations of Us Toward Children

Ephesians 6:4

Fathers, do not exasperate your children instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

What does *exasperate* mean? The word means to provoke to wrath or to stimulate to anger. When we place upon children burdens too great for them to handle, when we set our expectations too high for them, when we set them up for failure, and when we prod them with our personal pet-peeves, we provoke and stimulate them to anger.

Colossians 3:21

Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

What does *embitter* mean? The Greek word translated as embitter simply means to provoke, stimulate or stir up. The context determines whether this provocation is good or bad. The only other place this word occurs in the New Testament is at 2 Corinthians 9:2, where the NIV translators rendered it as stirred. In that context, Paul commended the Corinthians for stirring (stimulating, provoking) others to good work. In Colossians 3:21, the context is clear: don't stir them up in such a way that you literally cause them to lose courage for life.

II. **Second**, consider this important theological perspective...

"You attract more bees with honey than you do with vinegar."

Huh? That's right, but let's restate it...

"You attract more godliness with grace than you do with law."

The following two principles will bear this out...

A. Righteousness cannot be found through rules and regulations.

Romans 3:20

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin.

Galatians 3:10

All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law."

If God's law was never intended to produce our perfection, can we expect our rules and regulations to perfect our youth? Of course not. Just as the Old Testament Law was designed to teach people their need for something greater and their inability to be righteous apart from faith in God, so too will rules and regulations only serve as guidelines. They will, however, never change the heart and attitude.

B. Righteousness can only be found through faith in Christ because of God's grace. It is faith and grace, as well, that truly mold the hearts of our children.

Romans 3:21,22

But now a righteousness from God, apart from the law, has been made known, to which the Law and the prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe...

Romans 5:20,21

The law was added so that the trespass might increase. But where sin increased, grace increased all the more, so that, just as sin reigned in death, so also grace might reign through righteousness to bring eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

If God pours out his grace to provide eternal righteousness for sinners, can we not offer grace to increase holiness for our children and youth?

A Parental Perspective

As a parent, may I share with you my dreams and goals for not only my child, but every child. I am sure they are much the same as yours.

I. One Dream

Like any parent who loves his or her children, the parent whose child endures ADHD-like symptoms often dreams of the child's success...

The fresh air and beautiful sunshine of early February were a joyful pause in the midst of a long, wet and gray winter. The relief from old man winter's grasp renewed my expectations for life. A day earlier everything seemed dark; but the coming of the dawn sun brought light of another kind. It was a gift of God.

That winter had been unusually stressful. The difficulties my son faced day to day seemed too large to overcome. His impulsiveness and hyperactivity stirred most people to anxiety. Few in his life could refrain from pointing out his weakness and fault. In pain, my wife and I endured the long winter with him. His heart was broke and ours was breaking.

One night, during early February, when the days were sunny and warm and the nights were crisp and clear, I slept like I had not slept in weeks. There was no tossing and turning. My mind seemed unusually calm. My spirit rested. Shortly before the morning alarm erupted, I dreamed. If it's author was not God, I would be surprised.

Standing atop a very tall building, I looked below into the crowded city streets. People moved quickly and strategically. If not all, then most were engaged in the mother of all water-fights. They tossed water-balloons. They carried water-guns. They held hoses streaming water at full force. Some even wielded high-tech water devices only found in dreams and only used in George Lucas type films. There were hundreds and thousands. And the odds were several thousand to one. The one was my little boy.

In the midst of the city's chaos he stood alone. From my vantage point high above the city streets, I could not reach him. All I could do was watch as he moved between the cars, as he dodged one water blast after another, as he drenched his opponents, and as he maneuvered himself with the tactics of a special forces soldier.

Oh, how my heart stood still. Remorse and pride commingled in the depths of my emotions. Suddenly, I began to cheer. Words of encouragement fell from my lips.

"Go, son, go."

"Yes, yes, that's it. Look out, he's coming up on your left."

"Alright! Way to go! Great job!"

He took on so many. He stayed in the battle. He fought a good fight. Finally the numbers overwhelmed him. From front and back, from right and left, he took water, shot after shot, until he was drenched. The odds against him were just too great.

Sitting in the middle of the street, people standing all around him, he looked up. His eyes met mine. A lump formed in my throat. Tears gathered in the corner of my eyes. We looked at one another. And he smiled.

He smiled! He didn't cry. He didn't frown. He didn't stomp his feet. He smiled. All I did was cheer. He did the hard work. He engaged the battle. He met the resistance of a world filled with

uncaring and uneducated enemies. He won. He won! He may have been drenched. He may have been overcome by the sheer numbers. Yet, he had his victories. He won.

