

Attention Deficit Disorders MADE EASY! A Manual for Those with a SHORT Attention Span Methods and Miracles By Barbara Stein -

INTRODUCTION

I used to be a kid, and I never outgrew it. This, in my opinion, is the essence of becoming a "good teacher." Good teaching can only be achieved with sensitivity, creativity, love and laughter. My childhood experiences, coupled with my adventures in parenting have taught me that if you use the right methods, you are bound to see miracles.

As the parent of five children, two of whom have attention deficit disorders, I am a self styled "aggravation expert!" The methods, discoveries and anecdotes in the following pages are a result of my experiences as both a parent and a teacher.

Attention Deficit Disorders are being diagnosed in as many as 12-20% of our children. If you, or someone you love has been diagnosed with ADD/ADHD, you're in very good company. There's nothing wrong with your gene pool -- you've simply been hand-picked by Divine Intelligence to learn that wherever there's a problem, there is also a solution.

In the following pages, I have presented some possible solutions, methods and miracles for the academic, social and emotional development of children who have ADD. These ideas have worked for me, and I'm betting that they'll work for you too. All of my ideas are in sync with Universal Law, which can be easily taught to children of all ages.

This book is gratefully dedicated to my mother, Rosalind Mintz, who taught me that, "Everything in life depends upon your attitude!"

Barbara Stein June, 1994

So your child has been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. Or maybe it's Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Maybe you have it too, or maybe you married it! It runs in the family, you know. Either way, you are not alone. There doesn't have to be a disaster. Your child can and will do better in school if you do everything it says in this handbook.

There's an old song that says, "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade!" The following pages are a guidebook to the shaping of minds, the social development of mavericks, and the survival of the finest parents in the world....

Universal Law: Everything happens for a reason.

School Daze

The school called and your child doesn't follow directions. He/she spaces out in the classroom and "doesn't listen" or "stay on task." Maybe he fidgets and can't stay in his seat. Even better, he acts out and disrupts the class. He calls out too. The teacher is extremely annoyed, or worse, the teacher has tried "everything," and NOTHING WORKS!

Bored, turned off, tuned out and disorganized, your young person has an out-of-body experience every time directions are being given. Further, like the proverbial "absent-minded professor,"

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he/she is unprepared, can't find the pencil, doesn't know where he put the homework, and didn't know that there was homework! If, by some amazing inconsistency, he/she did the assignment, all bets are off as to whether or not it gets handed in on time.

Finally, this child's book bag looks like it went through a blender. His bedroom should be condemned by the Board of Health, and no matter how many times you attempt to correct the problem, your admonitions fall upon deaf ears.

Children with Undifferentiated ADD will merely stare into space. Trance like, they appear to be "somewhere else," quietly fading into the woodwork, going unnoticed as they slip gently through the cracks of our educational system. In contrast, children with ADHD will stand out in a crowd, and can be easily identified by their hyperactive, loud, impulsive, inappropriate, impossible behaviour, along with the disorganization presented by their mild mannered counterparts.

Remember: This child is probably your greatest teacher. He/she will challenge you by bringing out both your worst and the best; once this child has become part of your life, your life as you have known it will never be the same again.

Don't be fooled by the passive one -- he's internalising a mind that is as busy as Grand Central Station. He is highly susceptible to anxiety, low self-esteem, and even reactive depression. He feels powerless, and hates himself for the problems he has. My ADD son suffered constant heartburn in the sixth grade as a direct result of "failure syndrome," a sense of being academically bankrupt, and a lack of empowerment.

Many children with ADD/ADHD have difficulty getting along with the peer group. They are often picked on at the least, and scapegoated at the worst. Some may be aggressive, however, and are actually feared by siblings and peers alike. Kids with ADD (either type) are experiencing life "in their own worlds," and often do not properly perceive or react to "social cues," or body language from others. Thus, they can and do turn off many people.

As a parent, I was presented with five children, two of whom have Attention Deficit Disorders, courtesy of the genes handed down both sides of the family tree. Since the universe is "balanced," I am the proud Mom of one of each "flavour." After I accepted that which I could not change, I realized that two main themes are being demonstrated in my life:

1. You never get more than you can handle
2. Those who aggravate you most are your greatest teachers

Imagine the day when the teacher informed me that, "all of the other children have adjusted to classroom routines, except for your child." The best was yet to come: "Is anything wrong at home?"

I felt awful. Mortified. Guilty. Mad. It wasn't supposed to be like this. I was supposed to be a confident, competent parent. After all, I had been a great classroom teacher in my other life before they were born! I was going to be like Julie Andrews in *The Sound of Music*, with an

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entourage of perfectly behaved, brilliant children who would line up and sing with me as I played my guitar. Then, these kids came along, and made me look like an incompetent parent who was unable to cope in a insanely "dysfunctional family environment." This is definitely not what I ordered.

Perhaps this has happened to you? Do you feel slightly resentful? Just a tad? Do you feel as though nobody understands? Do you feel as if you are the **ONLY ONE THAT THIS IS HAPPENING TO???**

Universal Law: Whatever the experience, you are never the only one; you just haven't met the others yet!

Don't you love it when the neighbours talk about your child? Does it kill you when the other kids stopped inviting him/her to birthday parties? These same people who came to you for cups of sugar are now complaining that your kid hit their kid, harassed their dog, ran into the street without looking both ways, or made a mess in their backyard. Or, they're whispering behind your back that they heard that your child was "not doing well in school..."

You want to move to a foreign country or buy a farm in Never Never Land. You feel depressed. You want to find a hole and hide in it forever. You alternate between an urge to protect your precious offspring and an intense desire to finish him off! And then you hate yourself, because "it isn't right to feel like that."

Oh yes it is. I felt like that too, only I didn't bathe in the feeling -- I beat it with common sense, good teaching strategies, a great sense of humour, advocacy awareness and a healthy respect for the suspension of judgment.

The J word

Judgment makes us all feel unworthy, ashamed, unappreciated, misunderstood, and unacceptable. It created the mysterious "presentation -- " the act we all put on in order to "fit in." The act we all have to perfect, so "they" won't talk about us. "They" would be aghast if we did or said something odd, or "inappropriate." Who are "they," anyway? I've been looking for "them" all of my life, so I can tell "them" off!

