



ATTENTION AND ORGANIZATION

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Attention is related to organizational ability and inattention contributes to disorganization since it is difficult to organize that which is not perceived completely.

Disorganization on the other hand, may result in the child having difficulty selecting those aspects of the environment that deserve attention. If one shuts his eyes to "tune out" distractions, they may also be shutting out things that may be very meaningful.

Often, older students with a short attention span will remark: "This is Dumb!" "Why do we have to do this?" "What good will it make if I lean this?"

The Word of God says that we have been given a sound mind (2 Tim. 1:7). His power is at work in the minds of students, causing the mind to function as God intended to be attentive and organized.

Proverbs says, "My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart. For they are life unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh" (4:20-22).

If the Word of God instructs us to attend, it is possible for every student to achieve this end they can become good attenders. God is a God of order. I Cor. 14:40 instructs us to carry out our work decently and in order.

From early age Children, must be taught to attend. Consider some of the following strategies:

1. Eyes this way. Command the student to keep his eyes on the teacher. If needed, use a physical touch by placing a hand on the shoulder of child who is not attending. Praise those who are attending. Use "do it" signals only after children are attending. For example, "Class (Pause)" "Everyone..." When asking for attention face the child, especially when giving directions. Do not talk to the chalkboard.

2. Modeling. Teachers can model good listening skills. Many times, teachers do not attend to children when they are talking, or to give their full attention to them.

3. Directions. Try to give directions by having children place their bodies in different positions such as having one hand on top of the head when you give directions or by standing to listen.

4. "Show and tell" helps teach attention, especially when the children who are doing the telling get an opportunity to ask questions of children who are listening.

5. Listen. Does the child really know what it means to "listen"? Define it in observable terms, e.g., "feet flat on floor," "sit up straight," "eyes on the teacher."

6. "Simon says" could be used when giving important directions. Check to see which children get the directions by having them repeat back to you the direction.

7. Voice Patterns. Change voice pattern. You are in control of your delivery. Use it to your advantage.

8. Commands. Practice 3-5 part commands. This will combine responding with remembering.

9. Review importance in listening and some of the people students need to listen to and why. Include such things as police sirens, railroad crossings, school bells, fire drills, etc.

10. Have children listen and report on sounds they hear in classroom and the importance of picking out the teacher's voice.

11. Repeating. Teach children to repeat what the teacher has said by giving the information back in their own words. Provide corrective feedback, "Yes" "You are to take out a piece of paper. Good listening." or "No, I said to take out a piece of paper." "I like the way Peter has his paper out on his desk," etc.

12. Use a secret word such as "listen". Decide ahead of time how many times you will use the secret word during the day. Tell the children to listen for the secret word and keep track on a piece of paper the number of times they hear you saying the word. Use the word only during those times when you are giving important directions.

13. Praise children who are attending and reward attending behavior; consider token system, buttons, stars, points, etc. for attending and direction following, etc.

14. Good Behavior Game. Play good behavior game where children are divided into teams. Teams are awarded with points based on how well they listened during direction giving. Points are posted on chalkboard. Teams with a certain number of points can be released at first bell.

15. Cueing. Make instructions visually outstanding by starring, underlining, placing in brackets, superimposing pictures or cartoons, using different color ink.

16. Attention Chart. Create a chart and have student chart his own progress in attending to instructions.

Organization

For those children who are having extreme difficulty with organization:

1. Avoid all elements that may be confusing to the student.
2. Consider consistent negative consequences for being disorganized and positive ones for being organized.
3. Consequences for disorganization or organization must be understood.
4. Set firm limits and divide complicated instructions into smaller task segments.
5. Set up routines that are orderly where children can predict events and outcomes of who, when, where, why.

Limit number of choices to be made and see that all choices are clear and definite.

7. Find powerful rewards or reinforcers for starting work on time, finishing, working independently, etc.
8. Avoid nagging and ridicule or sarcasm for not attending. Sarcasm creates a laughing point, embarrasses, and hinders establishing positive relationships. Cutting remarks sugar coated as humor can cause deeply hurt feelings. Use a positive approach. Find small areas where they are attending and praise them. Praise areas where they are organized. Show them what is expected and inspect.
9. Cardinal rule is to have an attitude of acceptance which will cause the child to feel worthy of help, potentially adequate and lovable. Display warmth, and friendliness.
10. Teach the child ways to be organized to learn through establishing easy to follow routines-papers in folders, written schedules, etc.
11. God has given your students a sound mind. A mind that is disorganized and nonattentive is not pleasing to God. Make this a matter of prayer. Counsel with the child concerning God's expectations for soundness of mind.