**CHM Leadership Certification**

**Level IX, Course #3**

**WHEN ADHD COMES TO CHURCH**

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**(Presenter’s Notes)**

**When ADHD Comes to Church**

Today, it is hard to imagine that every church does not have a least one child in each classroom that exhibits manifestations of ADHD. ADHD results from a subtle malfunction in the intricate transmission of neurochemical messages between brain cells. This condition seems to affect boys a little more than girls and is characterized by behavioral and learning disorders. A child with ADHD will have problems in two major areas: hyperactive-impulsive behavior and inattentiveness. These children are often judged by their behavior and often labeled as defiant or silly.

It is also important for leaders to understand how controversial ADHD has become. For some, this condition is over-diagnosed and has more to do with diet and environmental influences on the child. For others, medication and the long-term effects on the child has become a point of controversy. Another unresolved discussion is whether a child with ADHD has the ability to grow out of this condition. Some children's leaders openly state that hyperactive or inattentive behavior is due to poor parenting. For some parents, even a professional diagnosis of ADHD is considered a negative label for the entire family.

It is important that church Bible study leaders create a learning environment that enables all children (even those with ADHD) to learn about Jesus and feel accepted with unconditional love. As a children’s leader may you take the time to understand the characteristics of these kids and be committed to developing strategies for a fun, safe time at church.

**These Amazing Kids Can Exhibit Any/All of These Characteristics:**

* Lack of impulse control
* Challenged with taking turns with other children
* Difficulty in following directions
* Difficulty remembering things
* Easily distracted and can’t stay focused
* Has a tendency to not stay with the group
* Difficulty finishing tasks
* Appear not to listen when spoken to
* Will demonstrate times of fidgeting, tapping, and squirming

**Create A Welcoming Environment:**

1. Start fresh with every session. Each child needs to feel that you are glad he has come to church.
2. Plan independent times for all children to interact with each other. This will help teach the child with ADHD how to interact and build relationships with other children.
3. Identify resources that can be put away instead of causing the child to get in trouble.
4. Work closely with parents. Plan to meet with them as needed to discuss common strategies that will be consistent at home and at church.
5. Look for positive and affirming comments when the child is successful.
6. Keep rewards tangible.
7. Provide a place for a child to go in cases of inappropriate behavior that requires removal from an inappropriate situation.

**How to Manage Classroom Activities Successfully:**

1. Set clear expectations and post a few simple rules that are easily understood.
2. Post a visual schedule; placing times on elements in the session can frustrate children with ADHD and they become stressed when the group does not stay on schedule. They do like the consistency of knowing what order to expect.
3. Provide a merging time at the beginning of learning sessions. This gives them an opportunity to “ease into the environment.” Purpose to have a more structured group time later in the session.
4. Limit “sit still” time. Plan for “hands-on” activities.
5. Offer “fidget toys” during times of listening.
6. Keep transition times to a minimum. Or provide an activity as you move to another activity.
7. Make sure you have the child’s attention before giving important directions. If necessary, have the child repeat a given direction back to you.
8. When possible, include a video element. This can be captivating for kids with ADHD
9. Enlist an additional helper to assist a child with ADHD when needed.

The author mentions: “I find it very interesting that EVERY week my student with ADHD at some point in the session will say, “I love you, Mr. Jerry!” That, my fellow children’s leaders, is one of life’s greatest rewards! It is, indeed, worth the time to understand ADHD and be willing to develop strategies so that all kids have the opportunity to learn about the Creator of the universe and His Son, Jesus.

Leaders who work with children will inevitably face the challenge of an inattentive or

hyperactive child. Some children will be diagnosed by a professional as having ADHD. Some will have parents that are proactive and engaged in finding successful intervention strategies. Some parents will choose to do nothing. Some children will be wrongly labeled by church leaders. Regardless of the diagnosis, any leader can create a learning environment that encourages all children to learn and feel accepted.

Reference:

Jerry Vogel, *Lifeway, Kids Ministry 101*, June 15, 2016

Carlton McDaniel, *Lifeway Christian resources,* January 1, 2014.

<https://www.lifeway.com/en/articles/how-to-teach-children-with-adhd>