Kids with ADD/ADHD need to get their act together, literally, because the world is full of judges. The judges and juries of our society decide what is and is not acceptable behaviour, acceptable academic performance and acceptable adjustment in our very sick society. They tell us to conform. To be like everybody else. And we wonder why our children don't fit in! Kids with ADD have more trouble with judgment than the rest of the population, simply because they have this nasty little tendency to break more of the rules!

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I heard a nifty little quote from George Bernard Shaw:

"The reasonable man will adjust to the demands of his environment. The unreasonable man expects his environment to adjust to his own needs. Therefore, all progress depends upon the unreasonable man!"

In order to help our children learn to fit in, we need to coach them in the fine art of upgrading their "act." So, we have to go into the "image making business," and teach our kids how to present themselves in a way that will be acceptable to the judges, whoever "they" are. So let's get to work. Put aside your own negative emotions and get objective fast!

Universal Law: You can't get what you want until you let go of the outcome.

Objectivity

If you're going to beat this thing, and you are, you **MUST** remain objective. You must **NOT** take it personally when:

- your mother-in-law asks you why you can't control your kid
- the teacher says that he/she is "way behind" (in everything)
- the teacher complains that your child is disruptive
- other kids don't like your kid
- your spouse says that you spoiled the child
- your child throws a tantrum in the mall
- your kid is never satisfied and you are exhausted

Take a deep breath. Imagine yourself holding a helium balloon by a long string. "Put" all of your stress and aggravation into the balloon, and let it go. Watch it drift up to the clouds and disappear. Do this every time you want to scream. Ask for another way to deal with the situation. Let it go. Wait a few minutes for Divine Inspiration and Patience to come to the rescue. You'll see. This is strong stuff! It's empowering. It is also relaxing. Most important, though, it buys time so that you can release your own creativity and brainstorm a solution to the situation comedy of the moment, without losing your cool.

Self Esteem

My favourite metaphor of the year is that self-esteem is like a rain forest. Once you chop it down, it takes forever to grow back. Therefore, the whole ball game is dependent upon the preservation of self-esteem. Statistics scare the hell out of us, because they predict a four to one ratio of a negative outcome for kids with ADD/ADHD. According to prevalent data, these 'unreasonable' kids are four times as likely to succumb to drugs, alcohol, teenage pregnancy, and every other nightmare that can put a parent's head into the oven.

How come? Is it the wiring in the brain? Or is it that their self-esteem got kicked in the teeth too many times? Research has demonstrated there is truly a neurologically based disorder that makes it harder to focus, harder to control impulsive behaviour, harder to get along with others, harder

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to be neat and orderly. Harder to be a person. A person with this problem could get in a lot of trouble with a lot of people.

Everywhere they go, they may encounter rejection. Oh no! The R word! Socially, academically, and emotionally, kids with ADD are extremely vulnerable. They have a thin skin, and they can't handle rejection. They feel guilty, because they are being bombarded with the message that they don't fit in. That they didn't live up to anyone's expectations. That they let everyone down. Their teachers yell at them. Kids on the playground have labelled them "nerd," or "geek" and have told them to "get a life." Life is tough for any kid, but for a kid who is a square peg being forced into a round hole, life can be unbearable.

When I present in-service training workshops for school districts, I hand out "Fragile" stickers to make this point. As a parent, I have to practice what I preach, and this means that I have to behave toward my child in the same intelligent, rational manner I expect of the professionals.

The Basis of Poor Self Esteem

- other people tell you who you are
- you believe what other people tell you
- you feel incompetent and unprepared
- you feel stupid
- no one likes you
- you don't like you

Notice that much of the feedback comes from "other people." A child who is at risk for low self-esteem MUST be taught early that "other people" don't necessarily know what they are talking about. Everybody is good at something. Kids with ADD/ADHD are great at many things, and they can learn how to cope "appropriately," by learning to curb their impulsivity.

Universal Law: Never let anyone tell you who you are.

Impulsivity or Brutal Honesty?

Let me share with you the story of my Kindergarten teacher, Miss G. I owe Miss G. a lot Because of her, I learned first hand how much power a teacher has; how a teacher can make or break a child's self esteem. The fact that I am a terrific teacher today is largely due to Miss G., who was a frustrated old bag who hated kids.

At the age of five, I had her pretty well sized up. Now, forty years later, I still agree with myself. She ate her lunch in front of the class, just as our little five-year-old stomachs were beginning to grumble. She had a pitcher of water and a glass for herself, but she wouldn't even let any of us out to go to the bathroom. Every day of every year, somebody cried in Miss G.'s class. Miss G. was a mean teacher.

I guess my fate was sealed when the parents were going to come to class to visit on "Open School Day." We were all so busy getting the room ready, and decorating the walls with our pictures. Miss

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G. drilled us day in and day out for a week, in preparation for a "game-like" "performance" that would wow the adults.

The day came. My Mom was there, with all of the other mothers, proudly smiling at her little cherub. And then, Fate stepped in and Miss G. said, "And now, children, we are going to try something NEW." She then proceeded to "introduce" the "game" that she had drilled and drilled and drilled into our bored little minds.

Of course I couldn't leave that alone! I was me then too! To my Mom's dismay, and to Miss G.'s horror, I called out:

"Oh No! Not THAT again!"

Yes I did. And I'm still not sorry. She was cheating. Lying. Pretending to be what she was not. She was trying to give "them" what she thought "they" wanted. But she wasn't teaching the TRUTH!

My mother almost died. Now that I think about it, my mother almost died a lot when I was a kid! I had disgraced the family again! I had embarrassed the teacher. Mom earnestly tried to patch things up, explaining apologetically, "Well you must realize that Barbara is a precocious child." (I was in college when I finally figured out what that meant!) No matter what Mom did, Miss G. hated me. And I, with my impulsivity and brutal honesty, had given her good reason! And, because we live in a balanced universe that makes sure that you get back what you put out, I got my comeuppance...

