



INTRODUCTION

The Creation of Brainworks

In 1997, the Brainworks Educational Center celebrated its 16th year of providing innovative programs for individuals who desire to improve their thinking skills. The center was founded by a professional educator, Carla Crutsinger, in response to her search for a facility which could help her gifted son achieve academic and personal success, an achievement complicated by his struggles with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Eventually, Carla reached the conclusion that there was no single place which offered the diverse range of services she sought as well as the individual focus and intellectual stimulation her son required. It was clear, however, that there was a need for such an institution, and in 1981, Brainworks was created to fill that need.

Since then, hundreds of people from the ages of 5 to 75 have come to Brainworks for assessment and remediation of a wide variety of

learning problems. Our staff works one-on-one with children and adolescents during regular “after school” sessions; adult tutorials are set up by appointment. Each person’s unique combination of strengths and deficiencies presents our instructors with the challenge of designing plans to help the client reach the academic, professional, and personal goals which translate into a successful life.

Answers for ADD Questions

From the beginning, Brainworks has been an ideal resource for people who needed help managing their negative ADD symptoms. While the center does not exclusively focus on ADD issues, it is true that ADDers account for the majority of our clients at any given time. In particular, we have worked with “school age” ADDers who, at some phase of the educational process, have “crashed” into an academic wall of overwhelming proportions. For some ADDers, this crash occurs in the primary grades. For others, it may come in middle or high school, and for some it happens in college, graduate school, or during training in medical or law school. But no matter what the age, the issues faced by these diverse individuals follow strikingly similar

patterns: problems with organization, time, and study skills compounded by difficulties with more personal areas, such as health, motivation, and behavior.

As we worked with ADD clients, we learned a great deal about how ADDers can best cope with the demands of this modern world. These clients gave us an opportunity to discover “what works” for them, and as they resolved their situations, they provided us with the strategies and insights which form the substance of **ADD Quick Tips**.

Using This Book

When the staff of Brainworks began to assemble the information contained in this book, we decided to focus on making it as “user friendly” as possible. First of all, the format was set up for quick reference purposes by dividing the information into four broad topic sections, alliteratively designated as Organization Options, Time Tips, Study Strategies, and Personal Pointers. Within each of these sections, a group of suggestions (or “tips”) are offered in response to questions we have heard repeatedly from parents, teachers, and ADD students. In addition, we have included a separate category of tips which address the special

needs of ADD children between the ages of 5 to 12. This section is called Quick Tips for Younger ADDers.

We also decided early on to present practical, realistic strategies in specific language and to avoid “theoretical” discussions and/or general descriptions of ADD behavior. If the reader of this book has ADD, he or she is probably quite familiar with the disorder’s definition and diagnostic criteria from a lifetime of experience, and the same familiarity holds true for those readers who have ADDers in the family or the classroom.

Moreover, we realized there are currently a number of excellent books already on the market which offer background information about the condition by examining the possible causes of ADD, delineating the symptoms, or describing case studies of various individuals with ADD. Our goal was to create a book specifically designed to provide strategies for resolving the problems of ADD students. This book primarily offers concrete methods to resolve real-life issues for ADDers; when an explanation seemed necessary in order to understand how a tip works, we have tried to keep these comments as concise as possible. Most importantly, this book is based on experience, not theories; every tip has been “tried and tested” by our clients.

A Disorder of Desperation

By the time ADD students arrive at our door, they are usually in desperate straits. Their inability to cope with the myriad details of their lives have caused them to fail one or more classes, and as their grades fall, their self-esteem also tumbles. Ironically, many of our ADD clients are also highly intelligent, gifted individuals; however, the disorder prevents them from achieving according to their capabilities, a situation which further fuels their frustrations.

Because so much emphasis has been placed on their deficiencies, ADDers tend to identify themselves by what they cannot do instead of what they can do. Yet, as Dr. Edward Hallowell (and many other ADD researchers) have pointed out, there may be as many advantages connected to ADD as there are problems. These “positive points” include creativity, flexibility, intuition, risk-taking, and independent thinking.

Unfortunately for the ADDer, school systems tend to stress the very traits which are not part of the ADD make-up, such as conformity, obedience, attentiveness, and organization. It’s little wonder many ADDers are diagnosed as a result of their behavior in classrooms, for in that setting the ADD student is truly a “square peg in a round hole.”

