



Helpful Strategies for Children with Auditory Processing Disorder

The following suggestions, though designed for children with known or suspected auditory processing deficiencies (APD), are additionally applicable to children who may have language impairment or who may be considered immature, distractible, or slow in catching on to new concepts, or to children who have a fluctuating conductive hearing loss. Many of these strategies may be implemented by parents as well as teachers of children with APD.

CLASS PLACEMENT

When children are known to have auditory processing deficiencies prior to class placement, we may then make arrangements with consideration for the following options – teacher (level of special training, temperament and experience with APD children), classroom location (far from distracting noises), classroom acoustics (with minimum echoing sounds), class size (smaller is better), degree of structure (more structure is usually better than less structure).



CLASSROOM SEATING

If possible, seating should be near the teacher to provide a sense of his or her personal warmth and concern. The APD child's behaviour may thus be monitored more closely. The children should not be seated near such distracting, noise-producing sources as pencil sharpeners, loud air vents, windows opening onto traffic or doorways near busy hallways. Teachers should consider the position from which they prefer to teach and make certain the child can see and be seen from these vantage points. Favoured seating should also take into account a hearing loss, even a temporary one, which may be more severe in one ear than the other. Seating could also be critical if central auditory testing uncovers the advantage of one ear over the other for processing auditory information.



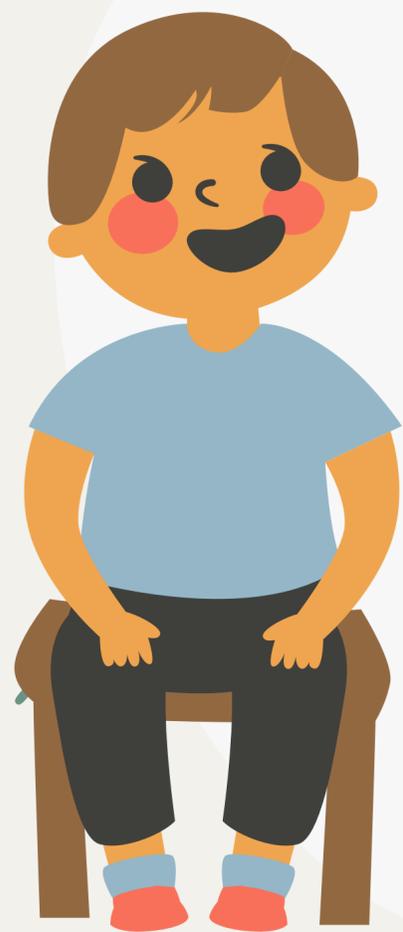
REDUCING DISTRACTION

APD children suffer inordinately from distractions. A teacher's seemingly innocuous hand motions or head movements while presenting information can reduce the child's comprehension. In general, the goal is to create a visual and auditory environment that is not too busy or over-stimulating.



ALERTING

"Daydreaming" is our way of 'taking a break' from tension. Though continuously occurring for brief periods, daydreaming is only noticed when it interferes with communication, for then it causes a lag to exist between the time auditory information is presented and attention gained. Thus, before presenting information, it is best to alert the child by calling his or her name and receiving some evidence that attention is being focussed.



SIMPLIFICATION

As a general rule, new information should be presented in small, digestible 'chunks' to facilitate comprehension, storage and recall.

REITERATION

When the APD child doesn't understand what has been said, it is usually best to rephrase the question or statement rather than repeat it verbatim. It is only by representing information using new words, and simplifying the sentence structure, that a new route to comprehension can be found.



MONITORING COMPREHENSION

Related to the need for alerting is the need to ask probing questions from time to time during instruction to make certain the child is following and understanding the lecture or discussion.



UN-STRESSING WRITTEN RESPONSES

Because APD children also often have difficulty organising and executing written responses, it is best to simplify and limit the amount of writing required except, of course, when it is the sole activity.



PREVIEW

The transition to a new instructional topic can be facilitated by first reviewing the previous topic and then introducing the new material. This transition can also be smoothed by 'prepping' the child with some idea of the new vocabulary and subject matter, a day or two before the new material is presented.

VISUAL AIDS

Visual aids may be extraordinarily helpful for children who cannot conceptualise the information presented auditorily (think of the effectiveness of computer graphics). Often, both seeing and hearing are needed to help concepts fall into place.



STUDY ENVIRONMENT

There are many children who study more effectively when TV or music is playing in the background. Children with APD, however, cannot cope with competing stimuli. Study areas at home and at school should be free from distracting background noises.



WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS

When instructional materials placed on the blackboard can be studied for a few minutes prior to presentation auditorily, APD children have a better opportunity to follow the instructional information.

BUDDY SYSTEM

If possible, a 'buddy' should be assigned to the APD child especially to check on the accuracy of written notes. A 'buddy-tutor' also may give some coaching during independent study or break time.



VARYING INTENSITY OF INSTRUCTION

Children with APD become fatigued more easily than other children, although this is not always readily evident. Complex instruction, therefore, should alternate with less demanding tasks to allow a refreshing of attentiveness.

REWARDING EFFORTS

Praise and reward are vital nourishment for the APD child. Accomplishments, even small ones, should be recognised with a tangible token (reward) and some words of encouragement. They go a long way toward counterbalancing the discouragement these children face every day.



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PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parents are a precious resource. Their involvement in the educational process is often the key to success with the APD child. Therefore, parents must be encouraged to become aware of and to get involved with goals and strategies as they unfold at school. When possible, parents should be treated as co-workers or colleagues rather than as grown up students.



SHARING THESE STRATEGIES

Many of the above suggestions can be adapted for the playground, after-school activities, relative's homes and home learning situations. This list should be shared with all the adults who are influential in the APD child's life.