Tips for Children with ADHD Characteristics and Others

1. Breakfast rules for ADHD kids, their friends, their parents, and their teachers: 09/08/09
   1. Never skip breakfast
   2. Breakfast must include protein
   White-bread toast and jelly for breakfast? Or last night's left-over casserole for breakfast? Hope you chose last night's tuna and hard-boiled egg casserole. Hey, some kids like it so much they'll eat it cold! It's got protein for energy and staying calm.
   Too much sugar—yes, white bread has sugar in it—increases hyperactive behavior!
   Just for kids: Make a list of everything you could eat for breakfast that has protein in it. Can you think of something really crazy?
   Here are a couple things to get you started: How about a peanut butter sandwich or some tuna salad?

2. Tips for students having difficulty focusing and/or sitting:
   “Space Buttons” may help. Following are ways they can help his students (and the rest of us):
   **Academic Skills:**
   - Ability to focus on a task
   - Increase interest and motivation
   - Keeping one’s place while reading
   - Organizational skills
   **Behavioral:**
   - Ability to relax
   - Ability to sit comfortably and squarely on a chair
   - Increased attention span
   - Ability to replace trying with intuition and knowing
   Changes you may notice: Hips level (not tourqued)
   Head level (not tilted or forward)
   To do “Space Buttons” put two fingers above the upper lip and rest the other hand on the lower spine. Hold for a minute, breathing the energy up the spine. Changing hands helps to activate both sides of the brain. Look up or allow the eyes to track a vertical plane like ceiling to floor at a corner to increase visual flexibility. Inhale as eyes go up the vertical plane and exhale as they move down.

3. Did you know that Winston Churchill wrote most of his books standing up at what's called a "standing desk"? Some schools now have standing desks for kids who can't sit still. They're a bit pricey so if your school doesn't have them, you can still let kids stand while they're learning.
   Who invented the "stay seated in your chair" rule anyway? Tip from Dr. MaryJo Wagner.

4. Hook-ups (Brain Gym)
   Brain Gym's Hook-ups is highly recommended for calming down, focusing, getting grounded and centered.
   **Part 1:** Sit quietly. Breathe deeply.
   Cross your right ankle over the left.
   Cross your right wrist over the left. With palms together, thumbs down, and fingers intertwined, bring your hands up under your chin.
   If it feels safe, close your eyes and continue to breathe slowly and deeply.
   **Part 2:** Uncross ankles and arms. Put fingertips together.

5. Tips for Relaxing, Focusing, and Testing
   Gently put your fingertips on your forehead just above your eyebrows and below the hairline.
   You're at that point in the middle of your eyebrows. Close your eyes*. Breathe deeply. And relax. It's not only relaxing but helps negative thoughts fade away. In Brain Gym® we call them "Positive Points". Whatever you call them, they're amazingly effective.
Academic: Release of memory blocks
Useful in studying spelling, math, social studies, or whatever when long-term memory is required

Behavioral: Organizational abilities
Study skills
Test performances

*Caution: Never make a child close their eyes. Sometimes that's really scary. You don't get to decide what is and what isn't scary for a child. They get to decide. When they're ready to close their eyes, they'll do it.

6. Some students seem to be doing something with their fingertips constantly. When they do it on their desks or something that makes noise, it drives you and the kids around them crazy, but if it is on their leg and no noise, who cares? It will help them focus and eventually they will learn other tools and won’t have to tap any more.

7. Helps improve focus and organize tasks and desks. Draw a triangle with one hand and two squares with the other hand while tracing a circle on the floor with one leg and nodding your head twice forward, then twice backwards. Switch hands and legs. Get more of these from Zaltsman Exercises. Tip from Dr. MaryJo Wagner

8. Music can have a calming affect for students and help them to focus. It doesn’t have to be Mozart but kids do best with music that's "on the beat."

