

ADHD Blog



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A Doctor's Personal Take on ADHD

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An Innovative Way to Help ADHD Kids Control Extra Energy

The concept of circuit training is a well-known fitness strategy. It is made up of multiple stations of different levels of conditioning exercises to be executed in a rapid continuous fashion. It provides variety, challenge, and ultimately, conditioning.

There is high energy level involved with the ADHD child and managing this energy can be problematic. It is always wise to harness and redirect this energy instead of trying to arrest it. So, what is a parent or teacher to do? What if an ADHD circuit training course were set up to manage the energy? Let's see what this might involve.

The first step is to identify a time of day or a situation that seems to bring on the hyperactivity. There may be multiple examples through the day when this occurs.

The second step is to define the spatial area that you have to set up your circuit training to manage the hyperactivity. An example may be the bedroom of the child, the entire house, or the backyard. If the child is out and about, the area may be smaller, such as a small area of a waiting room or a check out line.

The third step is to identify the time that is available. It might be in the morning before school, or the time it takes to prepare dinner after school. It might be at an unexpected moment of delay, when patience is needed to handle the delay.

The fourth and very critical step is identifying the involvement of the parent or teacher. Many situations require one on one involvement, whereas other times unsupervised activities are going to work.

So let's get started with scenarios:

Mornings: Sometimes an ADHD child has not slept well or had a hard time going to sleep (which is very common) and is very sleepy at wakeup time. The wake up of the child could be considered the warm up of the training. Put together a CD with music that is first rather soft and slow, and follow with songs that build the tempo and pace. Allow five to ten minutes for this warm up. This is a time when the parent may be going in and out of the child's room to periodically check on how the process is going.

Next, the child may want to drink some water and take the ADHD medication. Here is where deep breathing drills could be used to wake up the brain and start to turn on the thinking part of the brain. A parent needs to be there for this process and this might take two to three minutes.

Now the muscles need to be activated. Marching around the room or around the house can be fun and the child should be encouraged that this IS fun. Getting other siblings involved with this process would also work. This might take five minutes or even longer if you have the time. Throw in some jumping jacks or running in place. By this time, the child should be awake and starting to become active.

The next phase involves the speed drills. Set out the clothes all around the room. For example, have the underwear and undershirt at one station in the room, the pants and over shirt at another station, and the shoes and socks at another location. Tell the child that you are going to time each segment and record the total time. Record the times and let them know what they are. As they become more cooperative with this process, let them know that they are getting faster or slower. If this process is made fun and creative, the more cooperation will occur.

Add additional stations in the morning routine. Make it simple, but fun. After all of the morning routine is accomplished, the reward could be breakfast. Always make sure a child with ADHD eats breakfast. That is the meal that they need the most and it should include the most nutritious foods of the day, because often it is the only good meal they eat in the day.

Standing in a check out line:

This is an example of a small space and a small but critical time period. A suggestion would be have the child stand on one leg for five seconds, switch legs for five seconds, count backwards from 25 as fast as they can (or pick a number that they have mastered) , state their name, address, telephone number as fast as they can, and then start over. Often the key to the cooperation of the child is practicing this session often and before it is needed in the critical situation. Be creative and remember to make it challenging and fun.

Bedtime circuits can also be developed, but with the "cool down" coming at the end of the period of time. Remember, a routine schedule is critical to the child with ADHD, and in time, they will look forward to the process and hopefully embrace the technique. If the routine needs to be shortened due to "busy schedule" circumstances, don't skip the routine. Announce beforehand that the time involved will have to be shortened, and then take the child through a shortened version. Remember, taking a routine out of a child's schedule will throw the child "off balance" and cause behavior that is unexpected and negative.

Good luck, and have fun developing the ADHD circuit training.

Dr. Krutka is a board-certified pediatrician who works in private practice in Tulsa, Oklahoma. Her practice includes all ages of patients from newborns to young adults. Her areas of interest include attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, adolescent gynecology and sports medicine. She attended the University of Missouri Medical School and did her residency at UCLA Harbor General Hospital in Torrance, California.

We would like to thank Dr. Krutka for her permission to use her blog article in our newsletter and on our website. You can find many other excellent articles by Dr. Krutka by going to the www.everydayhealth.com website and clicking on ADHD Blog.