



TOPIC IN FOCUS

ATTENTION

WHAT, WHY, HOW...

WHY IS ATTENTION IMPORTANT?

Attention is important because it is the first step to learning new information or completing tasks. By keeping focus on a task we are able to take in the information relating to that task more fully and make more meaning of that information. Attention to a task also helps us to problem solve. By attending to a problem it is easier to come up with strategies to solve it. Good attention allows you to manipulate information in your mind before coming up with a solution.



WHY DO PEOPLE LOSE ATTENTION?

It is normal to have fluctuating attention levels. There are peaks and troughs throughout the day when our attention fluctuates. In mid-morning our attention is better than after a long day at work or school. There are many reasons why attention changes. When attention declines, it can be a sign of fatigue, due to a distraction or that we are not engaged in the subject matter.

WHAT ARE THE SIGNS OF ATTENTION PROBLEMS?

A person will be hyperactive and struggle to control their impulses, and/or they will have trouble paying attention. If you are concerned about your child's attention, you should consult a professional.

WHAT IS ATTENTION?

Attention is the ability to keep focused on an event or occurrence. It can be thought of as a spotlight that focuses awareness on part of your environment or on thoughts in your mind. Paying attention happens when we are able to manage the spotlight and direct it to where we want to focus. It is normal to have distractions such as brief thoughts or noise but good attention allows us to bring our focus back to where we want it.



HOW CAN PARENTS HELP?

- **Balanced lifestyle and predictable routine** – good sleep, healthy eating and exercise as well as breaks from screen time. Develop daily rituals and routines such as a morning routine (preparing for work or school) and evening routine (preparing for the next day and for bed).
- **Remove distractions** – turn off noise in the background when doing school work e.g. TV and music, create a quiet space for school work, put phone on silent and out of immediate reach.
- **Do it together** – It is easier to keep working, if everyone around us is working. Finding time at home where everyone is completing tasks can help with getting homework done.
- **Encourage following interests** – young people are more likely to engage in tasks that are interesting.
- **Provide positive reinforcement** – schedule small rewards earned for periods of concentrated studies. Mix low interest activities with high interest activities.
- **Be specific and task focussed** – keep homework sessions short and provide a timed break, 'prime' your child for activities to ensure they know what to expect and what is required.
- **Encourage frequent self-monitoring** – encourage your child to ask themselves "What should I be doing now?"
- **Active learning** – encourage your child to repeat material that is heard or read and restate it in their own words.

By Ms Stephanie Bennett and Ms Monica Bignold,
College Psychologists • E: counselling@joeysof.org