Management = Success

At Brainworks, we address ADD problems from several directions. First of all, we teach the clients strategies for managing the negative ADD characteristics which interfere with their ability to achieve academically. As they begin to have more positive classroom experiences, their self-confidence grows, and they become “empowered students.” Secondly, we increase their self awareness, encouraging them to analyze the ADD emotional reactions and behaviors which can negatively affect their self-image and their relationships with others. The “typical” ADD behavior pattern involves extreme shifts in mood and perspective, resulting in a great deal of tension within and around the ADDer. By documenting these behavior patterns, we help ADDers learn to anticipate and control their reactions. Finally, we encourage them to be more aware of their strengths, and we train them in ways to use those strengths to overcome their present deficiencies.

The underlying premise for our program and for these tips is: **“ADD problems need ADD solutions.”** In other words, we should not expect ADDers to respond positively to strategies which work with non-ADD students. Instead, we need “ADD friendly” methods which incorporate their special set of characteristics. It is our firm belief that ADDers can reach the “peak of success”

although they may have to travel non-traditional paths to get there.

Quick Tips Guidelines

**Do Not Attempt A Tip
Without Reviewing
This Section!**

Parents, teachers, and ADD students should keep these points in mind before beginning to work on a tip:



1. The student must acknowledge and understand the tip before working on the tip. Establishing the tip may require tracking and documenting the problem situation.

2. The ADD student must be an active participant in choosing and using the tip. If the tip is “forced” on the student, it will not be effective. Remember: The point of learning a problem-solving skill is to develop independence, something which is not likely to occur under duress.

3. Work on no more than one or two tips at a time and set goals within reasonable time frames. Do not commit to trial periods longer than two weeks; for younger ADD students, one week experiments are more realistic. Establish a “time table” to measure mastery. For example, if the student successfully maintains his assignment calendar and has no zeros in any class for 12 weeks, he can suspend having teachers sign his folder or having parents check his homework for six weeks. However, be sure to build in a “back up” plan for renewing the tip if the problem recurs.

4. Commit to the tip in writing. Have the student write (or type) the goal and the steps to be followed, including the time frame mentioned above. The student and parents should “sign off” on the plan to signify the commitment.

5. Expect the need to “fine tune” the strategies after the first trial period. The student, family members, and possibly the teachers should review the goal and evaluate the progress. Discuss what changes (if any) need to be made and create a list of options for the future.

Most importantly, parents, teachers, family members, friends, and ADDers themselves must be aware that **no tip, plan, or strategy is a “permanent fix” for any ADD problem.** The shifting nature of the condition dictates that no management technique works forever; inevitably, old strategies will need to be adjusted and new tactics developed to address the student’s needs. This situation often frustrates those who work with ADDers, for as soon as a problem seems “under control” and everyone starts to relax, then suddenly the same problem pops back up again, perhaps in an even worse form!

The best way to avoid discouragement about these lapses is to recognize the implications of the term “managed.” It doesn’t mean ADD can

be “cured” or “solved.” It means **ADD can be controlled**, much in the manner that a border col-
lie controls a herd of sheep; the job requires vigi-
lance, flexible responses, and perseverance.

6. Reward progress with praise IMMEDIATELY and FREQUENTLY. Analyze any setbacks in detail, making sure the focus is on the problem, not the student. (“What can you do to raise this grade in math to a C?” instead of “How could anyone not understand long division?”)

7. Parents and teachers should try the tips themselves. If the parent is also an ADDer (and according to genetics, it’s a distinct possibility), he or she might learn some new techniques which could make life easier. On the other hand, if the adults involved do not have ADD, they should practice using the tips in order to gain a better appreciation for what the ADD student is trying to accomplish.

8. Adults should not set higher expectations for the child than they do for themselves. Well-meaning parents sometimes pressure their children about the very areas in which the parents themselves feel insecure. The basis of this very natural and instinctive concern can be summed up as “I don’t want my kid to go through what I’ve gone

through.” However, from the child’s perspective, the parental attitude may seem hypocritical, and the student’s response may be negative as a result. “Why do they get mad at me for being tardy to class when they’re never on time to pick me up from school?” In other words, “If you can’t walk on water, don’t expect your child to!” Instead, parents should attempt to model the skills which they want the child to develop.