9. Do 4 million kids really have ADHD? No! Four million kids don't have ADHD but 4 million kids have been diagnosed with it. ADHD is wildly over-diagnosed. Lots of these kids just need breakfast or need to be tested for allergies or need glasses or need more sleep or need less TV or need more exercise or need more Vitamin D or need less stimulation or . . .

So if 4 million kids don't have ADHD, is it real? You bet it's real. I've got it and I'd tell you all about it except that would take more words than a tip. Basically it's brain that never relaxes--except when you're sleeping. It's very annoying. It gets in the way. It's also a real gift. Tips by MaryJo Wagner, MD

10. Students with ADHD-like behaviors do better with more movement. “Zaltsman Exercises for Improving Attention and Organizational Abilities” can be a fun resource for managing ADHD-like behaviors in the classroom.

Supplies: Several sheets of unlined paper and 2 markers, crayons, or pencils (one for each hand) for each student.

Following are a few exercises:

1. Place a blank sheet of paper on the left and one on the right. With a pencil, crayon, or marker in each hand, simultaneously draw a vertical line on the right sheet and circle on the left sheet. Repeat three times. Alternate figures with each hand-vertical line on the right, then on the left. Circle on the left, then on the right.

2. Draw a triangle on one sheet while drawing a square on the other. Switch figures. Repeat three times.

3. Draw a circle on one sheet while drawing a triangle on the other. Switch figures. Repeat three times.

4. Draw two circles on one sheet while drawing one square on the other. Switch figures. Repeat three times.

11. Simon says point to the east. Or Simon Says point to Jaren. Or Simon says point to three words on the walls. Simon says point to the class rules on the chart. Use other movements than pointing, such as bending, turning, or twisting. How about jumping, lifting one leg or putting your left hand on your right shoulder while lifting your right leg. Make it simple. Make it more complicated. Just remember that movement is the key to learning. Tips by MaryJo Wagoner
12. Reading and Writing: Help Eliminate Reversals and Transpositions and Increase Fluency

A fun, easy Brain Gym Movement to activate both sides of the brain is “Lazy 8s”. You make a lazy 8 (8 lying on its side or the infinity symbol) at eye level in front of you. To begin put your thumb in front of your nose and extend your arm forward to find the mid point where the 8 will cross. With the fingers closed and the thumb up, move your hand counterclockwise up, over, and around returning to the mid point and then clockwise up, over, and around. The eyes follow the thumb. After you do this 3 times, change hands and repeat, finish by repeating with both hands together. Students especially like this one!

Academic: The mechanics of reading (left-to-right eye movement)
Symbol recognition for the decoding of written language)
Reading comprehension (long-term associative memory)

Behavioral: Relaxation of eyes, neck, and shoulders while focusing
Improved depth perception
Improved centering, balance, and coordination

13. Now that we know how to do lazy 8s. Here are some variations you can use with them:

- Draw the lazy 8s on a white board using different colored markers
- Draw on paper with pencil, colored pencil, or markers
- Draw the Lazy 8s in the air with streamers
- Draw them on different tactile surfaces like sand, paper, chalkboard
- Graduate the 8 from small to larger and vise versa. Draw first on parallel surface to the face and later on desk so the movement is connected to writing

14. Lazy 8 Walk A Game with motion and Brain Gym Movements:

Directions: Do Lazy 8 Neck Rolls before beginning.

1. Create a lazy 8 pattern on the floor using masking tape or orange cones.
2. Walk the lazy 8 pattern single file, swinging arms in sync with opposite leg.
3. Skip around the lazy 8 pattern
4. Touch the opposite knee as you move around the pattern.
5. Thrust out the opposite arm and leg while moving around the pattern.
6. Walk the lazy 8 pattern in reverse. Walk the chicken scratch and the step over.
7. Place your hands on your hips, alternating shoulders in sync with the opposite leg
8. Invite the children to do the Cross Crawl while they spin around the pattern
9. Invite players to take turns being the leader and doing different movements