



Managing a busy or hyper-active child

Set up for Success in managing life with busy little bees.



Many parents struggle when dealing with children who are “hyper active.” ADHD, ADD, diet, lack of stimulation and sometimes, well, just plain old personality are all ways to describe someone who is hyper active.

A clear definition of hyper activity is someone who is overly active, which means they have trouble paying attention, sitting still, and keeping quiet. This can be highly disruptive in any and all settings. Families and teachers of children with these tendencies know that it is extremely difficult to enjoy daily activities.

Although hyper active children can present behaviour issues, commonly this is associated with very clever

children who have bubbly, warm personalities full of empathy and care. It is just as difficult for the child to behave as it is for the parents to understand and discipline them.

Problems associated with hyper activity become very apparent when people are busy and rushed, struggling to get through the day to day activities, as every parent feels every day. This can lead to more stress as the behaviour often starts to head into the “danger zone.” As we can’t stop our lives completely, we can place some preventative measures to ensure that we have as much control over our emotions and our child’s anxiety, frustration, and behaviour. We must “set up for success!”

Firstly, our children’s anxiety levels are the key. Knowing where they are and how they are expected to act is the first battle. Saying “DON’T DO THAT!” isn’t productive, saying “this is how we do...” is much better BEFORE the fact. I know this has been drilled into all our heads over and over again, but routines save everyone (including our children) a lot of stress. Routine takes away anxiety, and that is a great step towards better behaviour. Children are very adaptable and usually catch on to a routine within a matter of days. So, getting up and out of the house in the morning, homework time, bed time, etc., benefit greatly from routines. Most parents “give up” on the routines within a few days of poor response, but it is important that it lasts at least a week to give the children a sense of “who’s the boss” and also to make them feel safer within their day to day lives.

Here’s a great trick for 3-5 year olds: visual schedules. Take a picture of brushing teeth, getting dressed, eating breakfast, and getting in the car. When the child completes a task, remove the picture from a “list” or “schedule” so the child has a good idea of when they are finished and what is next. It also gives them a great sense of accomplishment, and lets them retain some control. Keep them simple and fun.

Keep sensory toys in places that you may need them. You know those corporate stress balls that your boss gave you as a holiday gift? Keep it in the car for your child to play with. It will give them something to “do” that isn’t necessarily “productive” but gives their busy minds and hands something to focus on. Some beading while sitting in a waiting room, a hand-eye coordination puzzle in the trolley at the grocery store, etc. You’ll find a lot of kids calm down when they have their hands busy.

Sometimes we can give them the perfect diet, get them to bed at night at the same time, etc. Everything can be in place and we still have a child that is labeled “hyper active.” These children need to be challenged and mostly the educational system is failing them, so any intellectual activities a parent can arrange would be great. For older children, find out what they are “interested” in career wise. You can often find an adult that will take on an “intern.” Having a job would be a great self-esteem booster, even if they just go once a month and help out with the mediocre tasks.

Having goals, systems, routines, etc. in place can truly help hyper-active children feel more in control, thus avoiding behaviour issues instead of correcting them. As always, the 123 Magic! method works, so if we have to discipline, it's the best way. Please feel free to contact me to book a workshop or if you have any questions!

I'm here if you need me :)



Pauline Mulkerins

Understanding Families Director
123 Magic! Workshop Coordinator
Mobile: (076) 481-6410
Pauline@understandingfamilies.co.za

www.understandingfamilies.co.za