

Creating a Healthy Brain for Children with ADHD

by Yehudit Weinstock

Tommy, an adorable 4 year old, had been diagnosed with the autism spectrum disorder PDD-NOS at 2 years old. Tommy was a terror at home. He was fully verbal but could not sit or stand still for more than a moment. He had no interest in childhood play or toys and could rip his parents' home to pieces with just a blink of an eye. Interventions including speech therapy, OT, and ABA helped his behaviors and skills, but due to his hyperactivity he still could not be left without supervision for even a minute. At this stage, Tommy came to the A+ Center for an evaluation. The evaluation took much longer than expected, since Tommy kept running out of the room and made a mess of the entire place. However, after six months of following a comprehensive full spectrum of therapy using the FOSA approach his behavior totally transformed. Tommy now is a full time student in a regular mainstream school and is doing great.

This is only one example of many typical examples of hyperactive children. Although Tommy did not have an ADHD diagnosis, some of his characteristics were symptoms of ADHD. Because ADHD overlaps with so many disorders it often is very difficult to know if a child really has ADHD or if it's something else. Tommy for instance had vision, proprioception and balance issues. His initial evaluators picked up on certain things; however, they missed his other issues. A child that is not grounded and struggles with other issues usually will act up and is then classified as an ADHD child. Thus, the question remains what causes the above mentioned issues and how can we help children acquire their missing skills?

Building a Healthy Brain

There are numerous theories and studies with different findings that try to pinpoint the causes of ADHD and other issues. ADHD is so complicated because there really is no one specific problem that causes ADHD. It actually is a combination of issues. However, all these issues have a connection to the brain which is the controller of our whole body. Therefore, in order for the body to function properly we need a healthy brain. Focusing on building a



Before (left) and after (right) images of an assessment done with Tommy before starting treatment and after having treatment.

healthy brain will automatically help all the other issues that impact the child.

How can we build a healthy brain? We have to start by looking at what the brain needs to function in a proper healthy state. For the brain to function properly it needs Fuel, Oxygen, Stimulation and Acceptance (FOSA). The first 3 were identified by Professor Frederick Carrick, founder of Functional neurology (Beck, 2011), and my research and experience have led me to add Acceptance as the last component.

To promote proper brain function, the brain needs *fuel* (nutrition) to grow and *oxygen* for proper circulation. In addition the brain needs to be *stimulated* to promote development. For instance, a child who is locked up in a stroller since birth and suddenly is expected at age one to walk will not be able to perform the task of walking since the motor part of the brain was

not prepared for walking. In order for a child to begin to walk the child needs to first develop certain reflexes, balance and vision, which is stimulated by crawling, creeping, turning, sitting up, etc... (Doman & Doman, 2006). Thus, if there is fuel and oxygen but no stimulation, brain development cannot take place—all the components are essential. Furthermore, if a child is not accepted by parents, teachers, friends or family, the brain shuts down

and no stimulation, fuel, or oxygen will help further its development. Therefore, when trying to help the child, the child needs to first feel that he/she is accepted, appreciated and loved.

In summary, if the brain has FOSA, the components needed to build a healthy brain, it is able to function properly. Once Tommy's brain was given what he needed, he progressed in all areas which eventually helped clear all his other issues as well.

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