As I awoke, I felt the tears running down upon my pillow. Pulling myself from bed, I stumbled into his room. His breathing was soft. His face was relaxed. His sleep was peaceful. The dawn once again brought early February sunshine. The light of the morning broke the night of darkness. The Light of the World broke the spell of darkness. My son had an advocate, a cheerleader. If no other would stand on his behalf, I would.

I bowed in thankfulness to our Savior. I realized then that my son had a greater advocate. His name is Jesus. And that greater advocate was calling me to be like him...filled with grace and compassion.

II. Several Goals

A. A Deep Abiding Love for God

Mark 12:30

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”

B. A Deep Love for Others

Mark 12:31

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”

C. A Healthy Respect For God

Ecclesiastes 12:13

“Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.”

D. A Life Led by the Holy Spirit

Galatians 5:22,23

“But the fruit of the Spirit...is self control.”

In essence, I, like you, want my child to walk in the wisdom of God. Why? Well, that's not difficult. Walking in God's wisdom will produce love, and hope, and kindness, and generosity, and self-control, and holiness, and...

III. Several Proverbs to Enlighten These Goals

So, how do we help our child (children) gain this wisdom?

A. Wisdom Comes From the Lord

Proverb 8:35

“For whoever finds me (wisdom) finds life and receives favor from the Lord. But whoever fails to find me harms himself; all who hate me love death.”

Sometimes wisdom comes by stiff medicine.

And, it would be better to gain it—even painfully—than miss it.

B. Proverb 13:24

“He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”

Proverbs 23:13,14

“Do not withhold discipline from a child, if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death.”

We fail our children when we fail to apply consistent, loving, gentle discipline.

Wisdom is sometimes hard to come by because...

C. Proverb 22:14

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him.”

When left to himself, a child will not find wisdom.

He will find heartbreak.

D. Proverb 29:15

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother.”

However, wisdom is not only a product of stiff medicine. It must also be imparted through reason, instruction and affection. The over-rigid authoritarian will fail, because he or she will miss the affectionate bond intended to bridge the generation-gap.

Children long to have pride and affection for their parents.

E. Proverb 17:6

“Children's children are a crown to the aged, and parents are the pride of their children.”

So, wisdom is also found through instruction.

F. Proverb 3:1

“My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart”.

We are not only disciplinarians and instructors, but mentors.
And, when our children attend to our mentoring, they can be equipped for life.

G. Proverbs 4:10-12

“Listen, my son, accept what I say, and the years of your life will be many. I guide you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths. When you walk, your steps will not be hampered; when you run, you will not stumble.”

Can you see how this requires so much more than “do this and do not do that?” This requires understanding your child at every stage of his or her development. It requires time spent in the warp and woof of his or her life. It requires stories that teach and questions that draw out the child’s imagination, creativity, and self-discovered solutions. It requires grace and compassion and understanding and sympathy. It requires consistent prayer. It requires a solid knowledge of the Bible and the moment-to-moment ability to apply the Bible’s principles.

To mentor is not the end either. Parents must also nourish and encourage.
For example, consider the character of the noble woman...

H. Proverbs 31

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------------------|--------|-------------------------|
| vs. 12 | she does good | vs. 23 | she is supportive |
| vs. 13-19, 24 | she is industrious | vs. 25 | she is confident |
| vs. 20 | she is kind and generous | vs. 26 | she is wise |
| vs. 21,21 | she is protective | vs. 27 | she is self-disciplined |

...and as a result... vs. 28 her children adore her; her husband also.

Yet, even the best efforts may not bear the fruit for which we hunger. Wisdom is sometimes missed. For, in the end, we cannot grant wisdom, but simply offer it as a choice.

I. Proverb 2:1-5

My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.

Notice the if-then proposition within this passage. If you will accept, turn, apply, call out, cry aloud for, look, “then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God.”

Unfortunately, a child may choose otherwise, since children are sometimes...

...too full of their own opinions...

J. Proverb 13:1

“A wise son heeds his father's instruction, but a mocker does not listen to rebuke.”

Proverb 17:21

“To have a fool for a son brings grief; there is no joy for the father of a fool.”

...and rebellious enough to scorn...

Proverb 15:20

“A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish man despises his mother.”

...and rebellious enough to mock...

Proverb 30:17

“The eye that mocks a father, that scorns obedience to a mother, will be pecked out by the ravens of the valley, will be eaten by the vultures.”

