

EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL CHALLENGES IN CHILDREN

陪伴孩子的情緒行為障礙

Children who “can’t sit still”, “can’t make friends”, “won’t shut up” or won’t open their mouths might be suffering from real behavioral or emotional conditions. In this book, clinical psychologist Wang Yi-Chung teaches parents and teachers how to recognize these difficulties in child behavior and offers practical methods for dealing with them productively and with sympathy.

How many parents and teachers have found themselves faced with extreme child behaviors that no one – not even the child – seems able to control or ameliorate? Those children are frequently labeled “the kid who can’t sit still”, “the shy kid”, “the kid with no volume control”, and made subject to the resentment of their classmates, while teachers and parents try to correct their behavior via increasingly severe methods.

Clinical psychologist Wang Yi-Chung wants us to understand that in situations like these, we often fail to recognize that the problematic children can themselves be victims. Wang identifies a host of clinical psychological conditions that manifest as common disruptive behaviors and over which the child has no control. Instead of opposing the child every time the behavior occurs, Wang suggests, we need to communicate with the child clearly in order to assure they can recognize their own symptoms and triggers, and thereby maximize their own self-control.

By underscoring his clinical expertise with a deep sympathy for his subject, Wang reminds that, generally speaking, everyone involved in a child’s problematic behavioral situation wants to make things better, including and especially the child herself. His analyses and suggested



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solutions point everyone toward collaborative solutions and away from pointless conflict.

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By Wang Yi-Chung

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Struggling with your hyperactive child? Carrots work better than sticks.

Let’s look at one day in the life of a child with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) and ask ourselves if perhaps our interactions are causing more harm.

06:30 a.m. The alarm clock goes off and the sun is up, but never mind, I’ll get some more sleep.

06:40 a.m. Mother: “Look at the time! Come on, get up!”

06:50 a.m. A yawning child shuffles into the bathroom.

07:00 a.m. Father hammers at the bathroom door: “Hurry up, it doesn’t take that long to brush your teeth. You’ll be in trouble if I’m late for work.”

07:30 a.m. At the breakfast table, siblings complain: “Tell him to eat faster, Mom, we’re going to be late for school.”

07:50 a.m. The teacher at the school gate: “Button your shirt properly, and don’t drag your bag like that. And look where you’re going!”

08:00 a.m. Storytime in the classroom: “Can’t you be quiet? It’s too early for so much noise and you’re spoiling the story.”

08:40 a.m. “Have you done your math homework? Where is it? How many times do I have to ask you?”

08:50 a.m. The pretty girl at the next desk raises her hand: “Miss, he’s playing with my pencil case, it’s annoying!”

09:00 a.m. The class tattletale: “Miss, he’s swinging on his chair”, “Miss, he’s not listening, he’s playing with his eraser.”

09:20 a.m. In the corridor, after bumping into a child from another class: “Are you blind? There’s plenty of space, how’d you bump into me?”

10:40 a.m. In the next lesson, the old complaint: "I didn't call on you, so just be quiet. Try listening, not talking."
11:30 a.m. Group work in science class: "I don't want to work with him, he lowers our grade."
12:00 p.m. Lunchtime: "Just sit quietly while you eat. And don't forget your tablets."
01:00 p.m. Naptime: "Just lie quietly, you're disturbing the others."
03:00 p.m. Clean-up time. Again the class tattletale: "Miss, he hasn't cleaned the blackboard, and he's getting chalk everywhere."
03:50 p.m. The school day is almost done. "Why haven't you filled in your Communication Book? Don't you want to go home?"
04:30 p.m. After-school class: "Surely you can write an answer for that one? Use your brain! Hurry up, you can't go home till you've finished."
07:00 p.m. Home at last, but mom's complaining: "Why are you watching television? Hurry up and finish your dinner and have your bath, then you can do your homework."
11:00 p.m. Mom's tired: "It's 11 already, your homework shouldn't take this long. Don't you want to get any sleep?"
12:00 to 06:30 a.m. Dreams about all those complaining faces.
06:30 a.m. The alarm clock goes off and the sun is up – but never mind, I'll get some more sleep.
And so a life of complaints goes on.

For a hyperactive child, every day is much like this: a constant stream of nagging and criticism. Imagine how strong you need to be to cope. Is it any wonder their self-respect, self-confidence, and self-image suffer?

Wang Yi-Chung on ADHD

The central issue in ADHD is a lack of self-control, which manifests itself in three ways: lack of concentration, overactivity, and poor impulse control.

Generally, problems with concentration are seen in the child's studies and in daily life. Problems with overactivity and impulse control affect interpersonal relationships, management of emotions, and classroom order.

Some hyperactive children display a combination of all three of these problems. Others have issues primarily with concentration (Attention Deficit Disorder, ADD), or with overactivity and impulse control. Problems with overactivity and impulse control often occur together.

The secret to guiding and educating children with emotional and behavioral difficulties

Adults and hyperactive kids: how to cope?

Can hyperactive children learn from experience?

It's a question that many adults have struggled with. Hyperactive children seem to have no problem learning how to reach the next level in a video game. So why do they keep making the same mistakes over and over again in their daily life?

While such children may seem to be enjoying living in the moment, their impulsiveness means they fail to consider their next action.

Hyperactive children do want to control themselves; they simply find it hard to do so. Self-discipline is a distant goal for these children, and even as they pursue it their lack of concentration consistently sends them down dead-.

Does a carrot and stick approach work?

Why, teachers and parents ask, do neither rewards nor punishments work with hyperactive children? Scold them, reward them – nothing does the trick.

I always emphasize that if scolding hyperactive children worked, we would have no need for the diagnosis of ADHD.

Let's look at how rewards and punishments can encourage and sustain positive behavior and reduce unwanted behaviors.

- **Clear targets**

Before starting, be clear about the behavior you wish to target. The more specific you can be, the better. "Sit quietly at your desk," "Raise your hand before asking a question," "Pay attention to the teacher," and so on.

Once we have a specific target, such as "raise your hand before asking a question," we should then ask what response the correct behavior will earn.

- **Identify effective reinforcements**

Different children care about different things, and therefore require different kinds of reinforcement. These could be social or material rewards, activities, or some form of currency, such as good behavior points. But we must know if these matter to the child. If a hyperactive child likes to see you smile, he or she will want you to be happy – and so a social reinforcement will work.

Hyperactive children need immediate reinforcement. When the desired behavior is seen, the reward must be immediate. It's just like playing a video game: they perform a task and get the points.

- **Prevent carrot overload**

We use rewards to encourage the kinds of behavior we want to see in our children, in the hope that they will persist in these behaviors.

But children will get bored of their rewards if they receive too many.

For example, parents often tell children they can play video games if they finish their homework. The aim is to have the child complete their homework, but the motivation for the child is now the chance to play.

Parent and child may find themselves in alignment for a while, but very soon the child will start to bargain, either for more time on the phone or tablet, or for a pass on doing their homework because they don't feel like playing games.

Rewards can have unexpected effects. Overusing them makes it harder to teach children that homework is a responsibility that they should take pride in completing.

Reduced or changed rewards

If you wish your rewards to be effective, try this: Gradually reduce or change the rewards as the desired behavior becomes stable.

For example, if completion of homework is initially rewarded with 30 minutes of mobile games, cut that time to 15 minutes after a week or two, or remove the reward altogether. Remember, homework is something children should do without needing a reward.

Gradually reducing the length, frequency, and intensity of rewards is equal parts art and science. It requires practice, as well as constant adjustment as you follow changes in your child's behavior.