

**"HELP! MY CHILD'S BEHAVIOR IS OUT OF CONTROL!
IS IT ATTENTION DEFICIT / HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER?"**
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Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a diagnosis commonly used to describe individuals who have difficulty paying attention in class (or at work) and controlling their level of activity.

Often times, parents are concerned that their child may be ADHD, as they describe him / her as "hyper." Most children are very active and restless, and this is typically considered to be developmentally appropriate behavior. However, some children are so inattentive, so impulsive, or so hyperactive, that it is considered to be maladaptive or inconsistent with the child's developmental level. For the concerned parent, it is important to differentiate what is considered to be a normal level of activity from that of a diagnosable disorder in activity level, such as ADHD. With proper diagnosis or understanding as to what may be causing a problem, parents can pursue the necessary interventions to help resolve their concerns.

If you are concerned about your child's behavior and you believe that he / she may have ADHD, the best thing to do is to consult with a professional, such as a pediatrician, psychiatrist, psychologist, or other mental health practitioner. The person making this determination should ask for input from various different people or professionals who have contact with the child, to determine if the concerns that are presented are consistent across several different settings. The professional will also need to determine whether or not there is another explanation for the behavior that the child is demonstrating. For many children, particularly those whose language is not fully developed, behavior is the only way they know to express emotions, including fear, depression, frustration, anger, and anxiety. The professional who is making the determination will also want to know if there have been any unusual life changes or stressors that could explain a child's behavior. Parents will also be asked numerous other questions about the child's medical, school, family, and emotional history.

Once a decision has been made about what may be causing your child's behavior, the professional who has assessed the situation should be able to give you recommendations about how to help resolve the concerns. Children who are demonstrating behavior problems are often good candidates for behavior management techniques to be used in the home and at school. Often times, ADHD children are prescribed medication to alleviate the symptoms of ADHD. If there is another explanation for the child's behavior (other than ADHD), such as depression, anxiety, or some other life stressor, the child may also benefit from counseling interventions to help identify a more appropriate way to demonstrate his / her feelings.

Overall, understanding the underlying cause of a child's behavior is very important, in order to know how to best intervene. The best thing you can do as a parent is to be patient and to get your child the help that is needed for his or her problem.

For more information about ADHD or other behavior problems in children, talk to your child's pediatrician, school counselor, or a mental health professional.