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School Behavior Problems

BEHAVIORS COMMONLY DISPLAYED BY AD CHILDREN IN SCHOOL

Temper tantrums: AD children are quite capable of full-blown temper outbursts at school. Such outbursts can consist of any or all of the following: screaming, shouting, throwing objects, use of obscene language, verbal threats, physical threats, physical aggression, and running out of the classroom and sometimes all the way out of the building. Such extreme outbursts usually indicate that the child's anxiety has escalated, and the outburst is a desperate attempt to ward off the perceived threat. AD children can get to this level of anxiety in as little 1-2 minutes if they perceive a danger of sufficient magnitude.

The onset of behavioral difficulties with an AD child in the school setting can be very rapid and often without any "seeming apparent trigger". However, there is always a trigger- it just may not be very apparent. It often takes both close observation and "thinking on one's feet" to figure out some of these triggers. The more a teacher figures out about an AD student's triggers, the more effectively that teacher will be able to work with that student.

Regressive behaviors: AD children can exhibit a wide range of immature behaviors in the classroom, including: use of a babyish voice, crawling around on the floor, curling up under furniture, pretending to be an animal, noisemaking, perseverative verbalizations, speaking nonsensical language, making graphic sexual and / or excretory remarks, giddyish forced laughter, and others. These regressive behaviors usually signal an upsurge of anxiety in the child, and they function both as a way to get away from the anxiety as well as to remove the child from the teacher's immediate control which serves to lessen the child's anxiety. Though these behaviors can appear bizarre, they usually do not mean that the child is psychotic at that moment.

Nuisance behaviors: These are frequently occurring minor infractions (such as interrupting or asking excessive questions) that disrupt the simplest of everyday interactions. These nuisance kinds of behaviors serve a dual purpose. First, they serve as ongoing reminders that the AD student is not under the teacher's domain. Secondly, they are "probes" that the AD child sends out into the environment to acquire information about the situation. From others' reactions to these "behavioral probes", AD

children begin to piece together who is punitive and who is supportive; who will respond and who will ignore; who has a short fuse and who has a longer fuse, etc. The AD child uses the responses to his probes to figure out how to "work" the adults. When the AD child feels confident that he knows how to maneuver the teacher, the "honeymoon" will be over.

Provocative behaviors towards peers: AD children are deliberately provocative towards peers for a variety of reasons. Peers are vulnerable to react, and AD children will see the reaction as proof of their power to control others. Peers will need support and suggestions from adults to learn to minimize their responsiveness to the provocations. Provocative behavior, from an AD child towards peers, is almost impossible to eliminate solely by working with the AD child.

Teacher instruction: AD children often accept curriculum instruction from the teacher on an erratic basis. One day, the AD student can be focused, taking in information and on-task. The next day, he may seem completely unworkable, which can appear as "spaciness", "forgetfulness", "distractibility", calling out, outright defiance, or complaints of boredom and disinterest. Usually this fluctuating pattern of receptiveness to instruction is one more way the AD student seeks to remind the teacher that he doesn't readily submit to outside authority.

AD children presume to know the teacher's intention in assigning work: it has nothing to do with learning. To the AD child, academic tasks are given out simply as a way to control the child, keep her quiet, and prove to her that the teacher is in charge. Task completion is usually a reflection of how secure or insecure the AD child feels at a given moment. If the child feels confident about her control, then "yielding to the teacher" by doing the task won't be a problem. However, if the AD child isn't feeling so in control, then she is apt to choose to resist the task in order to "defeat the teacher".

Work production: The AD child most often either refuses to do assignments outright or does them in a haphazard, perfunctory manner. Occasionally, these children will apply themselves and often turn in a credible product when they do so. These seeming "lightning bolts" of intelligence, motivation, and effort are generally all too appealing to the adult world of teachers and parents; and that is precisely their purpose. The AD child dangles these moments of production in front of the adults to tantalize them into a game of trying to figure out what to do to get the AD student to perform like this more often. Taking this bait and entering this game is exactly like stepping in quicksand. The more the adults struggle to get the child to perform, the deeper the adults sink into the muck. Meanwhile, the AD child is "laughing all the way to the bank".

Understandably, teachers and parents often view the AD child's unpredictable work production, despite having the ability, as pure stubbornness. This is partially correct, but there is more going on than just stubbornness. This is just one more part of the AD child's 24 / 7 need to maintain control to feel safe.

The AD child's never completing work on a consistent, longer-term basis serves a self-protective function for the child in addition to its maddening impact on the adults. By not turning out enough work so that it can be measured reliably, the AD child cleverly avoids having to confront the disturbing reality that there is ability, knowledge, and power greater than his. In keeping his true ability elusively un-measurable, the AD child can keep his personal illusion intact that he is the smartest, most knowledgeable in the room. Protecting this belief in school is critical for the AD child to maintain his cornerstone belief that he has the ability to be in control of all people in all situations in all places.

Support / Praise: AD children commonly have one of three responses to receiving support and/or praise in the school setting: 1) accept the support without any clear overt reaction; 2) reject the support outright, and 3) accept and then denigrate the support. The AD student will recycle these three responses in an unpredictable sequence that defies any pattern. The teacher is left in the uncomfortable position of never knowing what will come back should support / praise be offered. Meanwhile, the child strategically creates the appearance of being immune to praise and support which is yet one more aspect of retaining control.

AD children rarely, if ever, express any gratitude for offers of support, as gratitude implies dependence and dependence is seen as dangerous by the AD child. Knowing this up front can be a buffer for teachers against feeling unappreciated and resentful when their extra efforts go unrecognized by the child.