



Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

What is hyperactivity and impulsivity?

Hyperactivity and impulsivity are often linked to Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

Hyperactivity – always on the go, never still; seems to have an internal engine that never switches off

Impulsivity – acts on a whim, doesn't pause to consider consequences/danger, appears not to have the ability to learn from experience, often interrupts/buds in/talks over adults and peers

We currently refer to the condition as ADHD, not ADD (attention deficit disorder). The distinction is: children with ADD (now called inattentive ADHD) still present with extreme issues relating to attention – but hyperactive component is not present. These are the more 'living in their own world' type of children who are often observed day-dreaming. At school these young people are often overlooked by their teachers because they do not necessarily present with high levels of undesired behaviours.

A Biological/Neurologic explanation

Children with hyperactivity and impulsivity lack brain chemicals that stimulate the frontal lobe of the brain. The frontal lobe is associated with reward, attention, short-term memory tasks (ability to remember what you have just been told/what you just saw), planning, and motivation. When the brain lacks these chemicals, it processes, reacts and responds very slowly. So, the hyperactive/impulsive child constantly has to deal with a flood of unfiltered information from which he/she has to try to work out where to pay attention to first, and what's most important to pay attention to.