

How does occupational therapy help a child with ADHD?

Occupational therapists often work with children to help them develop self-regulation and executive functioning skills. By teaching children strategies to address these challenging areas, we empower them to become more independent and self-assured.

OT's target two important areas

Self-Regulation: refers to an individual's ability to identify and adjust their level of alertness. Understanding your current ability to pay attention, be safe, and interact with others is something that often comes naturally to adults. When we are tired and trying to pay attention in a long meeting, many of us make a (sometimes subconscious) decision to increase our level of alertness by tapping our feet, drinking coffee or chewing on a pen cap. For some children, including many of those with ADHD, it is difficult for them to develop this skill on their own and they need assistance to read their own bodies and choose appropriate strategies to help them focus.

Sensory Modulation: is one of the essential elements of self-organisation. We use different strategies to self-organise and participate in meaningful life activities. The kinds of activities used to wake up and prepare for the day typically differ from those we use to prepare for going to sleep at night. We need to stay alert and awake when learning.

Automatic Nervous System (ANS)

Response: Arousal

- Arousal is related to levels of alertness and to behavioural responses (people respond differently to increases and decreases in arousal)
- It is a very complex nervous system response
- It plays a central role in sensory processing and behaviour.

Executive Functioning skills: Children with ADHD often exhibit difficulty with executive functioning skills, such as organisation, initiation of and transition between tasks, problem solving and time management.

Key Points:

ADHD and OT's

- Practical strategies focussed on skill development and functioning are proven to be effective in managing ADHD and organisational difficulties
- OT's target sensory processing and executive functioning to help with ADHD
- OT's are trained to assess and manage these difficulties

How can an OT help?

OT's work with children and their families to identify how these challenges are impacting their daily lives. These areas are then addressed in two ways: helping a child to directly build those skill sets and by working with the family to create routines that emphasise a child's strengths.



"Thoughts fly lightning fast... Can you control them?"

www.adhd-app.com

What should I do if I am worried about this?

We have many ways to support children, young people, adults and families to understand your sensory processing including identifying your neurological threshold for responding to sensory input and what to do to make interaction in situation that are either under or over stimulating more manageable for children and young people with ADHD or attentional difficulties.

OT's can help with practical strategies to assist children and young people experiencing these difficulties and lessen the impact on mental well being and behaviours. If you would like further information, please contact Dr Carina Capra at carina@thoughtfulhealth.com.au

or Catherine Daly at catherine@whataboutplay.com.au

Or call the *Thoughtful Health Clinic* on 3463 0722