Universal Law: What you put out comes back

Miss G. announced that our class was very lucky, because we were taking a "very special trip" to the boiler room in the basement of our school. She made it sound like we were going to visit the Taj Mahal! Everyone in the class was looking forward to the "trip," and then, Miss G. looked at me with hatred and said:

"You can't go. I never know what you'll do next. It's too dangerous for you to go to the boiler room."

I was crushed. I didn't know about my 504 rights to equal access in education. After all, I was only five. My mother was furious! (She was in school more than I was that year). But I still didn't get to go to the boiler room. My impulsivity was the "rationale," and they hadn't invented advocates at that time. The good news is that truly everything happens for a reason. Guess what? The boiler room was full of ASBESTOS! Miss G. and the entire class are probably DEAD by now, but I have lived to tell the story!

My Mom always yelled at me for shooting my mouth off at the wrong time. "Even if you have an opinion," she said, "Keep it to yourself. If you have nothing nice to say, don't say anything at all!" When I got into my teens, she changed the patter: "You have no TACT!" At the age of 30, I figured out what she had been talking about all along:

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Universal Law: Never answer a question that hasn't been asked.

When I choose to accept the dictates of this simple rule, I have tact. When I don't, well, I don't.

An Oasis in the Desert

Every child has talents. Is it sports? Writing? Painting? Music? If you think about it, it makes good sense to nurture and develop activities that will build self-esteem. Find things that allow your child to evolve without pressure of competition. For me, it was writing and music. For my kids it was comedy, music and karate.

Team sports are great for some, but then there's the child who gets angry when he/she is put in the outfield instead of on first base. One of mine (ADHD) sat down in the middle of centre field, and rooted for the other team, because he was mad at the coach for refusing to put him on second. It was the last time he played team sports.

Karate is a miraculous natural intervention for either ADD or ADHD. It develops attentional focus, self esteem, self control, and self discipline...SELF! It takes care of all of those annoying little "developmental lags" that make some of our kids so clumsy. The training gives a child a handle on dealing with the bullies, without making him/her aggressive. There are new friends to be made at Karate class, and there's always a new belt to earn, a new technique to perfect, a new reason to like yourself. Best of all, it trains the mind to stay on task!

My son, the black belt, lost his heartburn on the mat, exchanging his Clark Kent passivity for the spirit of Superman.

Karate served him well in that it fostered the integration of his mind, body and spirit into one well-organized unit. He has become the most determined, courageous and organized person in my world. ADHD kids get their aggressions out on the mat, channelling their energies in a positive direction.

Organizational Strategies

Preparedness can be an art form. Even the most disorganized student can be taught how to fake out his own disorder. What every kid needs is a great organizational system. Here it is. Get a 6 pocket accordion folder from the stationery store. It should come with colored tabs and subject titles. Set it up according to the order of classes in your child's daily schedule. If Reading is first, make it the first pocket. If Math is next, make it the second pocket. And so on. Allow your child the option of choice and assign a colour to each subject. Then, colour code all notebooks. If Reading is Red (notice that they both start with an "R") then, all things related to reading should be labelled RED.

The folder is really simple, cheap and easily available. Best of all, the child always knows where the homework is!

All loose papers go in the accordion folder and may be filed in the appropriate notebooks after they are graded.

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This system contributes to self-esteem, because people like themselves when they feel prepared and on par with their peers. The positive feedback that will come with the change in preparedness makes a wonderful difference in academic attitudes!

Universal Law: When guilt is removed, there is freedom to grow and change.

The Addictive Nature- Use it to Your Advantage!

As we discussed earlier, the risk factor for addictive behaviour is higher in children with ADD. Since many of them come "standard" with this trait, we might as well make some lemonade. How do gamblers get addicted to gambling? That's right -- they WIN! So all we have to do is set up the child's life like a slot machine that always pays. All he/she has to do is pull the handle. His effort in following through with assignments, completing tasks, handing in work, and studying for tests is his version of pulling the handle.

Meanwhile, back at the school, we're going to modify program just a bit, so as to facilitate success. We're going to reduce stress, which gets in the way of creativity, and build success strategies. We're going to teach the child how to cope, and also how to advocate for himself in a polite, politically correct manner. We're going to "read him his rights," and make sure that he can respectfully prevail in making sure his school modifications are implemented. Success is addictive. Academic success is a great addiction for kids with ADD/ADHD. It certainly beats the alternatives!

School Based Modifications

Every child in the United States is entitled to a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Several federal laws protect children with ADD, including the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). If a handicapping condition interferes with a "major life activity, i.e.: learning," then, school districts MUST provide modifications and related services in order to make a FAPE accessible to each and every student.

Therefore, wherever you are, your child is entitled by law to a complete educational evaluation, and is also entitled to remediations and modifications that will facilitate learning. You may require an advocate or a lawyer to help, but it's worth it to get any or all of the following, as they may apply:

- schedule all academic subjects in the morning; all electives in the afternoon (as the day wears on, the will wears off!)
- an extra set of books to keep at home (to prevent being overwhelmed after an absence, to remove the excuse of "I forgot my book" at homework time, and to reduce stress when it comes to a choice between the bus or the books.)
- an extra couple of days to hand in written work (in case it gets lost)
- extra time to access a locker or make class changes (to reduce the stress associated with fear of detention)
- make eye contact with the student when giving directions (to bring him/her back to task and keep him there)

