

PREPARING FOR THE SUMMER AND BEYOND

by

Ernest J. Bordini, Ph.D., Licensed Psychologist, PY004140

As the school year is winding down and the pressures of keeping up with ADHD children and their homework seems to have an end in sight, it's time to look ahead to the summer and beyond.

Many children find relief from the demands of school and pose little if any major behavior problems with the reduced demands. The summer provides an opportunity for stress relief and recuperation of their self esteem.

For other children, the lack of structure becomes a major problem. Whether at home or at a day care program which offers little structure activity, behavioral problems can develop. These children can benefit from more structured activities and partial or full day camps. These can provide structure and practice for social skills.

Vacations can provide relief or stress depending how it is approached. Don't overplay and overachieve on vacation. Schedule activity as well as rest.

Summer is also a time when children spend more time with siblings. Sibling rivalries may heat up.

Structuring schedules or activities so that children have a break from each other can be helpful. Check the ADD Warehouse catalog for games that focus on cooperation. Avoid "holding court". Set mutual rewards and consequences for siblings getting along. Finding out who is right and who is wrong creates winners and losers. This can fuel further rivalry. If the children want to discuss it, hold the discussion until they have all served the consequence for not getting along. Remember to use the carrot! A treat for working cooperatively or playing together quietly will get more of the behavior you want than a great deal of attention for misbehavior.

Children's behavior and misbehavior is influenced by many things such as child characteristics, parent characteristics, work schedules, family illness, visitors, structure, and external stresses. Take a minute to think of one or two things that you as a parent can do this summer to work on yourself or your schedule to make things better.

Children getting ready to enter middle school may need extra preparation. They may need extra help with organization and planning. Working on general study skills and test taking strategies may be helpful.

Middle school places a greater emphasis in quantity and length of reading and written material. Children who "got by" this year may become overwhelmed in middle school. Every year we see many children who received good grades but had great difficulties in middle school. Some of these have difficulties keeping track of homework and organization (typical middle school ADHD problems), but others with early reading or writing difficulties become vulnerable as the demands increase. These may benefit from some extra assistance during the summer.

Dealing with the academic demands of children is a challenging task. The scholastic demands change constantly as do the skills and adaptation of the child. There are essentially two moving objects. If the child needs re-assessment plan on it early since the school and private practitioners always have a mad scramble