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Teaching ADHD Students life Skills Through Music.

A-Awesome! accelerated D-Dynamic H-harmonious D-Driven by music!

Introduction: What is ADHD? Is it really a disorder or a different learning style?

Dr. Daniel Amen's, "7 Types of ADHD"

- A. Classic ADD-inattentive, hyperactive, disorganized, and impulsive.
Normal brain activity at rest, decreased brain activity during concentrated tasks.
- B. Inattentive ADD-Short attention span, distractible, disorganized, procrastinates, may daydream and be introverted. Not hyperactive or impulsive, impacts both boys and girls, but more girls.
- C. Over-Focused ADD-Core symptoms of Classic ADD, and trouble shifting attention, going from thought to thought or task to task, getting stuck in negative thought patterns and behavior.
- D. Temporal Lobe ADD-Classic ADD symptoms, as well as learning, memory, and behavioral issues, such as quick anger, aggression, and mild paranoia.
- E. Limbic ADD-Classic ADD, and chronic low-level sadness (not depression): moodiness, low energy, frequent feelings of helplessness or excessive guilt, and chronic low self esteem.
- F. Ring of Fire ADD (ADD plus)-Sensitivity to noise, light, touch: periods of mean and nasty behavior, unpredictable behavior, speaking fast, anxiety and fearfulness.
- G. Anxious ADD-Classic ADD, as well as being anxious and tense, having physical stress symptoms like headaches, stomachaches, predicting the worst, freezing in anxiety-provoking situations, especially if being judged.

The parts of the brain that can be affected:

1. The prefrontal cortex, the cerebellum, which control executive functions of concentration, attention span, judgment, organization, planning and impulse control.
2. The anterior cingulate, which helps the brain shift gears and detect errors.
3. The temporal lobes, which involve memory, learning, emotional reactions, mood stability, and visual processing.
4. The basal ganglia, which are deep in the brain that help produce the neurotransmitter dopamine: the limbic system, which set emotional tone and bonding.

I. Why should teachers learn about ADD? Don't we have enough to think about?

II. Identifying, however not diagnosing students with ADHD

Never diagnose, simply identify consistent observations in the seven types of ADD. Express concerns only to the counselors, the school medical staff, or go through your school's red tape channels. Never go directly to the parents for your own protection. Always meet with parents when discussing their child's behavior issues if you suspect ADD, with trained counselors, and administrative staff.

II. III. Turning a negative into a positive through music. ADD students have many traits that are advantages for the music making process.

- a. Students with ADD can have a tendency to hyper focus on something they like. It is a myth that students with ADHD cannot focus. The trick is finding something they are interested in doing.
- b. ADD students are often perfectionistic in their area of interest, therefore it is important that a student be allowed to explore the type of music they like, and possibly the instrument they play.
- c. ADD students often have amazing memories, and can often recall information when needed.
- d. ADD students can be highly motivated if they love what they are doing.
- e. ADD students can be highly sensitive, and intuitive on a deeper level than many people. They are often highly intelligent, creative and successful, especially if they find their passion.

Part 2

1. The benefits of Music through listening:

Listening to music increases brain fiber connections in children according to researchers from the Radiological Society of North America.

- Specific types of music can help a student focus and even control their behavior:
I.E. Quiet classical music for things like homework, reading and calming a hyper moment, and jazz for group work.

2. The Benefits of taking part in music activities: (ADDitude)

- Music provides organization because of its intracrite structure.
- Music also has a soothing effect, and can alleviate the symptoms of stress and anxiety.
- Music strengthens the areas of the brain of an ADHD person, that are weak.
- In some cases studies show, that children who have difficulty focusing when there is background noise, are particularly helped by music lessons, and even listening to music while they study.
- Combine music and nature! Listening to music while walking in nature has a beneficial effect, and can even “re-set” the brain and even calm the body.
- Imaging of the brain when listening to music, light up the left and right lobes.
- Music lasts longer than most conversations, helping the student to focus for longer periods of time.

Examples of music that can help the ADD brain: (Additude)

Emperor Concerto for Piano, No. 5, Beethoven

Mathematical structure of pieces like this, builds portions of the brain simultaneously, advancing speech and language skills.

Symphony in No. 40 in G Minor, Mozart

Stimulates the inner ear. Helps retain the muscles in the ear, thus strengthening auditory and motor functions.

“Water Music” Handel

Handel’s music is good for getting the brain into Alpha Mode. It takes about 20 minutes for the brain to change into this mode. Start before homework!

Canon in D, Pachelbel

Helps with sleep, and is very meditative. It can help soothe overactive brains.

Concerto for Violin in D, Brahms

When the child’s brain goes into Alpha Mode, he/she may seem relaxed, however their minds are picking up all of the notes. This allows them to focus their energy effectively and stimulate great ideas without distractions of fidgeting.

V. Benefits of Music by participating in lessons, and/or ensembles:

Private lesson, can help build confidence, focus, and healthy study habits through individual attention. A private teacher can help a student structure their practicing, and help them organize.

Chamber music, can help students build socialization skills, and increase their boundaries of awareness. Many ADD students do not like working with groups, and are often not included by other children.

Both small and large ensembles not only help develop student's team building skills, they also teach a student how to learn the art of getting along with others in a supportive, and even in a leadership role. They also learn that everyone on a team is important.

