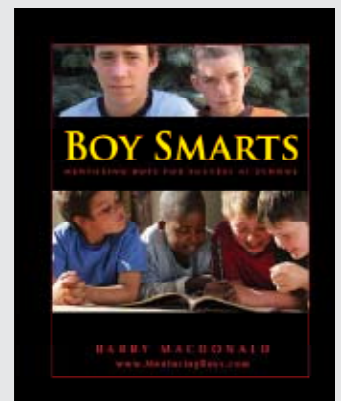




While it's natural for teachers to want students to be focused and attentive at all times, a student who is fidgeting, twisting a tiny rubber elastic figure in his hands, shuffling books noisily, or even gazing absently out the window, has much to teach. Such students are giving cues that something else is needed. How can we move from judgment and irritation to a more compassionate and helpful way of viewing these students? It is adult perspectives that will make all the difference in how well these students learn, and how they feel about themselves.

Typically, it is around this time of year that teachers tell me about the pressures of preparing report cards and how they can more easily become frustrated with challenging behaviours at school. One teacher recently emailed about her own frustration and her attitude "make-over":

REFRAMING ATTITUDES TOWARD *Active* LEARNERS



I want to do my best to inform parents about their children's achievement...

Hello Barry,

“**LIKE** clockwork, preparing report cards increases my tension on the job. Even my own kids and husband notice my stress level building. This year my son innocently announced that I needed a *make-over* or else he'd move out. Sensing the mounting tension among my colleagues, I know that I am not alone. I am a bit of a perfectionist and want to do my best to inform parents about their children's achievement. It can be hard at times not to spiral down into discouragement and frustration with certain student behaviours, especially the short attention spans associated with ADHD. Still, I work hard to maintain optimism and focus on student strengths.

AS you emphasize in each of your **Boy Smarts** stories, I too have discovered that when I shift my focus to student strengths and work to see the silver lining of challenging behaviours, students learn that I care about them and respect their unique ways of learning. When I look from a place of compassion, we both discover more patience – and I get my reports cards get done on time! I recall a list of mindset *make-overs* you summarized at a conference that I found to be helpful and inspiring, and would appreciate the list again. Thank you!”

Elizabeth - Grade 9 Teacher, Vancouver



“It can be hard at times not to spiral down into discouragement and frustration with certain student behaviours, especially the short attention spans associated with ADHD.”

You are wise to focus on student strengths...

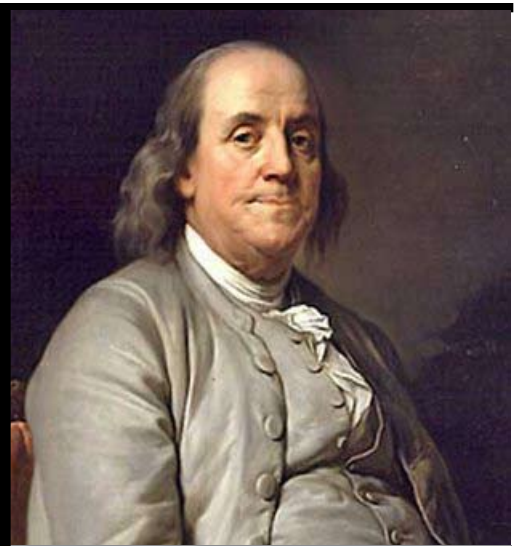
Dear Elizabeth,

AS you attend to the challenging task of teaching today's youth, you are wise to focus on their strengths, appreciating that being unique can have its advantageous. Studies suggest that many of the traits students with ADHD exhibit can be expressions of deeper talents: powerful imagination, searching insight, and unusual intuition. Consider the following list of imaginative and resourceful men who were diagnosed or believed to have lived with ADHD:

- Sir Issac Newton
- Albert Einstein
- Magic Johnson
- Micael Jordan
- Abraham Lincoln
- Nelson Rockafeller
- Henry Ford
- Pablo Picasso
- Amadeus Mozart
- Steven Spielberg
- Galileo
- Alexander Graham Bell
- Babe Ruth
- Benjamin Franklin
- John F. Kennedy
- Walt Disney
- Bill Cosby
- Vincent Van Gogh
- Christopher Columbus
- Michael Phelps

BY reframing our automatic judgments into more compassionate observations, we can develop more satisfying and productive relationships with students. At the end of the day, the week, the term, as pressures mount, we may also, by taking a breath and tilting our perspective, find that we are feeling kinder toward ourselves.

MAY the following 20 reframing transformations of thought help you maintain a focus on strengths and foster positive responses to the everyday challenges of parenting and teaching kids:



“Hide not your talents.
They for use were made.
What’s a sundile in the shade?”

Benjamin Franklin

““If you can dream it,
you can do it. Always
remember that this whole
thing was started with a
dream and a mouse.”

Walt Disney

Kids don't care how much you know until they know how much you care...