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- be sensitive to the student in front of his peers (to proact, and set a good example for the peer group)
- provide time-out in a positive setting, as needed
- eliminate Scantron testing forms entirely (have you ever observed a child with his/her shirt buttoned wrong all the way down? Also, it is harder to stay on task, if you have to keep moving your head back and forth between the test booklet and the answer sheet)
- remove time limits on testing
- provide LARGE TYPE tests for all subject areas, as well as standardized tests (kids find large type less stressful and easier to read)
- have teachers/parents review and sign a homework pad daily
- provide note-taking assistance by the teacher
- allow the use of a tape recorder for lecture type learning formats and also for brainstorming ideas for writing assignments
- provide encouragement and praise whenever possible
- provide opportunities to have responsibilities in class, i.e.: taking a note to the office, passing out papers, etc. This builds self-esteem: we all need to be needed.
- seat student preferentially between good role models and away from distractions, such as window and doors
- provide computer assistive technology - access to a computer in school (more on computers later)
- provide keyboard and word processing training
- provide social skills training (social cues, body language, assertiveness training, stress reduction, proacting, etc.)
- Provide in-class support with an Instructional Aide in the Mainstream class, or
- In a pull-out replacement resource room, give the special ed. teacher the role of "anchor," and liaison to the mainstream. Allow completion and retake of tests in special ed. setting.
- Provide for co-grading between special ed. and mainstream teachers (we are facilitating success here!)
- Provide pull-out replacement resource centre for organizational skills training and/or other remediation
- Provide Basic Skills Improvement classes, if warranted by test scores on standardized tests
- Provide supplementary education (tutoring)
- Make homework available for pickup the first day of absence (so the child will not be overwhelmed with make-up work)
- Provide opportunities to earn extra credit
- Ensure that medication will be given at appropriate times, as per doctor's prescription. Access to activities and class trips may not be denied due to lack of personnel to administer meds.
- All of the above is the responsibility of the school district, according to each child's "unique needs." Most may be delivered whether or not the child is classified. Classified students are covered under IDEA + 504 + ADA. All others are covered by

504 + ADA. Not every child with ADD needs to be classified. It's up to you, the parent, to become educated about ADD, and to find an advocate to help you to obtain these services for your child. If a modification is not written down concretely into an IEP or a 504 Plan, there is no way to insist

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that the district implement it. So, get it in writing! ADD parent support groups are extremely helpful in making the right connections.

Out of District Placements

You shouldn't have to pay tuition in order to guarantee that your child is placed in an appropriate educational environment, specific to his/her unique needs. Some children are so out of control, they may require an out of district placement. Some may do well in the mainstream with certain modifications. Others are gifted, but have problems with self-control or peer relationships. High functioning children should never be warehoused" in a restrictive placement, such as a self contained classroom. The child study teams must offer a "continuum of placement options," specific to the "unique needs" of the individual child.

Remember, an IEP is an Individual Educational Plan. Not an identical educational plan! Do not accept a computer-generated program that does not effectively address the strengths and weaknesses presented by your child. Expect the district to determine measurable goals and objectives that specifically address your child's strengths and weaknesses. You do not have to sign an IEP if you disagree with it. It is not a good idea to sign the IEP at the IEP meeting. Take it home and think about it. Get input from another parent or an advocate. Would you buy a car or a house without reading the fine print???

Children who are given services under 504 must have a written statement called a "504 Plan." Every district must have a 504 Coordinator. Find out who it is!

Learn to quote the Joint Policy Memorandum of September 16, 1991, which recognized ADD/ADHD as a handicapping condition covered under existing federal law, under the heading, "Medical/Other." Another name for the Policy Memorandum is "The Notice of Inquiry." ADD support groups will be delighted to get you a copy of this piece of paper.

Start a File

Save everything. Document every single item. Bring a tape recorder to meetings. Every time you speak to a professional at the school, mark down the date and the gist of the conversation in a journal. If you communicate via mail, send it certified, and get a return receipt. Keep a copy of all written communications, IEPs, and evaluations. If you have ADD, give it all to a friend who won't lose your stuff! Don't you have a file for your mortgage, your car insurance, the title to your car, and your credit card receipts? Well?

The Corporate Image

All kids have a problem with sloppiness at one time or another. Kids with ADD/ADHD have the problem more often. Sometimes, the choice comes down to either completing the task within the time limits set by the teacher or carefully doing a neat job of writing. Our kids simply cannot be rushed, without making a mess. Pressure is no good for people with a low frustration tolerance level.

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I noticed that crossed out messes on their papers disturb many of my students. The eyes stray back to the error and a sense of guilt ruins the "flow" of their creative output. The straying eyes tend to get the child off task, and the flow stops flowing. Here are some tips:

1. "Capture" the cross out. Put a circle or a square or a triangle around the cross out, so it "can't get out." Containing the mistake helps the child to go on and "let the past go." Since kids with ADD are known to be perfectionists, this will end the endless do-overs, and will facilitate the completion of a task!
2. Buy a computer with a great word processor, and a typing tutorial program. Once the child is proficient in using the computer for homework assignments and reports, the worst of the nightmare is over forever!

It has been demonstrated countless times that prettier presentations get good grades. Teach your child to use graphics to embellish assignments, using creativity to select the appropriate themes. Then, watch for the enthusiastic audience reaction from the teacher and the whole class.

3. A good presentation should be motivating for the child. Assignments must be meaningful in order to maintain attention. If, for example, we are doing a homework assignment on George Washington, it would be helpful to announce that he had wooden teeth! This juicy tidbit of information livens up the dreary humdrum rote-based memorization/regurgitation in ditto city, and actually makes George Washington into a REAL person, with REAL meaning.

When you go to the store to buy your favourite cereal, a lot has to do with the package. If they put the exact same product that you are accustomed to buying in a black and white, no-frills box, how likely is it that you would buy it? Isn't it true that we all buy into the presentation, even when it comes to cereal boxes? We want the pretty colours and the cute cartoon person.

Corporate America knows this about us, and spoon-feeds the consumer the pretty box with the rabbit, because IT SELLS. Teachers are not immune to marketing techniques. They watch television too! They are also consumers. Teach your child to beef up his/her presentation on paper, and watch the grades go up, up, up!

It's a Matter of Learning Styles

Kids with ADD are hands on, experiential learners. They have to touch it, examine it, and take it apart. Warning: they don't always put it back together! If they are to want to learn, there has to be an experience beyond the ditto sheet! Here are some examples of fascinating facts that are guaranteed to turn on the turned off:

- Cleopatra as fat (oh, yes she was!)
- If you put dry ice into a balloon, the balloon will blow itself up!
- Romeo (of Romeo and Juliet) probably had ADD ---he was impulsive!

