



Trauma
Care

Newsletter

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TraumaCare

Box 1807, Magaliesview, 2067
5a Franshoek Rd, Lonehill
Tel: 0715929690
Website: www.traumacare.co.za
Email: mail@traumacare.co.za

Loving Hyperactive Children

While raising children is a full time job, raising children that are hyperactive can seem like overtime. Hyperactive children have to be watched much closer and often require constant interaction. These children are usually in constant motion searching for something entertaining. Fortunately, there are things you can do to raise hyperactive children without becoming overwhelmed. Consider the following options.



Consider the Activities Your Child Enjoys

Some activities are known to make kids more excited. When trying to maintain an environment that helps your child stay calm these activities should be excluded. For example, fast action video games or shows can quickly excite a hyper active child.

Instead of allowing your child to play fighting or racing games, you might opt for interactive learning games. Another option to consider is games or activities that allow for creativity and require concentration. Activities such as painting, drawing, or sculpting can often calm a hyperactive child. These activities allow for hands on activity without exciting your child.

Schedule Your Child's Day

Hyperactive children often feel more comfortable in environments where they know what is going to happen. Instead of last minute trips to the store or activities around the house, you may find your child works better on a detailed schedule.

This allows them to adjust to what should be done before the time actually arrives for it to be done. For example, instead of facing a temper tantrum or meltdown when it is time to clean the bedroom, you can include this as part of a weekly schedule.

Make sure your child knows that every Thursday evening is the time to clean their room and they will adjust much better. This schedule should include everything that has to be done during the day, from brushing his or her teeth to taking a bath at night.

Children who are excessively hyper present a parenting challenge to moms and dads. Dealing with these hyper children and their seemingly limitless supply of energy often proves taxing, even to the most energetic parents. If you find that your child hits the ground running each day and never stops, you may need to modify your parenting style to help him harness his excessive energy.



Diagnosed Hyperactivity Disorders

While some children are just a bit more hyper than most, others have a diagnosable hyperactivity disorder. The two most common disorders of this type — Attention Deficit Disorder and Attention Defect Hyperactivity Disorder — are on the increase. If you think that your child may suffer from one of these disorders, voice your concern to his doctor. By acquiring an official diagnosis, you can both increase your understanding of your child's struggles and ensure that your child gets accommodations in school.

Beware of Impulsivity

Children who are excessively hyper also tend to struggle with the inability to control this impulses. This means that they will likely fail to think through things before acting, putting them at a greater risk of self-injury. If your child seems to act on a whim, you may need to monitor him a bit more closely to ensure that his failure to think before he acts doesn't put him into harm's way.



Setting Standards

Hyperactive children often operate best under strict standards of behavior and set schedules. By creating a household schedule and making a list of rules from which you do not deviate, you help your child develop a routine and more effectively manage his hyperactivity. Avoid allowing any gray areas to exist in your household, such as unwritten rules or flexible bedtimes, as hyperactive children often deal best in black and white.

Benefits of Rewards

Many children who suffer from hyperactivity feel as if they are constantly being sanctioned for their bad behavior. To decrease the likelihood that your child feels like “No” is his first name, reward her for good behavior whenever possible. By celebrating her successes, you can build a better relationship with your child and show her that you truly care about her and are her partner in fighting the hyperactivity.

Preparing for School Success

If your child is hyper at home, he will be hyper at school, too. Don't send him off to school thinking that his behavior will be different in the classroom. Instead, speak with his teacher about his hyperactivity. If your child has a diagnosed hyperactivity disorder, share this diagnosis with your child's school to ensure that they accommodate this behavioral issue.

Parenting can be challenging, whether or not you have a hyperactive child. All kids can cause you to want to tear your hair out at times, or make a quick break for Tahiti. It is especially difficult when you have a child whose activity level is very high and who might be labeled hyperactive. The suggestions for helping your child may work equally well with children in general, since they may help to promote a sense of calm in your household.

One of the most important aspects of helping your hyperactive child is to provide structure in your household routines. It can help a child to know that he or she must always brush their teeth after breakfast, that bedtime remains relatively static, that most of the time dinner takes place at a specific hour, and that there are particular outcomes for certain disagreeable behaviors. Routine helps provide the hyperactive child with a game plan for how life will occur.

General

Consistency in parenting is as equally important as routine. Kids do need to know that bad behavior like hitting, biting, destroying property or talking back will result in the same consequences. Make consequences realistic for the child. A five-year-old hyperactive child who hits should not get time out for an hour. Attention span won't last that long and it's not appropriate to a child of this age. Rather, consider a minute time out per age. A five year old would get five minutes of time out, and you might consider even less for hyperactive children. Always keep consistent in how you respond to disagreeable behaviors, and keep in mind that a child may not be able to help certain behaviors.

