

# THE HOMESCHOOLER'S GUIDE TO ATTENTIONAL DIFFICULTIES

Practical Tips For  
Daily Success

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**The Homeschooler's Guide  
To Attentional Difficulties**

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### **“Real Life” Success Stories**

(The following are true stories, with the identities of the children changed.)

#### *“Sarah”*

I first met Sarah when I was asked to observe her in her first grade classroom at a College Preparatory private school. I was directing a resource program there for children with learning problems and attentional difficulties. Sarah’s teacher was concerned because of her inability to attend to instruction. Sarah’s mother had her evaluated and it was determined that she had attentional problems. At the end of first grade, Sarah was told by certain officials that the school she was attending could no longer meet her “needs” and that she should go to a “special school” for children with her “kind” of problems. Sarah attended this school in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at a yearly tuition of \$6,000. There the message was also communicated that Sarah’s needs could not be met. She was often isolated to work alone. After completing these two years, her mother tried to enroll her back in the “College-Prep” school, but was told that it still could not meet her “needs”. It was at that point that her mother decided to homeschool Sarah and to implement the techniques that are covered in The Homeschooler’s Guide To Attentional Difficulties. During the three years that Sarah has been homeschooled, she has *excelled* in every area. Academically, she has scored in the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on Achievement test for three years. She also won her citywide Spelling Bee and competed for State Finals for two years. She is now able to read as much as she wants and pursue topics of interest like chess and science. All the academic subjects that troubled her in traditional school have improved tremendously since she has been home. Sarah also feels much better about herself and her abilities than she did before. Sarah is definitely a success!

*“John”*

John has been homeschooled since birth. Ever since his parents can remember, he has possessed a hunger for knowledge and learning. When he was three years old, he could tell you the name of every dinosaur in all his dinosaur books. When it was time to begin reading instruction, John learned to read immediately because he memorized the words. Once John began “formal” schooling and was required to write in a math book, and do English workbook pages, he became frustrated and no longer liked “school”. His mother then began to have a difficult time during “school time” with John. She could not understand why John could not sit and focus long enough to do math problems or complete workbook and spelling pages when he could memorize the names of all the U.S. Presidents by looking at a Weekly Reader poster. The peaceful relationship between John and his mother began to be strongly tested. Finally, John’s mother realized that something had to change. She then began using the techniques that are covered in The Homeschooler’s Guide To Attentional Difficulties. Instead of requiring John to sit for long periods of time, his mother began to give him breaks after each small teaching session. She also tried doing some English and spelling exercises out loud, instead of requiring so much writing. John and his mom used manipulatives to figure out the math answers on his work pages. This took place in 1<sup>st</sup> grade and now at the end of 4<sup>th</sup> grade, John and his mother still participate daily in the “joy of learning”, and John has not yet saturated his quest for knowledge.

### **A Note of Encouragement to Parents**

Please remember that you have been blessed with a very special task in teaching your child at home. Home schooling, on good days, can be a challenge, but when you are teaching a child or children who have a difficult time paying attention, focusing, or staying seated, the task can seem impossible.

I have included practical, obtainable methods that I have used with my own child (who has an “attentional challenge”) and countless other students over the years. You, as a homeschool mom or dad, are at a great advantage. You can easily make certain modifications available to your child; whereas, schools—public and private—can claim they will try to adapt to the learner with attentional difficulties, but are definitely challenged in their endeavors because of a number of “school” factors. I often tell parents, in my consulting business, that the best thing they can do for their children with attentional problems is to homeschool them. These children do much better in quieter, smaller, more individualized environments where they are free to learn and explore through their own styles of learning. Most schools are not conducive to the type of learning style these children require.

I also want you to remember that even though these children can be an incredible challenge when they are young and often appear to have no academic potential or future, the opposite becomes apparent as they grow up and are allowed to channel their creativity appropriately. From the more than 300 students with attentional difficulties that I have taught and tested over the years, I have witnessed growing children bloom into wonderful adults and pursue various fields including art, law, dance, drama, engineering, fire fighting, missions, teaching, and writing. Because they were provided with the proper learning environments and given opportunities to optimize their strengths, instead of focusing on their weaknesses, these children not only learned to enjoy life, but also were among the most talented and creative students in their fields.

So, I encourage you as parents of the “attentively challenged”, to take heart and be thankful that God blessed you with a gifted child! He will give you grace to cultivate this growing “flower”!