



LIFE WITHOUT STRESS

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Will plain walls help a student with ADD?

One of the most common suggestions made in the management of Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) in order to help a student focus is to place them in an environment devoid of external stimulation. Plain walls, no pictures, absolute quiet.

On the surface, this sounds like sage advice. On the surface it makes sense because the ADD student will appear to be distracted by all these stimuli to the exclusion of the subject on which you want them to be focusing.

On the surface.

This doesn't always work. I've observed classrooms in which it was used and seen the frustrations of both teacher and student in these settings. I've tried it, also without success. I'm assuming its popularity is due to the lack of a viable alternative. I'd like to suggest one.

Basically, the solution lies in observing one specific peculiarity that is commonly found with ADD. In ADD (or ADHD) individuals with whom I've worked there have always been one or two isolated subjects or skills in which they thrive. They are able to process the information exceptionally well and produce well above average performances. Much to the frustration of parents and teachers comes from not being able to figure out why the children (or adolescents or even other adults) perform so well in one or two areas but not in any others.

It seems that the principle issue here is self-identity. People with ADD tend to have a poor self-identity and subsequently poor self-esteem. Because of this it's difficult for them to motivate themselves to work on projects with which they struggle. By the time they've been distracted by pictures on the wall, their commitment to the subject at hand has been long gone. The stimulation they seek is provided internally as a product of their own minds. In a bland setting mental images and wildly creative thoughts will take over.

In other words, day dreaming. We're (I have ADHD) creating an environment in our minds if necessary that attempts to fulfill the need for identity.

The explanation for not subduing their surroundings and the fact that they excel in certain specific areas is a matter of emotional content, their emotional investment in the subject or project.

When the ADD student is performing well, they're emotionally involved with that subject. Their identity is being reinforced by it. It may utilize a natural ability that brings with it peer or adult recognition. Whatever the cause, once internalized, it drives the person with ADD forward often with magnificent results.

It's also time to set aside the mistaken belief that it's the visual stimulation of computer games that captures the ADD kids. There are plenty of ADD kids profoundly stimulated by more intellectual games. It's how it makes them feel about themselves as they exercise skills that feel effective. It's about emotional investment.

Any method that helps them to feel accomplished, effective and worthwhile will bring out their best effort, academic or otherwise.

Come to think of it, that's true for everyone.

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