

## **Why Is High School So ADD-Unfriendly, and What Can You Do About It?**

High school years can be some of the most ADD-unfriendly years of your life. Let's take a look at why:

- Fatigue - high school starts too early in the morning.
- Too much listening - not enough action and interaction.
- Boring classes - you have to take classes you're not interested in.
- Your day is controlled - you can't take a break when you need to.
- Negative teachers - sometimes the subject is interesting, but the teacher is boring or has a negative attitude.
- Distracting - it's hard to concentrate in noise and confusion.
- Day is too long - it's impossible to concentrate for seven periods.
- Too many rules - very little independence or freedom.
- Too much homework - you can't work all day and at night too.
- Not enough high-interest activities - if you don't keep your grades up, you can't do the extracurricular things you like.
- Have to sit still - even when you feel restless.
- Too many things to keep track of - notes, assignments, and projects for six or seven classes.

High school may never be your ideal environment, but there are things you can do to make it better! Although you can't change many factors that make high school so difficult for students with ADD, here are some strategies that can help:

**Fighting the fatigue factor.** Try to get to bed earlier at night. Pay attention to your "best" times of the day, and take your hardest classes at these times. If you feel half asleep when you get to school in the morning, don't sign up for your most difficult classes first or second period.

**Fighting the boredom factor.** Try to sign up for the most interesting teachers. Get involved in class; passively sitting for hours is much more boring than talking, asking questions, and discussing ideas.

**Fighting distractibility.** Sit up front and center in class if you can. You'll be less distracted by other students and more involved in class. Take notes while the teacher is talking; this will help you maintain concentration.

**Dealing with restlessness.** Keep something with you to manipulate with your hands - a nerf ball or small rubber ball that makes no noise. But don't let yourself be tempted to toss it to a friend, or your "help" will become a "hindrance." Get regular, daily

exercise. Try to arrange your schedule so that you have periods of activity interspersed throughout the day-lunch, PE, art or shop, chorus, band, etc.

**Coping with homework.** Do homework in small bits - on the bus, before class, when you first get home, just after dinner. Dividing homework into small bits is easier than sitting down to a two-hour stretch in the evening. Get a tutor to teach you how to write and study more efficiently. Many people with ADD spend too much time on homework because they haven't learned effective study techniques. Get help to get organized: an assignment book, a folder in your backpack for daily assignments; a large calendar above your desk at home so that you can visually mark out longer term projects. Your resource teacher or guidance counselor can also help make school more "ADD-friendly". Work closely with your academic advisor to choose your courses each semester.

**Customize your registration.** Ask for customized registration rather than computerized registration. This will let you carefully choose the best periods to take your most difficult subjects. Take them at the times of day when your energy is highest.

**Work hard to develop a good relationship with your teachers.** Teachers usually work hard to help students who seem involved and motivated. Try to get them to help you solve your problems. Don't wait until there is a problem before you talk to your teacher about your add. Let your teacher know you are trying.

**Attend summer school.** Consider taking a really tough course in summer school, when you can concentrate on it without all of the competing courses and activities of the school year.

**Consider community college.** Explore the possibility of taking courses at the community college for high school credit. Sometimes these courses can be more interesting and challenging and can also be taken in summer school.

**Work with an ADD tutor or coach.** A tutor or coach who specializes in students with ADD can teach you tips and strategies to overcome procrastination, to become more organized, and to study more efficiently.

Don't try to do it all alone. With the help of parents, tutors, coaches, and counselors working with you and with your school, you can greatly improve your chances for success in high school.

Good luck in making your high school years more ADD friendly!