As a parent, nothing can fuel hyperactive children more than your anger. Angry responses on your part like screaming or hitting will tend to increase negative behavior in your hyperactive child. If you feel angry all the time, help your child by helping yourself with therapy. Your emotional stability can positively affect your child.

You can also do things with a child to help them learn self-calming behaviors. DVDs or tapes that offer exercises for kids like yoga and tai chi can have an extraordinary effect on the hyperactive child. It's true they may not get it at once, and it can take some time to show positive benefits. Some kids may not even make it through a whole tape at first. Yet if you consistently do these tapes with your child, you'll help them learn focus and meditation techniques in the long run.

Hyperactive means overactive, and there cannot be enough stress placed on the need to provide hyperactive children with lots of exercise opportunities. Especially when you see a child getting overwhelmed, it's a good idea to take exercise breaks. Do jumping jacks with your child for a few minutes, take a quick walk around the block, or race to the mailbox and back. Give your child plenty of times during the day for unstructured exercise times.

Also, provide a quiet time space. When a kid literally can't stay still, convert a small closet or part of a child's room into a space with a few books, quiet toys, and perhaps some papers for coloring with pens or crayons. Kids can learn to self-limit and impose "quiet time" on themselves. When they need to take a break they can, with special activities only available in the quiet time area.

Bedtime can prove especially challenging for the hyperactive child. It can help to have soothing routines available at night. A warm bath each night can prove relaxing. Avoid excess stimuli, like television or video games for at least an hour prior to beginning a bedtime routine.

Lastly, give some thought to your child's diet. Protein rich foods tend to serve the hyperactive child well. Try to avoid simple carbohydrates, like white flour, which convert to sugars in the body. Your child typically does not need this kind of quick energy boost. Instead offer snacks of foods like peanut butter on whole grain toast, slices of lean meat, and dairy products (no sugar added) like yogurt. These foods have been shown to help reduce hyper behavior and can be your allies.

Teach New Behavior Skills

One way to help your child gain control over his or her impulses is with behavior skills therapy. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), and a form of CBT called social skills training, teach very active kids how to:

- Take charge of their behavior.
- Interact more positively with others.
- Learn the consequences of their actions.

In CBT, children learn important skills, such as how to:

- Wait their turn.
- Read social cues, like facial expressions and body language, and adjust their behavior based on these cues.
- Play by the same rules as other children.
- Understand the results of their actions.

You can also control your child's impulsivity at home by using tools such as:



- Distractions
- Consequences
- Rewards

Here are some tips:

Distraction. When your child acts impulsively, distract him or her by redirecting to another activity. For example, you can say: "I know you want the video game. But why don't we play a game of catch until your friends are done playing with it?"

Consequences. Set clear and consistent consequences for bad behavior. For example, you can say: "You didn't stop interrupting so I'm sending you to your room to quiet down."

Rewards. When your child stays in control and controls his impulses, reward him or her with praise.

Work With Teachers

Your child spends most of the day at school. That's why it's important to reinforce in school any behavior skills your child learns at the therapist's office or at home.

To curb impulsivity during the day, make the teachers your allies. Try taking these steps:

- Keep in close touch with all of your child's teachers.
- Ask frequently how your child is behaving in school.
- Work together with teachers to find solutions for any impulsivity issues that arise.

Exercise

If you've ever sent your child outside to burn off some energy when he or she was misbehaving, you were on the right track. Studies are finding that exercise can help control impulsivity and other behavior problems in very active kids.

Consider signing your child up for a sports team, such as basketball, soccer, or rugby. Playing a sport not only gives kids exercise, but it also teaches them important social skills, such as how to follow rules and take turns.

Medicines

When other treatments don't work, or your child also has other ADHD symptoms, your doctor might recommend medicine. However please consider and try every other avenue before you rush into medication, it comes with many negative side effects, do your research thoroughly.

Stay Involved

It's common to get frustrated when you're living with a hyper active child. Taking an active part in your child's treatment will help you feel more in control. And it will give you a better handle on impulsivity and other behavior problems.

Consider taking these steps:

- Learn as much as you can about impulsive behaviors.
- Take a parent training program to learn ways to manage your child's behaviors.

- Keep in close contact with your child's doctor, teachers, and therapists.
- Join a support group to learn from other parents who have been through the same issues.

Finally, don't give up. You will find solutions to your child's impulsivity problems if you stay consistent and involve a team of teachers, therapists, and other experts.

STOP putting labels on people.
We are **NOT** defective,
nor deficient, nor disordered.

We may be different,
but that doesn't make us broken.

Many times, it actually makes us better, for
we are more in tune with what's going on.
We **DO** have advantages that others don't.

This newsletter has been issued by:

TraumaCare, Box 1807, Magaliesview, Gauteng, 2067

www.traumacare.co.za * mail@traumacare.co.za * Tel: 071 592 9690

Play Therapy * Counselling * Trauma Counselling

Please note that this information must not be used for diagnostic purposes. Please visit a medical professional for a correct diagnosis.