

Evolution

The birth of Pay Attention to Attention began in 1981 with a decision to offer groups and classes for children and families where there were concerns about attention and self-control. At that time, I quickly realized that offering individual therapies, or simple-minded advice about rewards and consequences were insufficient. Parents told me, and I believed them, that youngsters did not behave in my office or during an assessment, the way they did at home. So, I thought, let's bring the kids together and see how they behave. Parents doubted that the groups would work, but they did. The kids enjoyed the classes, the fast-paced format allowed them to be successful, and we included parent observation and teacher involvement, so the concepts and activities that we were presenting to the children could be practiced at home and in school. Gradually, we expanded our emphasis to include concepts from many disciplines, using many different approaches. There was, and always will be, a deemphasis on diagnosis. I believe that these clinical diagnoses pathologize our children, and I believe that ADHD is a condition characterized by weakness, and a condition of degree, not of pathology. We decided that our emphasis was going to be on building skills and integrating strengths, not an emphasis on deficits. We also decided that the information presented had to be practical. It had to be skills that the family and teachers could use, and we took a long-term perspective. ADHD is a developmental condition. We're talking about building skills and understandings that children can use over time. Because of the pandemic, the next evolution of Pay Attention to Attention is this online format.