

OCTOBER 2016

DEAR DR. ROBYN

## FOCUS

**Young students:** "I pay attention even when it is hard to do!"

**Older students/teens/adults:** "Using laser-like concentration even when there are distractions."

*Dear Dr. Robyn,*

My 7-yr-old child is having trouble focusing in school. I wish it was just one thing but it's not. She gets distracted and antsy depending on where she sits, who she sits next to, what time of day it is or even what kind of skill she is working on at the time. How can I help her?

Rachel R; Washington, DC

*Dear Rachel,*

I understand! Many children have trouble focusing in school. Your daughter is not alone!

Focus is required throughout the school day. Children need to pay attention even when distractions are inevitable. Reasons for lack of focus range from reduced daily recess time to larger class sizes, bigger teacher to student ratios, difficulty dealing with troubling life events and distraction disorders like ADHD.

Of course, there are some ways to help our children reduce some distraction in their lives. To help your child focus, try the following:

**(1) Get excess energy out:** Many children need to stretch, exercise and let out extra energy before, during and/or after sitting for long periods of time. I know that I need to do this too-- do you? If this is the case for your child, have them

do some other kind of movement before school, if possible. Encourage them, if needed, to get up during an appropriate time in class to stretch or walk and to use recess or breaks wisely!

**(2) Enlist the help of the teacher:** For some children, the teacher can be a wonderful resource when it comes to ideas to expend energy and cope with distraction. A child might need to use a tool, like silly putty, to keep his hands busy while listening in class. Other children might need to stand periodically or take a break. Still others may need to be positioned in a specific place in the room for best results. Ask the teacher what can work best for your child in his/her class.

**(3) Recognize effort:** Children are still learning and growing. Their brains are developing and may need more time to get used to focusing for long periods of time. When your children are trying and working on concentrating,

**POWERFUL  
WORDS**  
CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

<< Paraphrased from a message; with permission

recognize the effort. They need to know that the process of helping themselves is part of the win!

**(4) See your doctor or school resource team:** If your child is still having challenges, ask his/her doctor or school professionals for some ideas. S/he may need additional assistance to help him/her thrive. There is no shame in asking and receiving help!

**Here's to your success!**

