Your Attention Please!

What black parents need to know about ADHD

September 1, 2009 By Kat Noel

Is your child easily distracted? Does he or she have difficulty paying attention? The prevalence of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)—a neurobiological condition—in African-American children is similar to that of the general population, according to a study published in the *Journal of the National Medical Association*, but fewer black children are diagnosed and treated for the disorder compared with their white peers.

Researchers speculate that this disparity is linked to many African Americans' distrust of medical and educational establishments in their communities. As a result, parents often remain unaware of ADHD symptoms and treatment options.

Diagnosed with the disorder, Shane K. Perrault, PhD, psychologist and founder of ADHD Performance Counseling in Silver Spring, Maryland, advises parents to view children with ADHD as kids who allocate their attention differently—not as kids who lack the ability to pay attention.

Things that aren't stimulating enough to catch most people's attention will get the attention of someone with ADHD, Perrault tells RH. "It's not that they can't pay attention, because they can hyper focus and do really well at some things."

If you're concerned your child might have ADHD, Perrault recommends scheduling an assessment with an ADHD psychologist to check the child's learning style, strengths and interests. "All the kids I've treated with ADHD are bright and gifted in some way," Perrault says. "When we teach them to tap into their gift, I've seen amazing progress."

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A midday game of kickball may be as important for school children as their studies. It teaches them teamwork, sportsmanship and the benefits of fresh air and exercise. But, according to a study published in the journal *Pediatrics*, 30 percent of children nationwide have little or no recess. —James Wortman

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