

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES
MANAGING THE
HYPERACTIVE
STUDENT

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MANAGING THE HYPERACTIVE STUDENT

- A hyperactive student is not hard to recognize. He is the student who is constantly on the move, bouncing from one task to another and rarely completing any. Even if he is sitting in his seat, he is anything but still as he fidgets, wiggles, twists and turns. He is a “mover and shaker” in the literal sense of the words. A hyperactive student can usually be found anywhere and everywhere, except in his seat.
- It would be nice if teachers could simply turn off a switch with hyperactive students to calm their behavior, but there are no easy answers with these children. Indeed, teaching a hyperactive student can be one of the most challenging management problems that teachers face. It can also be one of the most exasperating, especially if he is disrupting your ability to teach and students’ ability to learn.
- The challenge in working with hyperactive children is to balance the needs of these students with the needs of your other students. You want to create an optimal learning environment for the hyperactive student, mindful of the issues of peer rejection and low self-esteem. At the same time, you want to minimize the disruption to your other students. This requires considerable structure, support and consistency. It also demands your patience and restraint in the face of often difficult and frustrating behavior.

MANAGING THE HYPERACTIVE STUDENT

What can you do?

1. Identify the source of the student's high activity level. While his hyperactivity may stem from an attention deficit disorder that has a physiological basis, it may also result from other causes. It may be, for example, that the work is too hard for the student, causing him to be frustrated, or too easy, causing him to be bored. Also check whether the student is confused about the directions or lacks the materials needed to complete the task. In addition, consider whether his high activity level reflects agitation or distress.

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What can you do?

2. Adjust your classroom standards. In particular, you may have to rethink your assumption that all students must be seated at their desks, facing forward, feet on the floor, and back straight. For example, you might allow a hyperactive student to stand up near his desk, walk around with a clipboard, or read while standing as long as he does not disrupt other students. Some teachers have even let their more active students work in the hall (under their watchful eye) so they can get up and walk around when they are feeling antsy.

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What can you do?

3. Give the student a break. A hyperactive student tends to get restless sooner than other students. If so, give him a breather. For example, you might have him work for 20 minutes on a math assignment, then take a break for five minutes, and then begin work on a reading task. Have the student engage in some movement during the break by, for example, going to the bathroom or getting a drink of water.

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What can you do?

4. Provide opportunities for the student to release excess energy. Allow him to redirect his seemingly boundless energy by engaging in constructive activities rather than moving around aimlessly. In this way, he learns to be responsible and contribute to the class while releasing energy that might otherwise disturb other students. Feeling a sense of belonging is especially important to the hyperactive student. The following are some examples of activities that you might ask him to do: decorate a bulletin board; collect or distribute papers; feed the animals in your classroom; and take a message to another teacher.

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What can you do?

5. Allow the student to manipulate objects at his desk. Some hyperactive students are able to play with small items and still stay on task and remain in their seat. Indeed, doing so may actually help them pay attention. Consider letting an active student play with such items as a paper clip or a pipe cleaner as long as he can remain on task. Or you might let him squeeze a stress ball to release tension while sitting in his seat. Another stress reliever is to have him place an elastic exercise band under his desk and press his legs against it while sitting at his desk.

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What can you do?

6. Set up a work space for the student. Establish physical parameters for him by placing masking tape around his desk to make a square or rectangle, putting the tape about a foot or so beyond the desk on all four sides. Tell him that this is his “office” and that he can stand up or move around as long as he stays within the boundaries of his work space, but that he can’t leave the space without your permission. This will give him a feeling of freedom, but also help him learn some self-control. With time, you may want to make the space smaller by bringing in the tape.

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What can you do?

7. Establish a signal to cue a student that he is out of his seat. Just as you might with a student with an attention problem, arrange a subtle signal with a hyperactive student to alert him that he needs to return to his seat. This might be a wink of your eye, a touch on your shoulder, or a pull on your ear. You may need to quietly say his name to get his attention. If necessary, follow up the signal with a verbal reminder to the student to return to his seat.

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What can you do?

8. Ticket, please. If the student gets out of his seat often to do such things as sharpen his pencil or ask you a question, you might give him a limited number of tickets and require that he give you a one when he wants to leave his seat. When he runs out of tickets, he is not allowed to leave his seat. If he does, take away three minutes from his recess every time he leaves his seat. This will help teach him self-control while lessening his out-of-seat behavior.

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What can you do?

9. Arrange for the student to wear a weighted vest. This is a vest with extra weight that has been used to help distractible or hyperactive students calm down and relax. Some teachers have also used moist neck rolls with hyperactive children. When worn around the neck, they can provide weight, heat and tactile stimulation that may lessen stress and calm the student. If your school has an occupational therapist, ask her if these items are appropriate and available for your student

- Adapted from:

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