Free guide for parents

Yochai Leshem

Attention from a different angle

A child under stress is not a free child: four steps for parents

A hike on a volcano

Imagine someone invites you to study a philosophy text on a volcano that's about to erupt. You wouldn't be free for it. Not because you can't concentrate, but because you're under stress. Many of the attention difficulties I meet are linked to inner stress the child is carrying. So the first question is not "what's wrong with him?", but "what is filling his stress cup?"

1 Understand: the body seeks balance

When the stress cup fills up, the body opens taps:

- Restlessness and physical agitation.
- Outbursts and jumping from one thing to another.
- In some children, tics that increase under stress.

"Sit still!" only closes one tap, and the water is still in the cup. Better to give the body a good tap: movement, outdoor play, sport and creating.

2 Know your child's nature

Every child is born with his own way of meeting the world. When life doesn't fit that nature, stress builds up:

- Clever hands: loves to take apart, fix and build.
- A thinking head: loves to plan, think and analyze.
- A moving body: learns through movement and experience.

None of them is a problem. Each one blossoms in the place that suits him. Ask yourself: where does my child blossom, and where does he switch off?

> **Important to know**
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> This angle does not replace a diagnosis. Attention difficulties, and certainly tics, can also have a neurological background and other causes. If the difficulty is hurting your child, consult the pediatrician or a professional.

3 Equip him with strengths

A child without self-confidence meets every test, new friend and hard task as a threat. And every threat adds a drop to the cup:

- See small successes and say them out loud.
- Praise effort, not only results.
- Give him a task he's good at, and let him lead.

Self-confidence is armor. A child who believes in his ability meets the world with less stress, and has more strength to concentrate.

4 Lower stress first, then ask for focus

- Before homework: a small snack, movement and a moment of quiet.
- Notice what happened just before he "disappeared".
- Choose the right solution at the right time, with open eyes.

Medication can also be the right solution. Starting, changing or stopping medication is done only with a doctor.

✂ Cut out and stick on the fridge

The question of the week

What is filling his stress cup?

What I discovered:

Want to go deeper?

On the site you'll find the full article "A child under stress is not a free child", and the "Attention and Focus at Home" course: six short video lessons, a summary sheet for each lesson and a task for each week.

parenting.yochai-leshem.com/en/

Yochai Leshem is a clinical social worker who leads an attention and focus center and has been guiding children and parents with his own method since 2005.