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Here are some tips to making learning fun:

- gross them out (think of something disgusting, like wooden teeth) about an historical figure
- make them laugh - connect a boring piece of memorized trivia to something funny, and they'll remember it forever
- be dramatic -act out the Battle of _____. Have the child relate to the bodies all over the battlefield.
- Show a movie.
- Look at pictures.
- MAKE IT REAL!
- put it to music: as simple as the ABC's - that which you sing, will cling! I learned how to spell encyclopaedia from "Jiminy Cricket," who sang a song that spelled the word. To this day, I sing the song when I write the word.

Universal law: when you connect the learning of new information to an emotion or an experience, the information sticks. Increased retention is key to increased motivation and overall academic performance.

Squeeze Your finger

Yes, you read that right. Did you know that when the brain learns anything new, it grows a dendrite? A dendrite is like a branch on a tree. Whatever is connected to the same "branch" will be forever associated. Therefore, if you connect the memorization of spelling words, dates, times tables, etc. to a physical sensation, like squeezing your finger, the brain will associate the feeling in the finger with the memorized material.

Try it. It's like saving a file to a computer disk. When you want the learned information to resurface, all you have to do is squeeze your finger again. This accesses the "file" where it was saved, and brings it back up in time for a test. The only problem is remembering which finger you squeezed. Most kids choose the finger that is utilized in the "international hand signal," because it is the most memorable! I developed this system with my ADD son, who squeezed his finger so much during tests, his teacher thought he had a tic!!

Creative Writing

With such an emphasis on format these days, students have a hard time letting their creativity flow. There are soooo many rules! The main idea comes first. The supporting details follow, with transitional phrases, like "first, next, in addition, also, and finally." The kids are so busy trying to conform (and our kids are nonconformists by definition) that they lose the opportunity to let the words flow. If someone had done that to Ernest Hemingway, the `bell would never have tolled! Let's find a way around the format.

Draw a Picture

Before a carpenter can build a cabinet, he has to see it in his mind's eye. He makes a drawing, measures it to scale, decides what materials to use, what colour it should be and what purpose it

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will serve. In his mind, the idea of the cabinet came first. Then, a drawing, then the plans, and finally...the cabinet. This process is known as creative visualization.

Universal law: Thought becomes material

Try this: There was an old woman who lived in a shoe...."

- draw the shoe
- is there a window?
- is it in the toe? The heel? Where?
- is there a chimney?
- does the shoe move? Is it on wheels?
- who else lives in the shoe?
- who lives next door?
- what kind of shoe is it? Is it a boot?
- are there any pets?
- do the people in the shoe have a TV?
- do they have cable? How is it hooked up?

Get silly. Make it fun. Don't be afraid to say something "off the wall!" The funnier it is, the more motivating it will be.

Now draw each idea into your "diagram." Label the window, the chimney, the wheels, etc.. Notice: The shoe is the main idea, and the elements of creativity that were added are supporting details! Give your child "points" for each idea labelled. Every ten points gets a reward. (I let my students have 10 minutes of computer games for 10 points).

And Now He Writes...

So the rough draft is written. An expansive diagram is all labelled and maybe even collared in. The shoe has wings, can fly, and is a spy station for an outer space alien planet waiting to conquer the Earth! It has a built in radar system, a satellite dish, and a washer and dryer! Creativity RULES! And the child can write. Chalk up another point for self esteem.

The Final Copy

Did he do it on a word processor? If he did, he can edit on the screen. No drudgery with the pencil. It's fun to seek out and highlight the errors! It's even more fun when you get a point for each one that is discovered, and self corrected! The ADD perfectionist is empowered at last! And the writer within each of us is free!

Quick! Save it to the disk! Now, it can never be lost. Even if the entire bookbag disappears into thin air, you can always print out another and another and....

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Get the point? As long as a piece of work is saved on a computer, and backed up on a disk, it is eternally available and fully accessible! Isn't that easy? Oh yes, the presentation is absolutely flawless!

Confidence Coaching

Each step of the way, the child becomes more sure of himself. "I think I can, I think I can" becomes the Mantra, along with "Just do it!" Each small success becomes a link in a chain called, "I did it!" And confidence is reborn.

Kids with ADD tend to get overwhelmed and frustrated when something appears to be "too hard," "too much work," "too many pages to read," and so on. If, however, an assignment is broken down into small components, tiny steps, and one step at a time, everything becomes possible.

I climbed a mountain once. Believe me, I never want to do that again in this life or any other! But just once, I had to prove to myself that I could. From the foot of the mountain, the peak looked a long way off. In fact, it seemed impossible to reach. Instead of looking all the way up, I simply projected my mind to the closest ridge _ the nearest step. When I achieved that goal, I set another, and then another, and finally, all of those small, achievable steps brought me to the TOP of the mountain.

Moral of the story: If the Klutz can climb a mountain, anything is possible...one step at a time.

Universal law: Every great journey begins with a single step.

You know the old story of the King and the Bundle of Sticks? Well, there was this King who had three sons. He wanted to choose which of his sons would succeed him to the throne, so he put all three of them through a little test. They were each given a bundle of sticks and ordered to "break them."

The first son tried to chop them with his hand. He broke his hand and failed. The second son tried to break them over his knee. He failed too. The third, and wisest son, broke them all..one stick at a time. And guess who got to be King?

Moral of story: do one assignment at a time _ one page at a time_one example at a time, and don't ever look at the WHOLE THING and call it impossible.

Don't Work Harder---Work Smarter!

Let's facilitate some tough assignments. Social Studies homework usually involves reading the chapter and answering questions at the end. A typical question: What were the names of Columbus' three ships?

1. Use part of the question to make part of the answer:

Columbus' three ships were_____.

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Look it up. Use the key words: Columbus and ships. The questions usually follow the sequence of the chapter, so as you answer the questions, you'll pretty much know what page to skim. You don't have to read the whole thing! What a relief!

Instead of spending hours being tortured, use every shortcut known to ADDers who had me for a teacher:

2. Take fact notes on the chapter, using a computer. Use keywords in bold type. Invent your own shorthand (it's fun!) and shorten a paragraph to less than a line; shorten a chapter to less than a page. Use a bold, large font to make it less stressful.

This: George Washington was the first President of the United States.

