



Parenting Playground

brought to you by
Child Development Council
609 West Clinton Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
(607)273-0259
www.childdevelopmentcouncil.org
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An Olympic Athlete and ADHD

Dr. H.S. Koplewicz, Director of the Child Study Center at NYU Langone Medical Center, says that there is a “tremendous amount of pride” when patients diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) recognize Michael Phelps as one of them. Michael Phelps is proving to be a role model and an inspiration for parents and their children who have been diagnosed with ADHD. The tremendous amount of energy seen in ADHD patients may be able to be channeled into something productive, rather than seen as simply a burden which limits them for a lifetime.

Not everyone sees it in such a positive light and are actually worried that it may interrupt or prevent someone with ADHD from getting help that they need to lead productive lives. Not everyone with ADHD can become an Olympic swimmer and many will struggle with the distracting thoughts and surging energy they feel.

Dr. Edward Hallowell, a psychiatrist and author, feels that patients need a view of ADHD that recognizes the potential strengths of the disorder, rather than treating it as a deficit-based medical model which he says can result in low-self esteem. Dr. Hallowell feels that “...if you manage it right, this apparent deficit can become an asset. I think of it as a trait and not a disability.”

Recognizing the potential strengths of a diagnosis with ADHD and finding outlets for those strengths, certainly will give a boost to patients who may feel that they are doomed. On the other hand, recognizing strengths does not mean denying other types of medication or therapy which may help a child focus as he or she looks to Michael Phelps as their hero.

(Content from NYTimes, 11/25/08; A New Face for ADHD and a Debate)





More Than One Way to Have Intelligence

“Frames of Mind,” by Howard Gardner, proposes that there are many types of intelligence. The IQ scores that most of us are familiar with are based on verbal or mathematical skills. It is a great relief to have it recognized that children have and show intelligence in more than these two categories. Here are seven categories of intelligence which better encompass the whole child, rather than having limitations. A child probably will show characteristics in more than one category but stand out in one.

Bodily-kinesthetic: Dancers, athletes and even actors can fall into this category. Does your child tend towards physical activities? Is it difficult for him to keep still? Is he a ‘contact’ learner, needing to practice a skill, rather than watching someone else do it or reading about it?

Does he show skills in fine-motor activities?

Interpersonal: People who are very aware of others’ feelings, moods and needs of others fall into this category. Is your child very social? Does he empathize easily with others? Is he helpful to other children? Does he show leadership qualities?

Intrapersonal: Does your child show a side of self-knowledge? Does he enjoy playing by himself? Do you see him looking in ‘deep thought’? Is he independent and reluctant to join in groups? Has he shown that he has a strong will?

Linguistic: People strong in this trait rely on their verbal skills. Does your child tell stories or carry on a verbal conversation while playing? Does he enjoy books, especially stories with rhyming. Is he able to explain what he is thinking?

Logical-Mathematical: Children who enjoy learning numbers, counting their toys or practice lining up items such as blocks in patterns have a strength in this trait. They not only enjoy math but like to play strategy games. They may also have a tendency to find out how things work by taking them apart.

Musical: Characteristics of this trait can be seen in children who not only love to sing or play a musical instrument, but also those who respond to music. Children who sing along to music, or are often singing to themselves, belong in this category. So do children who enjoy playing a musical instrument or can identify different instruments in a piece of music.

Naturalist: Children who not only spend time but show an interest in the outdoors tend towards this trait. They might be drawn to animals, insects, birds, as well as appreciating plant life. They are the children that not only want a pet but really have an interest in taking care of the pet and becoming attached.

Spatial: This is one of the most difficult to categorize. Children who tend to enjoy things like jigsaw puzzles or putting together lego creations fall in this category. Also children who are good at drawing and pay attention to color have spatial intelligence.

These are all brief descriptions of a complex theory poised by Howard Gardner. It is meant so that adults think broadly about a child’s strengths in many categories; and through observation, can provide activities and environments to help the child reach his own potential.