Part 3-Strategies for working with ADHD students in individual lessons, chamber music and, orchestra:

- Always have a clear lesson structure that the student can rely on, with a similar routine that you follow, each week for lessons, or rehearsals. Find ways to say the same thing in a fresh way until the skill is understood, and/or mastered.
- Be as clear as possible.
- Ask questions, and what the student thinks! Have discussions, activities, etc.
- Have the student repeat the assignment back to you.
- Choose music that interests the student whenever possible, or compromise.
- Always have a performing goal if possible.
- Have a student memorize short excerpts daily, or weekly.
- Use a checklist.
- Use large fonts when possible!
- Try to have as few distractions in the classroom, or teaching studio, along with a quiet place to focus. Turn them away from the window!!
- Be kind, yet state expectations clearly and firmly.
- Rote learning can be beneficial
- Have the student keep a detailed notebook, including having them WRITE the assignment themselves.
- Change channels quickly, yet try to make sure a student is successful before you move on to a new task.
- Give frequent reminders when a task needs to be complete
- Have short and long term goals
- Divide assignments into units.
- Allow a student to record a lesson, or video-especially to correct their own mistakes!

- Have the student upload videos for you! Via Youtube, etc. Speak their electronic language!
- Divide music into specific measure or sections, and display on electronic device
- Have the student practice at the same time every day if possible.
- Be careful to choose discipline issues wisely.
- Eye contact is important-stare out! Challenge short term memory by having the student look up at you or a peer. (chamber music, ensemble)
- Educate peers in an age appropriate way! Have a buddy system
- Ask the student what they need in order to focus and calm down
- Have a student carry something heavy, push and pull-Have them set up the stage and chairs and stands if possible!
- Be sure to be excited when the students are successful!! Even a little progress means a lot to these kids, since progress can sometimes be slow.
- Allow a student to get up and move if they are being distracting, until they are capable of joining back into the ensemble.
- Allow students to move while they play.

Honoring the learning styles of each student:

- a. Seeing, hearing and feeling-even tasting
- b. Be crazy, be creative!
- c. ADD students often do not deal well with change. Music is always changing, always in transition. The flow of this change can help an ADD student deal better with the anxiety of life's curve balls!
"Adjust, Adapt, Accept" Dr. David Hamilton

Rhythm/ pulse/movement

- 1. *Be supportive of helping students feel music. Honor that that ADHD students have to move. It is not their fault that they are active.***
 - a. Dancing, singing, even jumping. Have a dance out!
 - b. Clapping, shaking hands, closing eyes and feeling rhythm or pulse, even banging it out!
 - c. Our biological systems work on precise rhythms because of our heart beat. Out of sync rhythm is uncomfortable for most of us.
 - d. Try using rhythm instruments to teach basic rhythmic skills.
 - e. Draw the beat! Or the music-This can also help shut out extra noises
 - f. Stand instead of sit. Even choose an instrument for the ADD child where they can stand and move.

Performing

A, Have students from the beginning stages, perform short, easy pieces, and gradually build in length, and difficulty. This also increases focus, and confidence.

B. Have a performing Friday-Celebrate

V. No excuses-hold a student accountable, and turn weaknesses into strengths.

1. The student is in charge of their own brain and body
2. In an age appropriate way, if supported by the parents and guidance counselors work with a student's strengths and weaknesses. I.E. Hank, learning only one run of Barber

Famous people with ADD:

Justin Timberlake, Jamie Oliver, Michael Phelps, Jim Carrey, Simone Biles, and Will Smith

Conclusion

Dr. Oliver Sacks, the late professor of neurology, at Columbia University concluded," Nothing activates the brain so extensively as music." He was studying brains with Parkinson's, and Tourette syndrome, and autism, but found similar results on the ADHD brain. Research shows that pleasurable music may increase the brain's dopamine levels which helps in regulating attention, and working memory, and motivation.

If anyone is interested in starting an idea sharing ADD forum, please let me know. It could also include other issues like dyslexia, and autism.

Brief idea sharing/questions

Observation list:

1. Does the child have a short attention span?
2. Does the child seem to be detached from group sessions or class activities?
3. Does the child take direction well?
4. Does the child daydream in class?
5. Does the child appear to have trouble concentrating?
6. Does the child complete activities?
7. Does the child work independently?
8. Is the child easily distracted?
9. Is the child able to complete tasks?
10. Does the child listen well?
11. Does the child become engrossed in an activity?
12. Does the child disregard at least some or all directions?
13. Is the child defiant or easily frustrated?
14. Does the child have difficulty in group settings?
15. Does the child run everywhere?

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<http://www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/11294>

Books/Articles:

Healing ADD, The Breakthrough Program that Allows You to See and Heal the 7 Types of ADD, Daniel G. Amen, M.D.

ADHD, the Classroom and Music: A Case Study

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education. University of Saskatchewan

Joni Erin Wiebe

Musicophilia, Oliver Sacks, M.D. Professor of Neurology at Columbia University

The Educated Mom, The official blog of Mindprint learning, by Nicole Davies

Music for Healthy ADHD Brains: 8 Songs for Focus: By the authors of ADDitude-Sharlene Habermeyer

