

Serving Scouts with Disabilities: Attention Deficit Disorder

A Few Statistics

- Approximately 15% of youth are diagnosed with attention deficit disorder.
- Of these, approximately 12% also have hyperactivity as an added element.
- 80% of youth diagnosed with ADD are boys.
- Diagnosis is based on activity of daily living between the ages of 5 and 12

How It Affects the Boy?

Try this exercise. Read this and do not look elsewhere until the instructions say to. How many windows in the room? How many pictures are on walls? Pictures of what? Any other conversations going on in room? Outside room? What color is the wall? The floor? The ceiling? the floor is tile? Wood? Carpet? Color? How many lamps in the room? Ceiling fixtures? Now, look around. How many did you get right?"

The boy with ADD could give you the answer to all those questions and more!! That is the problem. You are focused on subject. You pay attention to it and block out all other all other sensory inputs that are occurring simultaneously so that you can focus.

THE BOY WITH ADD CANNOT DO THAT!!!

All those inputs are hitting him equally, and he cannot focus out any of them!! With all that going on equally in your head, which one would you pay attention to?

How You Deal With It?

First, start saying it right. This is not a handicapped boy, or a disabled youth. This is a BOY with a disability. Put the boy first. You know how to deal with a boy. The same rules apply. The same rewards produce the same results. The same yelling/punishing yields the same results. He is still a BOY. Deal with the boy not the impairment.

Now that we have the right framework (a boy) and an understanding of the medical problem and the limitations imposed, you should be able to think of solutions. For example:

- ❖ Rules. Who makes the rules? Who enforces the rules?
- ❖ Choices and consequences -- remember, consequences can be both good and bad. Good choice, good consequence; bad choice, bad consequence.
- ❖ Reward good behavior.
- ❖ Punishment should fit the crime. And if others are acting up, then they get the same punishment.
- ❖ If you don't see it, do nothing. You wouldn't punish another boy based on a "tattle-tale" so the same applies to this boy.
- ❖ If you see it, act immediately. Remember, his focus will have him forgetting the why of your action if not taken immediately.
- ❖ Planning is the key; you need multiple activities available to challenge the youth as soon as you lose him.
- ❖ Joining conference/Scoutmaster conference - with youth and parents together. Find out what are his strengths that can be used to overcome his weaknesses?
- ❖ Get any available info on youth from sources such as teachers, doctors (*with permission*)
- ❖ If possible, assign a mentor - an older Scout or adult - not a babysitter.
- ❖ Parents can be a solution; parents can increase the problem. Observe them and decide.

You can work with the Boy Scout.