Attention and concentration strategies for High School

Challenges with attention and concentration can hinder academic performance and social interactions. This advice sheet provides strategies to support teenagers with difficulties in this area, helping them improve organization skills and achieve academic success.

Classroom Strategies:

- **Quiet Corner:** This minimizes both visual and auditory distractions and provides a peaceful space for students to retreat to when they feel overwhelmed or need a break. Make sure the area is free from visual clutter, such as posters or busy decorations and ensure it's located in a quiet part of the classroom away from noise. This allows students to recharge and refocus without additional sensory stimulation.

- **Classroom Routines and Procedures:** Establish consistent classroom routines and procedures to provide structure and predictability. Clearly communicate expectations and reinforce these routines to support students in managing their time and materials effectively.

- **Brain Breaks:** Introduce short brain breaks throughout the day to help students recharge their mental energy. These breaks can involve activities like deep breathing exercises, yoga poses, or guided relaxation techniques.

- **Visual Timelines and Schedules**: Create visual timelines and schedules that outline the daily or weekly classroom activities.

- **Task Checklists:** Provide students with checklists or task cards for assignments and projects. Break down larger tasks into smaller steps and encourage students to check off completed tasks, helping them stay organized and track their progress.

- **Personal Organization Tools:** Teach students how to use personal organization tools such as digital calendars, planners, or mobile apps. Encourage them to input assignment due dates, exam schedules, and extracurricular activities to stay organized and manage their time efficiently.

- **Peer Collaboration and Support**: Foster a supportive classroom environment where students can collaborate on projects and assignments. Pair students with attention difficulties with responsible and supportive peers who can help with organization, task reminders, and study support.

- **Effective Study Techniques:** Teach students various study techniques, such as creating concept maps, using mnemonic devices, practicing retrieval through quizzes or flashcards and summarizing information in their own words. Help them identify which techniques work best for them and encourage regular review sessions.

- **Active Reading Strategies:** Teach active reading techniques, such as highlighting key information, summarizing main points and jotting down questions or annotations in the margins. These strategies can enhance comprehension, retention and engagement while reading academic texts.

Curriculum Modification:

- Reduce amount or volume of work as necessary to ensure completion of tasks and quality rather than quantity.
- Allow extended period for completing work.
- At the start of new learning experiences, allow for a lower accuracy rate and increase expectations with time.
- Focus on effort rather than quantity of work production.
- Determine with parents a reasonable time commitment for homework.
- Modify tasks that involve significant inherent distractions. Fewer items on the page or use a cardboard cut-out overlay to allow better focus on a single item at a time.
- Break down complex tasks into small steps and present one at a time.
- For complicated or lengthy tasks, present only one component at a time.

Self-Organisation Strategies:

- **Study Environment Optimisation:** Help students create a conducive study environment at home. Encourage them to find a quiet space, eliminate distractions, and personalize their study area with tools that enhance focus, such as comfortable seating, good lighting, and organization aids.
- **Digital Tools for Organization:** Introduce students to digital organisation tools such as note-taking apps, task management apps, or online file storage systems. Show them how to use these tools to keep their notes, assignments, and study materials organised and easily accessible.
- **Time-Blocking Technique:** Introduce the time-blocking method where students allocate specific time blocks for different activities throughout the day. This helps them create a structured routine, prioritize tasks, and avoid procrastination.
- **Prioritisation Techniques**: Teach students how to prioritize tasks based on deadlines, importance and their own strengths and weaknesses. Help them develop strategies for identifying and focusing on high-priority assignments.
- **Break Tasks into Manageable Chunks:** Encourage students to break down larger assignments or projects into smaller, more manageable chunks. This approach helps reduce feelings of overwhelm and allows for better organization and focus on specific tasks.
- **Goal Setting and Tracking:** Assist students in setting academic goals and tracking their progress. Encourage them to establish short-term and long-term goals and provide them with tools to monitor their achievements, such as progress charts or journals.
- **Self-Reflection and Adjustment:** Teach students the importance of self-reflection and evaluation of their study habits and organizational strategies. Encourage them to identify what works best for them and adjust as needed to improve their efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Use of fidget toys:** It offers tactile stimulation and sensory feedback, allowing individuals with attention difficulties to channel their restless energy in a non-disruptive manner. This can help reduce restlessness, increase engagement, and promote better concentration.

One recommended discreet, silent fidget toy in the form of a functional pen can be found through this link:
https://www.amazon.co.uk/stores/page/F8805521-36F1-4CE1-9131-CCB9D8BDF0D9 - this link will take you to the "JJA" store on Amazon, click into the "search all JJA" search bar and type in "**Think Ink Fidget Pen**" and press enter, the product in the picture below should appear.