Becomes this: GW -- > 1st pres./ US

This: The Indians traded Manhattan for \$28 worth of trinkets.

Becomes this: Ind. got 28d/Manh.

See? Making up your own code is FUN, because it's challenging. This is what I meant by faking out your own brain.

Reading Retribution

Children with a short attention span, who are easily overwhelmed by long tasks, have a great deal of trouble imagining the reading of a 200 page novel for a book report once a month. This nightmare occurs in the Middle School Years.

There are several ways to handle it. One, is to bargain.

"I will read 10 pages, and then you will read 10 pages.

Okay???"

"Okay."

So I read the ten pages, and he loved listening to the story. He loved the attention he was getting. He loved not having to read 10 pages in loneliness. I waited until a suspenseful moment in the rising action of the story, and then I cut him off! Now, if he wants to know what happens, he has to read the book. Right? It works. Get the child attached to the outcome of the plot, and you've got it made.

Ten pages became 20, then 30, and then he was hooked on reading to himself. I gave myself a pat on the back for this innovative way to fake out his brain. Success is sweet, let me tell you.

Before I developed the "reading retribution" method, I found it helpful to get him books on tape. The fact is, he enjoys reading, but he does not enjoy being all alone when he has to do something

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he perceives as HARD. Books on tape make it seem as though there is a real live support system at your beck and call for hours.

A Word About the Validity of Testing

I would like to share the story of my ADHD son's pre-Kindergarten admissions testing saga. The precocious five year old that takes after his mother was given a picture identification test. The examiner showed him a picture of a girl, and asked him to identify what it was.

"It's a person," he replied.

"What kind of a person?" prodded the examiner.

"A pretty person," said the BRAT!

"Wrong," said the examiner.

Universal law: Someday we can all laugh at everything.

Socialization

How do you socialize an egocentric person whose battle cry is, "I didn't do anything!" How do you create order out of chaos? How do you reason with the unreasonable???

I was standing in my kitchen one day, in front of the counter, hoping it would hold me up. Five kids can run you ragged. Along came Mr. ADHD (who would have my head if I took his name in vain in this book), and he wasn't looking where he was going. (Do they ever?) Anyway, he tripped over my feet. Of course, it was my fault. He actually yelled at me for being there! I, miraculously retained my sanity, put my tongue firmly in my cheek and asked sweetly,

"What if I had been a tree???"

Medication

To medicate or not to medicate. That is the question. Will it have a negative effect on his health in the long run? Will he become a drug addict? Will he ever get off the stuff? What about side effects? Will it destroy his personality and make him into a zombie?

You can always stop the meds, but you can't always stop the kid! Make sure you carefully check out the doctor who is monitoring the medication, and see if it helps with focus, impulsivity and behaviour. If you think that the "drug of choice" is actually hurting your child, stop feeding it to him. I held off until mine was 12, putting up with tantrums, broken walls, noise, and general misery. Believe me, between ADHD and puberty, I would have given Mr. ADHD arsenic if it were legal and a doctor swore to me that life would become normal in our house. Since every child has a different body chemistry, the outcome of medication cannot be predicted. Most meds are safe, but it's important to do the research and read the PDR (Physician's Desk Reference).

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The idea is, if you can calm a child down long enough to get him to listen, you have a shot at being heard! Kids who can control themselves are happier and better adjusted than kids who can't. Medication is an individual decision. There is no right or wrong. There is only trial and error. Just be sure to read up on the stuff your child is swallowing, and compare notes with other parents who are going through the same thing. Note: "A Pill does not give you the Will."

Above all: do not feel guilty. If he had strep, you would give him an antibiotic, wouldn't you? If his nose was running, you would provide an antihistamine, right? Consider ADHD a medical condition, and treat it! Note: Do not give medication just to placate the school authority figures. They have no right to demand this of you.

Siblings=Poor Things

It is not uncommon for siblings to resent the extra attention demanded by a child with special needs. It is also likely that a hyperactive, inappropriate sibling can really mess things up when a sibling has a friend over, or wants some private space. Kids with ADHD tend to hover and annoy everyone to death. They are extremely emotionally needy, and they hate being alone. For relatively brief periods of rest for the family, they can focus on TV or Nintendo (I never saw one who couldn't), but most of the time, they park themselves in the centre of attention, demanding more and more of everyone around them. Mine was like an "energy vampire," draining the life out of me, constantly talking and demanding attention and time. Since he had social problems and few friends, he zeroed in on my energies to keep him entertained. There was just one small problem. There was never enough. These kids tend to be insatiable.

I found it helpful to agree to play a game, help with homework, listen, listen and listen for a specific, preset time period. I agreed only under specific conditions: "When the clock strikes 5:00, I have something to do, and our special time will be finished." In order for me to give him any time at all, he had to agree to the fact that there would be an ending. I found it helpful to establish firm limits, and that is why I am still alive.

Faith, Hope and Clarity

It can be done! It happened! Consistently, the methods have made miracles. The accordion folder, the picture map of the main idea and details, the keywords, the shorthand note taking, the use of a computer and graphics, the finger squeezing, the works! They work! My children and my students recovered from "failure syndrome" and got addicted to academic success. The "flat affect" was turned around. Everyone who has experienced this phenomenon now believes in miracles.

The supports and modifications at school eased the tension, freeing up their natural creative flow. The nurturing of interests and talents brought out their best and gave them an opportunity to contribute. Their self-esteem is intact! They even made honour role (on occasion)!

Of course, there was never a year that I didn't have to in-service at least one teacher, but that has generally been a satisfying collaboration. I find that a marvellous rapport can be established if a parent approaches the child's needs in an objective manner. As a parent, I know how difficult it can be to remain objective, so I faked out my own brain like this:

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"I am asking for these modifications not only for the educational benefit of my child, but also for the others in the school who also have attention deficit disorders. Please feel free to use my son's IEP as a template for other children with these special needs."

A Flashlight and a Map

If heaven and hell are to be perceived as states of mind, rather than places, then perhaps I can lead you out of the pit. Having been to hell and back a number of times, I am the proud owner of a flashlight and a map.

