

## Getting Ready

One of the things that happens when parents come to our clinic to help their children with attention problems, is they're initially motivated to work on attention, but they actually don't understand the nature of attention and don't take the time and effort and practice that is required. Attention training is complicated. That's why we spend so much time talking about the nature of attention, the different attention networks, the reasons why we're using different attention strategies. Because a simplistic notion of what attention is just won't do. I've had many families that have asked me for activities and recommendations. They return two, three, four weeks later without having actually practiced much of what we've talked about. It also requires patience. You can't just talk about attention with your children and expect them to go, "I've got it, I'm ready to go." We have to work slowly, build skills, figure out how we're going to transfer skills from home to school. We can't jump into the hardest activities that require the most attention, the most focus. We need to start with simple goals and build up gradually.

It requires us to be very patient. This is hard to learn. This is not something that even a motivated student can easily learn to do.

Attention training also involves advocacy. We have unrealistic expectations of children at school or in sports that are beyond their attention resources. We can't simply expect children to pay attention because they're in a Pay Attention to Attention program. Sometimes we have to adapt what we expect from the children for them to succeed.

Now let's define resources. Schools are challenged to find resources. We have to figure out what we can do to support the school's efforts.

In many cases, the best progress is made by modeling by parents and teachers. It's better if you show children what to do, not just tell them what to do. For many parents, this can be a challenge.

Remember, attention is complicated and involves many contributing factors. If we overlook sleep, if we don't address physical health, if we don't understand how stress can impact a child's attention, all the attention training in the world won't work.

Attention training also requires that we do a thorough assessment of a child's strengths and weaknesses. Too often, a diagnosis such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder narrows our focus, and we overlook very important things that need to be considered if we're going to help our children with attention.

If we have an open mind, and are prepared to work hard, and develop a strong team, we can help our children build their attention skills.