



**VRANCH HOUSE: HELPFUL HINTS
TIPS TO HELP WITH FOCUS, SELF-ESTEEM &
BEHAVIOUR**

The following ideas may help the child at school, some may help at home, and some may be relevant everywhere!

The list is by no means exhaustive! It may help any children who have problems with any of the following areas: Attention & concentration, listening to instructions, Following instructions correctly, remembering what to do next, listening carefully, Self-evaluation, Self-esteem and Self-confidence, writing problems

Giving instructions

- Before you start, ensure that the child is not moving, is looking at you and is paying attention
- Give instructions in simple straightforward language
- Don't give too many instructions at once – one at a time may be enough
- When asking a child to carry out a task, give the instructions in the correct sequential order e.g. Now it is time to change into your PE kit but before you do don't forget to tidy up' say 'tidy up and then change into your PE kit' or instead of saying 'off to bed and remember to clean your teeth' say 'go clean your teeth, then go to bed'

Distractions

- Keep the space in which the child is working as clutter-free as possible – it helps minimise distractions
- Keep external noise/movement to a minimum, e.g. TV and others moving around doesn't help concentration while doing homework!
- Within the classroom, sitting in the middle of a busy class can make it difficult for a child to concentrate. The buzz of extra stimuli may help him/her to feel insecure or frustrated. It may help the child to be facing 'front', fairly close to the teacher in as quiet and unfrenzied an atmosphere as possible.
- It may help to have the child's workplace as secure/distraction-free as possible. For example, next to a wall will cut out distractions from one side.
- Some children are fidgety and can't sit still because they need to wriggle in order to give themselves additional sensory information as to where their body is. They are not necessarily being restless.

Handwriting

- Handwriting may be a problem – it helps to look at the position of the child before he/she starts. The non-writing hand should support the paper, the paper should be at an angle, and their feet should be either on the floor or on a block if the floor is too far away.
- A writing slope board often makes writing easier as well as encouraging good posture (why don't we still follow the good example of the monks!)

Organisation

- Organisation may be a problem, label all belongings!

- Have a container for different sorts of belongings, e.g. a pencil case for pencils, a drawstring bag for PE kit, and a school bag that will help keep schoolwork flat.
- Encourage the child to tidy up after each activity – this will improve organisational skills, promotes a sense of order as well as minimising distractions. It also helps the child to focus more fully on the next task.
- A write on - wipe off board on which the child can write his/her timetable, things to remember etc. may be useful. Most children love these boards. A sense of control and autonomy may be encouraged.

Homework

- Homework may be a nightmare – try not to nag
- It may take a child much longer than others to complete less work. Despite time and effort, the quantity and quality may be lacking.
- Negotiate with the parent/teacher/child about what is reasonable and praise the little success and moments of good concentration. Don't make them sit there forever – a good 5 minutes may be all that he/she can manage to start with.
- Encourage the child to evaluate his/her own work/achievements
- It is important for the child to have time for him/herself and friends. Because things take longer to do, this time may be curtailed. Try to allow the child plenty of time for play/exploration/socialising.

Self Esteem

- Self-esteem is one of the most important attributes a child can have. This must not be compromised in any way!
- Be positive about what the child is doing however small. Try to avoid being over-critical or comparing him/her to others.
- Reward the child with rewards that are appropriate to the child, e.g. extra football may be a nightmare for some children but a dream for others. Commendations/certificates/achievement stars may be valuable for reinforcement.
- Select tasks that the child can achieve with reasonable ease – this will build self-confidence, the desire to do more and the feeling that it is worth trying! No one likes tasks that are too easy. The child may feel inadequate or reluctant to admit failure if the task is too difficult.
- Try to avoid tasks which highlight the child's difficulties, e.g. if PE/sport are difficult he/she may enjoy getting exercise through walking, cycling, orienteering, treasure hunts, etc.
- Encourage the child to develop interests/hobbies and make him/her feel good and enable a sense of power/expertise. Several children enjoy such hobbies as gardening, raising seeds, stamp collecting, fossiling, beach combing, etc.
- These children need lots of encouragement, praise, love and imaginative handling in order to reveal untapped potential and talents.

Please share this information with your child's teachers.