Why ADHD Children Are Often Tempted to Run Away

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ADHD and Running Away

Do you have a child with ADHD that seems to always want to run from you, especially in public places? Not only does this cause problems for you, it can be potentially harmful for the child. What can you do?

Behavioral Therapy for ADHD and Running Away

A way to modify the behavior of running away from caretakers or parents is using a behavior therapy program or behavior management regime. It is based on many simple notions about what motivates children to behave a certain way.

One notion is that a child wants to please his/her parent and feels good when Mom and Dad are proud of them. If the relationship is based on positive feedback, it can be a source of motivation for the child. Positive consequences are another approach to rewarding good behavior. Children also avoid negative consequences by acting the appropriate way.

Consider these tips for getting started:

- You will need to be very clear about the fact that your child needs to stay near you and not run off. Let him know what the reward is and makes sure he clearly understands this.
- Be sure to make sure that the expectation is reasonable for the child. Do not set him up for failure by expecting him to stay glued to you for an hour at a carnival, for example. You will have to gauge this by age appropriateness – a three year old is different to a teen. Make obtainable goals for the child.
- Allow your child to pick from some types of rewards.
- You can use a behavioral program for other issues in your child's life as well. Just don't try to do a lot of them at once or it is sure to fail. Do behavior modification on one or two things at a time.
- There are many types of rewards; not just tangible ones. Praise is a wonderful type of reinforcement of good behavior, and other types of rewards can be used in conjunction with social rewards.
- Above all, be consistent. You really have to maintain the program for it to succeed. If you fail to reward after good behavior, the child will feel that there is no benefit. You should reward without fail, and you need to keep to the program no matter how tired you are of doing it.

An Argument Against Medication

Many health professionals may suggest putting an ADHD child on medication to control his/her impulsiveness, but medication isn't always the answer to this type of problem. Children respond to medications in their own unique way and sometimes, a child just won't respond to it at all.

Some studies suggest that as many as 20% of ADHD children to not benefit from medication. In other children, medications may not take care of all the symptoms of ADHD and many times, kids just do not want to take pills.

Making a child take medication can create more problems than anything.

Talk to your doctor about other treatment possibilities, and consider using trying regular exercise, music, and other therapies to help calm your child. If he has more control over impulses and less unused energy for hyperactivity, he is likely to run away from you less often.