Keeping Your Child On Task

Family Tip Sheet | Primary and Elementary School

Introduction

Keeping yourself on task can be a challenge. And it's not always easy keeping your child on task, either. With all the things that beep, buzz, tweet, and text at you and your child, staying on task even for a few minutes can be challenging. What can you do to help your youngster stay focused and on task in a world full of distractions? How can you prevent modern technology from becoming something that's as harmful as it is helpful? How can you and your child work together to create an environment that helps her or him stay on task? Continue reading for some ideas that might help.

Table Talk

Talk with your youngster about things he or she can do to stay on task. Ask:

1. Does listening to your music help you stay on task, or do you need it quiet while you work?
2. Do you prefer to be alone while you're studying, or do you like to have people around you?
3. Does it help you stay on task to have a friend over to do homework with you?

Tips & Tricks

- **Suggest taking breaks.** Getting up and moving around helps the brain process. Research has shown that sitting for long periods of time without a break is harmful to your child's health.
- **Suggest making goals.** Sometimes it helps for your child to set a goal. Maybe your youngster can make a goal of reading five pages of her or his book, and then rewarding herself or himself with a short break or a healthy snack before reading the next five pages.
- **Talk with your child about foods that affect the ability to focus.** Too much sugar can make a person agitated and make it hard to stay on task. Keep healthy snacks like apples, tangerines, and bananas available for your youngster.

Plan & Practice

Help your child practice staying on task:

- **Experiment with background music.** Although some music is a distraction, research indicates that other types of music can help increase a child's attention span. Find music that helps your child stay on task and then plan to have that music available for tasks.
- **Encourage your child to practice self-monitoring.** Ask your child to keep a record of how long he or she can stay on task without being distracted. Set a target goal with your child—maybe 20 minutes of uninterrupted task time—and make it a game to see how long it takes to reach that goal.
- **Practice limiting the amount of time your child uses technology.** Research indicates that too much time watching television or playing video games can shorten attention spans. Texting and computer use can also impede focus. Parents have important choices to make regarding the use of technology.

Learn More

For more information on how to help your grade school student with homework, check out the sites below:

- ***Great Schools***
  http://www.greatschools.org/parenting/behavior-discipline/3018-helping-kids-focus.gs
  Five ways to help children stay focused.
- ***Health Central***
  http://www.healthcentral.com/adhd/raising-child-with-adhd-278679-5.html
  Helping your child with ADHD stay focused in school.
- ***Spelling Bee of Canada***
  http://spellingbeeofcanada.ca/three-easy-ways-increase-your-childs-attention-span
  Three easy ways to increase your child's attention span.

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