...and rebellious enough to curse...

Proverb 30:11

“There are those who curse their fathers and do not bless their mothers.”

So, while it is true that parents must sometimes accept responsibility for their children's failure...

K. Proverb 29:15

"The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother."

...it is also true that children may perfectly well choose the way of the prodigal.

L. Proverb 28:9

"If anyone turns a deaf ear to the law, even his prayers are detestable."

We must learn the art of digging in, confessing, repenting, praying, and re-engaging when we are at fault. However, we also must learn the art of resting, trusting, praying, and accepting God's initiatives when we are not at fault.

IV. Suggestive Strategies

The following items contain helpful hints for anyone who would be a child and youth advocate. Parent, grandparent, neighbor, friend, teacher or whomever, everyone can benefit by applying these strategies with wisdom.

A. Challenges To Face (Learn to use these to everyone's advantage rather than fight against them.)

ADHD Children Are:

- Action oriented
- Trial and error learners
- "Doers" more than "Hearers"

ADHD Children Will Work For:

- Something that stimulates
- Something that is new or unexpected
- Something that is action oriented
- Anything that eliminates repetition and boredom
- Attention (good or bad)

ADHD Children Tend To Improve When The Environment:

- Is predictable
- Is structured
- Is conducive to short work periods
- Is founded on small student-teacher ratios
- Is rewarded with individualized attention
- Is abundant with positive reinforcement
- Is filled with grace
- Is filled with motivating and interesting material

ADHD Children Will Suffer Problems When:

- A task is difficult
- Work is required over a long period of time
- Little supervision is available
- Activities are in transition
- Order is based more upon rules than love

B. Guidelines To Utilize (Learn to use these fluidly and spontaneously rather than rigidly and methodically.)

- Shower the child with love and affection
- Exercise grace abundantly
- Provide very consistent structure
- Maintain clearly defined expectations and limits
- Visibly chart progress
- Provide special time
- Utilize many rewards

— Utilize fetch commands that can be verbally rewarded instantly (For example: as a child is leaving the room, you can ask him, “Would you mind turning off the light?” As the child walks by, he simply flips a switch. You can then immediately say, “Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.” These simple commands require no observations or statements if the child ignores them. These simple commands can be offered spontaneously all throughout the day. These simple commands can provide many opportunities to verbally reward your child.)

- Ignore inappropriate behavior when possible
- Utilize natural consequences (rather than ill-conceived punishments)

— Utilize logical consequences (when natural consequences impose a danger or are simply not possible)

— Utilize brief, monitored time-outs (It would make no sense to ask an ADHD child to

take a long time-out. However, a brief, controlled time-out under your patient observation can sometimes help to slow a child down and help him or her regain some focus.)

— Discern between rebellion and impulsiveness (Do not treat rebellion and impulsiveness alike. Rebellion must be punished. Impulsiveness needs to be rechanneled.)

— Give single instructions (Do not group your instructions.)

C. Tips For Friendships (Help your ADHD child to build strong friendships.)

— Reward behavior conducive to making friends

— Observe your child's peer behavior (This can inform the next suggestion.)

— Coach and role play (Make this fun and entertaining. Do not design it as a training period in which frustration can occur...with with your child or yourself.

— Catch your child being appropriate (and reward that appropriate behavior or attitude)

— Build "Friendship Times" for your child (Make connections through invitations.)

— Create breathing spaces during friendship interaction (Join the fun. Redirect the children's attention from one another to yourself, a game, a video clip, etc.

— Interrupt and eliminate aggressive behavior

D. Tips For Teachers

Ideal Organization For Classrooms:

— Classrooms that minimize distractions are helpful

— Classrooms with nooks, crannies, and interesting distractions are less helpful

— Classroom rules should be prominently displayed

— Schedule and assignments should always be posted or delivered in the same way

— Transitions should be tagged (i.e. provide a five minute warning before transition)

— Transitions should be well directed through clear verbal instructions

— "Quiet" work spaces should be available for students upon their request

— Adjust seating arrangements to move your ADHD child way from common Distractions

— Adjust environment to remove distractions from your ADHD child

— Place ADHD child with strong, positive role models

Classroom Leadership:

- Know your students well
- Smile absolutely as much as possible
- Remain enthusiastic
- Function according to grace, not law
- Provide regularly scheduled transitions
- Train students to recognize "Time To" cues
- Vary your attention getting methods

- Establish "Secret Signals" with your ADHD child (to use as a reminder when he or she is off task

- Create learning partnerships in which your ADHD child can either be helped by another student or be the helper for another student

- Provide your ADHD child with a "helping task" that you are sure he can successfully accomplish (Do not set up for failure.)