Homework can be a nightmare. To a child who works slowly, has difficulty following directions, exhibits a short attention span, and has had enough in school all day, homework is a punishment from hell. It's like having a second job, with no pay. Family time suffers, tension builds, and everyone in the household is under pressure. The kids don't get enough sleep, because it takes all night to get through the homework, and if you were to venture a polite query to the teacher(s), you would be informed that, "Everyone else in the class is able to finish this assignment within 20 minutes." If you were to dare to inform the teacher that this 20-minute assignment took well over two hours, and that you have no life, the standard answer is likely to be, "He/she should be able to do this independently."

I know a lot of parents, and only a few boast highly gifted, perfectly amazing children who can do all of their homework independently. Even the ones who don't have ADD/ADHD (I have three of those too) need help from time to time. Add up the hours a parent has to spend driving to the library, driving to a shopping centre to "pick up this or that for a project," keeping appointments with various professionals who are supposed to "fix" what's wrong, keeping dental and eye doctor appointments, and driving to activities. After you add it all up, I would appreciate it greatly if you would share with me a way to "make quality time to be with your family."

Marriages have been known to break up over this problem, because parents are people too. They also need time off to relax and "spend quality time together," after they have worked all day. Homework made me want to run away from home. It was a constant albatross on my back. This is how I coped:

1. Check with other parents with kids in the same class as your child. Ask if they are suffering too.
2. Check the homework policy in your school district. See how much time is allotted per grade level, and politely call attention to the fact that policy has not been followed. Bring five other parents along at the same time, to effectively demonstrate that you are not the only one.
3. If your child is classified, modifications for homework can be included in the IEP. For example: Johnny is expected to do homework nightly, for a period not to exceed _____.
4. Also, modifications may be added that reduce the number of math examples from 50 down to 20, the number of pages to read in a given evening, as well as the amount of writing or rewriting that can be reasonably expected of the child.

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The Pressure Cooker

In the neighbourhood of hell is the pressure cooker known as the Middle School. Just at a time when the heat is on with puberty, and they all go crazy, the children are sent daily on a bus to the newest "progressive concept in education," where they have eight or nine periods per day, with at least seven different teachers, each with a homework agenda. The average child has three minutes to access a locker or make a class change, with the threat of detention for tardiness held over his head. Rest consists of a meagre twenty minute lunch period, half of which is spent on the lunch line waiting for food.

Further, it is not easy to access a locker or manipulate a combination lock with thirty or so other kids in the same two-foot area, all of whom are dealing with a "beat the clock" stress factor. Consequently, most of the kids carry a bookbag that weighs more than they do. This extra weight on their backs, combined with the stress involved in meeting ridiculous expectations, just might be a contributing factor to the high rate of suicide and depression in kids these days!

The contract of the "sanitary engineers" in my town specifically states that these strong men may not lift more than 50 pounds of garbage at a time. Proportional to size and weight, our kids are carrying much more than that around to class every day! In the average American workplace, most adults are guaranteed at least 30 minutes for lunch on the job, while our kids have to "inhale" a meal with little time to digest and regroup. Their teachers, by the way, have the same schedule.

We have strict child labour laws for summer vacation. The kids have to get a physical, and they are limited as to how many hours they can work. If the child labour laws were applied to education, many of our middle schools might measure up to the horror of the sweat shops of the turn of the century!

Statistics demonstrate that if a child is going to "slip through the cracks," the most vulnerable age is 12. Notice that most of those most vulnerable are attending middle schools. Some of my students did not just quietly "slip through the cracks." Excuse me, but they were dropped on the head in a hole! The middle school was created for the purpose of saving money. Let's be honest here. It's really all about money! We have, like the ancient pagan tribes so strongly denounced in the Bible, "sacrificed our children to a false god."

Now that I'm on a roll here, let's do a number on "peer pressure." In addition to the rotten "working conditions" that our kids have to accept, there is the peer pressure. The "clothes police" in the peer group examine each student's fashion statement of the day, and might find it wanting. Few kids hesitate to stab each other in the heart with a charged epithet or two, and a child who doesn't have a quick comeback feels like a fool. A child who doesn't fit in can easily be pushed in the direction of failure on all levels.

Where is the social skills training? If our children, by law, are entitled to a "safe environment" at school, doesn't the word 'safety' extend to their emotional well-being? How come kids get away with being so mean to each other?

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Health Class

Where I live, the typical sixth grade curriculum in Health class is a mandatory, paper intensive memorization and identification of every drug known to the street. The children literally have to classify drugs and alcohol under appropriate subheadings, like depressant, stimulant, or hallucinogen. Miniature pharmacists emerge from this abyss, still calling each other names, still kicking dents in one another's self esteem, and still just as vulnerable to negative, self destructive behaviour. As far as I could tell, five of my children went through the same meaningless curriculum, without ever having role played a real life situation, and without ever having had to develop a thought process that could create a coping strategy.

Although they learned that "stress was harmful" to the body, they were not given any concrete application as to how to reduce stress. In spite of the fact that they can categorize every drug the pusher could offer, they were not empowered, at least not in mandatory health class, with assertiveness training, self esteem building, or honest sharing of concerns. The whole paper chase is a farce, because it adds to the stress by virtue of the extra homework, and because it doesn't teach alternatives to following the crowd.

Consider this. In our health conscious society, tremendous attention is focused on extending our lives, watching what we eat, exercising, and dealing effectively with stress. Meanwhile, we, the people, the parents, the highest authorities under God, allow our children to go through physical and emotional duress in school, and then we diligently have their cholesterol levels evaluated at their annual check-ups! One of the most prevalent feelings among parents is a sense of having "no say."

I'm Only a Parent

Only? If this book accomplishes anything, let it be parental empowerment. You have the power. You are the power. You made the child! You are the one who brought him/her into this world, and you are also the one who has to deal with the consequences of the cards he/she is dealt. You pay the taxes that support our educational system. You pay the doctors to undo that which ADD/ADHD and our society have wrought. You, my friend, pay the Piper.

Universal law: Most people are enslaved by a system for as long as it takes them to free themselves.

Sunrise, Sunset...

