
The Best Approach to Dealing with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder or ADHD in Children

Abstract

The debate over medication or behavioral therapy when dealing with a child with ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) has been going on since medications such as Ritalin have been developed. Are drugs really more effective in the modification of a child's behavior, or is therapy a more reasonable way to go? Perhaps a combination of both can be an even better alternative.

Drugs or Therapy

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a growing problem in today's society. Lack of focus and inability to sit still and remain quiet are some of the symptoms associated with this disorder. Disruptive behavior from a child with ADHD can be a lot to handle. They can be abusive, destructive and very disobedient. Many parents have tried various ways to counteract such negative behavior. Some have used therapy and others use medication as a way to help influence the child's behavior to reduce hyperactivity and negative outbursts and help maintain focus. What methods are truly effective in controlling a child's outbursts? Can such actions be corrected by manual discipline or is a medical approach a more reasonable way to go? Or perhaps a little of both may be appropriate. Should a child be on medication for his behavior or should the parents work harder to correct the situation?

As a child grows and develops, knowing what to know what they are capable of doing is natural. This includes pushing the limits and boundaries set out by their parents. As a way of testing the waters, a normal child will deliberately disobey to learn the consequences of their actions. On the other hand, a child with a behavioral issue such as ADHD will continue to push the envelope to see how far they can go and what it takes to get their way. ADHD (Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is a very common issue in today's youth. According to research, approximately 9% of children in the United States have been diagnosed with ADHD (SciCurious, 2012). Drugs such as Ritalin and Adderall have been used to help counteract the symptoms associated with ADHD since the 1970's (SciCurious, 2012).

Medications have been known to help treat the symptoms of ADHD by lowering hyperactivity and increasing focus. In an article in Time, children voiced their opinions on the effects of their medications (Szalavitz, M. 2012). One child stated that his medication "slows my brain down and makes good ideas stay longer" (Szalavitz, M. 2012). Having the ability to put a reign around your child's behavior is an amazing accomplishment. Not just for your own piece of mind and sanity, but also for the benefit of the children themselves. Bringing normalcy into a child's life gives them the opportunity to succeed in the future. Being able to graduate on time or even hold a steady job can be a major accomplishment. Long term friendships and relationships are also a possibility once behavioral issues associated with ADHD become manageable.

Medication does have its drawbacks. Chemical dependency and the side effects caused by some medications can ultimately be catastrophic. Other approaches in the way of therapy have been known to show significant results in the battle against ADHD. Studies conducted by psychologist Bill Pelham of Florida International University, has shown that behavioral therapy for both child and parents has produced results similar to that of children taking medication (SciCurious, 2012). Getting the same effect as medication without the use of drugs is a great long term option. Medication only lasts so long until the next dose is due but therapy lasts a lifetime with no side effects.

Most research has shown that a balanced combination of therapy and medication can have the biggest positive impact on a child's behavior (Chang, H., Chang, C., & Shih, Y. 2007). While there is no cure, no single solution can be found to be perfect in treating the symptoms ADHD. It takes time and effort to find what works for each child (Chang, 2007). Learning the skills needed to succeed and medication to maintain focus and discipline, most children have been very responsive to drug and therapy combinations (SciCurious, 2012).

While it has been proven that therapy can be just as effective as medication and a combination of the two can be a game changer, it is ultimately up to the parents of the children on the route of care that will be provided for them. Many factors can influence the overall behavior of a child. Whether it is a medical condition or just the child trying to assert themselves, different approaches are necessary in order to find what it takes to find out what the problem is and what the cause of it is. While parents can be to blame just as much as the child, it can be something more that should be medically investigated. The welfare of the child and the entire family depends on the resolution of behavioral problems wherever they may lie.

I give the example of my own family and our 6 year old son, Cody. This child is out of control and he is pushing my wife and I to the edge. Although he has not been diagnosed with ADHD, it is very possible that he might have it. I think that he should be evaluated and possibly put on medication, but my wife is the complete opposite. She believes that he can be controlled as long as we are firm and consistent. She thinks that therapy can be beneficial but rejects the option of medication. Having conducted my own research for this assignment I believe that in our situation we should receive therapy for our son but keep the option open for medication not as a substitute but as a supplement to be used in conjunction with therapy and structure.

Parents themselves can be the underlying factor behind the disruptive behavior as well and may have caused the development of or may have nothing to do with ADHD altogether. Spoiling a child can give them the impression that they get whatever they want and do whatever they want. Physical abuse can cause a child to be defiant in retaliation against the abuser. Whatever the case may be, it is in the best interest of the child to find the source of the problem and treat it so they can have the best possible life available to them.