- Give your ADHD child instructions only when you have direct eye contact
- Do not call upon your ADHD child for answers, help, reading, etc, when he or she is not on task

- Notice when your ADHD child is on task and use these periods to ask questions or to read, etc.

- Use your ADHD child's name in a loving and gentle manner before calling on him

E. Tip For Planned Behavior Modification

- Select specific behavior you desire to increase
- Select a reinforcement with great appeal to your child
 - attention
 - praise
 - written awards
 - extra free time
 - reduced work load
 - non-classroom activities

- Reward desired behavior immediately and consistently
- Use rewards at a 20:1 ratio over aversive measures
- Keep your child clearly informed on how he can increase rewards and how he can minimize aversive measures

— When and if aversive measures are necessary, deliver them in a firm, business-like way without excessive emotions and long explanations

— Once an aversive measure has been implanted and your child actually “gets the message” and submits, bring on the warmth, smiles, hugs, gentle, nourishing words, etc.

Conclusion

While this outline is not the end of your research and discovery regarding ADHD or ADHD-like symptoms and behavior, I hope it has been a helpful start. You will do well to move patiently as you attempt to master and apply this knowledge. Read over it often. No, don't just read it...study it. Apply yourself to it like you were going to have a final exam before God himself. Don't just familiarize yourself with it. Get it down into your soul so you can call upon it as though it were second nature. You and your child deserve that much.

Finally, should it prove possible that a little outside coaching or consultation is in order, do not hesitate to reach out to competent help. And don't forget, the operative word in that last sentence is “competent.” The last thing in the world you want to do is allow your child to come under the influence of someone who will do more harm than good. Next to the Lord, you are your child's best advocate. So, even as you learn from an outside source, trust the Lord for the strength and wisdom to guide the process and lead the charge in the discipleship of your child.

From the Holy Spirit of God through Paul, the Apostle of God
to you the most highly beloved of God,

Ephesians 3:14-21

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

About Sound Communication

Jesus said fields all across the world are ready for the harvest. It comes as no surprise that he wants as many as possible to hear his message...

...and, at Sound Communication, we can think of no greater privilege than being a part of a team that delivers that message.

Since the first century, followers of Christ have dedicated themselves to this task. The times in which we live are no different. Faithful messengers still proclaim God's life-changing message of salvation through Jesus Christ. Ricki Lee Brooks and Rainer Kunz are two of them.

Ricki's goal has always been to be not only motivational, but inspirational. Inspiring others to face and overcome hardship by developing their love for and connection with the Savior remains at the heart of all that he does. In fact, over twenty-five years ago, Ricki and his wife, Vanita, wrote down their mission statement for life. Here it is...*Our mission in life is to love our Lord, one another, and our children more and more every day and to help as many as possible to do the same thing.* Since the loss of his beloved at the hands of a drunk driver, Ricki has often said, "Without her I feel less effective, but not less impassioned. Helping people love the Lord is the greatest privilege on earth, because, in the end, our purpose was never just about us...it was and is all about Jesus."

Rainer has also served the Lord for over twenty-five years. He and his wife, Susan, are the proud parents of three sons and two daughters. In his free time, Rainer loves to hike, fish and play "Go Fish" with his daughters (his grown sons too when they are able to come home). No wonder, since hiking, fishing, and playing Go Fish is just what the Savior ordered. In fact, Jesus once said, "I will make you fishers of men." Why...because people should be like us? No, it's not about us. It's because people need to know how much they are loved by God. Casting nets...bringing them into the circle of God's love...that's the best kind of fishing...the kind of fishing that Rainer feels both compelled and thrilled to pursue.

Together, Ricki and Rainer want to assist you with the skills you need to meet your unique challenges. They also want to give you a two-fold promise. First, should they accept the mission of assisting you, they will give you the absolute best of all they are and all they have to offer. Second, they will not offer what they cannot reasonably accomplish. Therefore, you can always count on them for an honest assessment of both your dilemma and their "fit" on behalf of your dilemma.

So, when you have the opportunity, visit their website or give them a call. Some of the areas they might be of assistance are...

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------|
| —preaching/teaching | —anger management |
| —workshops/retreats/conferences | —personal coaching |
| —consulting and/or coaching | —conflict resolution |
| —intervention for addictions | —alternative leadership skills |
| —church planting and church planters assessment | —spiritual identity disorder |

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