Bedtime for many children with ADD/ADHD is a "nightmare," (pardon the pun) simply because they do not know how to wind down. Similarly, getting up in the morning is no great shakes either. If you're up late at night doing homework, and you haven't relaxed yet, it's hard to fall asleep peacefully. Then, when the clock strikes "time to get up for school," it's a hard reality to face when you've only had a few hours of sleep. Kids with ADD/ADHD often have irregular sleep patterns. They get their days and nights "mixed up," like infants, and could easily stay up to the wee hours of the morning and sleep until noon. As far as school is concerned, there's really no strong motivation to get there, if it hasn't exactly been a pleasant experience, so sleep becomes

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an avoidance strategy. In addition to the child's natural tendency to have difficulty with sleep schedules, some medications may exacerbate the problem.

I used to call Mr. ADHD "the night stalker," because he walked around at night when he "should have been sleeping." I discussed it with the shrink of the month, (we went through seven or eight; I lost count) who told me to stand outside my son's door and hold it closed all night, so he would stay in his room. I decided that I was paying big bucks per hour for ridiculous advice.

Universal Law: If a clinician doesn't demonstrate realistic understanding of the situation, and/or does not produce at least some relief within three months, get another clinician!

I Don't Do Mornings

Creative geniuses, myself included, have been known to produce their finest works `by candlelight' at two am. We just have a slight problem: the world wakes up at six! I still often stay up all night, writing, and then I have to force myself to get up in the morning. Coffee helps. A lot.

As far as the kids are concerned, just do the best you can. We have tried everything from warm milk to counting sheep to relaxation tapes, and the most effective way to get a child to go to sleep is EXERCISE during the day. So, back to the karate mat, or the gym, or the soccer field, or the bike, etc.

Some of the most profound conversations with my own children have taken place in the middle of the night. It's quiet, the phone doesn't interrupt, there are no chores, and a mutual exchange can flow. Many of our best problem solving ideas have emerged during our late night chats. Perhaps "they" wouldn't approve? Who cares?

The Dysfunctional Family

I frequently begin an in-service workshop for child study team members with an interesting question: "Who among you did not come from a dysfunctional family?" Guess what? Everyone in the room laughs, and not one hand goes up! A typical social assessment by the school will begin with,

"Johnny is an 11 year old male from a _____ family."

Fill in the blank: dysfunctional, intact, or supportive, etc. Parents actually take this stuff seriously!

"Oh no! `They' said that we have a dysfunctional family!" Don't worry about it -- EVERYBODY does! It is impossible that a family dynamic wouldn't be frazzled with all the pressure of raising a child with problems in school!

Universal Law: "They" don't always know what they are talking about.

The self-esteem of parents is key to the resolution of all problems presented in the adventure of child rearing. Giving parents the message that they are at fault for the child's problems in school is not conducive to improving the situation. Judgment never helps and always hurts. Any professional who lays guilt or uses manipulation or intimidation in a ego battle with parents has

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forgotten why he/she decided to be a professional! Forgive them, parents; they know not what they do.

Universal Law: Whatever you don't forgive, you are bound to re-live!

Teachers

Every profession offers a host of wonderful people who truly want to make a difference. A talented, dedicated and creative teacher is a godsend for our kids. Conversely, a burned out, frustrated meanie, like Miss G. can be worse than no school at all. We are at the mercy of the "luck of the draw," however, it is often possible to successfully "request" the godsend instead of Miss G. If an older sibling already had Miss G., and you had a bad year, many principals or guidance counsellors will quietly arrange for your next child to be alternatively placed far away from Miss G. Every school has a Miss G. or two, but there are many more godsend out there than you may realize! Even Miss G. is educable, if you can objectively show her the facts on ADD/ADHD.

Universal Law: Inside every meanie is a miracle waiting to happen.

Aggravation Experts

If you have children, you automatically qualify as an aggravation expert. Whether or not your child has ADD/ADHD, you will be put through hoops of one kind or another. Parents with children having attention deficit disorders must jump through hoops of fire!

All of the suggestions and strategies that have been made so far will, if applied, benefit any child. Please utilize them liberally, and share them with the professionals in your school.

Universal Law: God gave us children so we would know what it feels like to be God.

Universal Law: ADD/ADHD may not be outgrown, but it can certainly be managed and overcome!

Universal Law: Each person is unique and has a unique function to fulfil in this world. SO JUST DO IT!

Universal Law: ADD/ADHD runs in the family... of man.

If our educational system addressed the fact that we're here, and recognized that any and all modifications designed to improve the performance of a child with ADD would be helpful to any child, than perhaps we could return to the days of "quality education" in the USA!

Well, now you have it. The madness, the methods and the miracles. To all the parents and students who live too far away to come to my house, I wish you success! And to my own "greatest teachers," I express my humble appreciation for all of the aggravation that has made me the expert that I am! To all children and adults who have Attention Deficit Disorders I would leave one parting reminder:

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Until you make it in this world, you have ADD.

Once your creativity makes a unique contribution --

You are merely eccentric!

About the Author

Barbara Stein is a teacher, advocate, lecturer, support group leader, author, and mother of five children. Mrs. Stein gave herself the title of "Aggravation Expert" when two of her sons were diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. In order to assist her own children in coping with the difficulties they were experiencing in school, Mrs. Stein became actively involved in developing coping strategies for students, along with effective management strategies for parents and teachers.

In her book, Attention Deficit Disorder Made Easy, Barbara Stein offers sound educational expertise, along with a common sense approach to dealing with learning differences. Also, she shares vital advocacy tips that assist parents in obtaining appropriate educational services for their children.

Known as "The Confidence Coach," Mrs. Stein works with her students in the areas of written expression, organizational skills, word processing, attitude adjustments and homework completion. Over the years, Mrs. Stein's methods have been demonstrated to be effective in helping students of all ages to become successful in achieving their goals.

Mrs. Stein presents dynamic interactive workshops for numerous school districts and parent groups throughout the tri-state area. Recognized for her insight, humour, and personal anecdotes, Mrs. Stein offers presentations aimed at empowering parents, students and educational professionals.