• **DEFICIT FOCUS**
J u d g m e n t a l

- ✦ Distractible and can't focus
- ✦ Impulsive
- ✦ Doesn't try
- ✦ Hyperactive and can't sit still
- ✦ Talks too much in class
- ✦ Inappropriate behaviour
- ✦ Attention-seeker

- ✦ Is lost in daydreams
- ✦ Never finishes things
- ✦ Irritating or annoying
- ✦ Stubborn and argumentative
- ✦ Unwilling
- ✦ Lazy and unmotivated
- ✦ Doesn't care

- ✦ Reacts and becomes mean
- ✦ Refuses to sit still
- ✦ Doesn't have the discipline to focus and study
- ✦ Resists help and direction
- ✦ A show-off
- ✦ Never plans ahead and is impulsive

• **STRENGTH FOCUS**
C o m p a s s i o n a t e

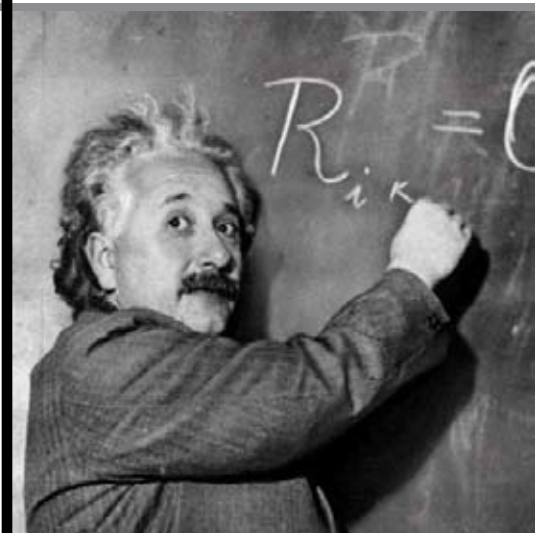
- ✦ Notices everything
- ✦ Spontaneous
- ✦ Has difficulty getting started
- ✦ Lots of energy and drive
- ✦ Very social and relates well
- ✦ Lacks awareness about behaviour
- ✦ Needs support and reassurance

- ✦ Has tons of creative ideas
- ✦ Good at starting new projects
- ✦ Challenged and has a low tolerance for frustration
- ✦ Independent and knows ownmind
- ✦ Unable
- ✦ Tired of failing and struggles with how to begin
- ✦ Has difficulty sustaining attention, becomes confused

- ✦ Becomes defensive, hurt, unhappy
- ✦ Over-stimulated
- ✦ Learns quickly through watching and doing
- ✦ Becomes embarrassed, anxious, and frustrated
- ✦ Overcompensates
- ✦ Thinks on feet and is able to react quickly



"It is a miracle that curiosity survives formal education...
The true sign of intelligence is not knowledge but imagination."
Albert Einstein



The drive for excitement and stimulation can lead to success...

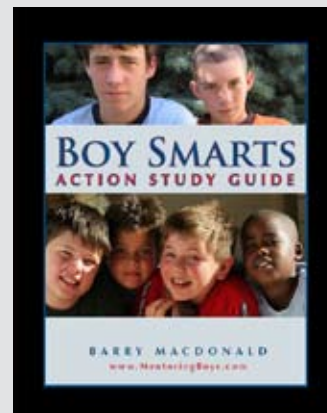
KEEP in mind those children who struggle with attention, focus, or ADHD challenges often become creative and resourceful learners out of necessity. With maturity, these children develop wonderful traits such as creativity, divergent thinking, inquisitiveness, spontaneity, intuitiveness, resourcefulness, humour, and resilience. As they develop self-confidence in their approach to living, they experience success as adults by choosing careers that build on their unique strengths and abilities. In this way their drive for excitement and stimulation can lead them to success in business, innovation, entertainment, sports and public speaking.

WHILE it can be harder to reach some students than others, transformational teachers know that it's possible to engage almost any student when they tap into students' innate strengths and interests to help them learn.

AS we hold strong to the conviction that with support, all kids can achieve great things, they in turn will learn to channel their energy in positive ways. • • •

Barry MacDonald

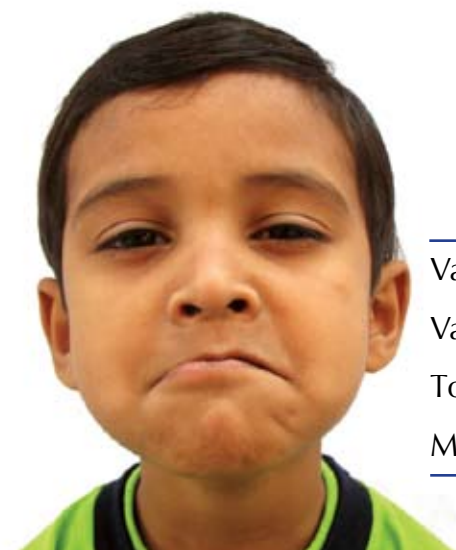
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