Teaching students with attention, concentration, and memory deficits

General Information

Students with attention, concentration, and/or memory deficits may experience problems in one or more of the following areas: following a lecture, timed reading, spelling, short-term recall, and with associative learning tasks. The student may present as lethargic, “slow,” or as if daydreaming. Commonly associated disabilities include: attention-deficit/hyperactivity, learning disabilities, anxiety disorders, psychological disturbances, seizure disorder, and head trauma.

While each instructor knows the demands of his/her own class, the following questions may be considered so that classroom information is accessible to the student:

- In what way can I help this student to focus on my lecture with a minimum of disruption or embarrassment in the classroom?
- Which mode of communication has provided the most success in the student’s previous courses—reading, writing, speaking, or listening?
- Has the student ever used a tape recorder to tape classes?
- Would the student benefit by using a note taker in class?
- What aids, besides the textbooks, would be helpful to the student?

Suggestions for Communication

- Most people with disabilities do not mind talking frankly about the disability. Understanding and awareness of the facts promotes acceptance and integration.
- When speaking with a student with attention deficits, establish eye contact, use clear, concise language, and ask for clarification of communication.
- If necessary, provide assignments or instructions in both written and oral form.
- Provide frequent feedback to student.

Academic Considerations

- In the classroom, use of proximity control and preferential seating is often beneficial.
- Begin lecture or activity with review of previous class and an outline of current class.
- Vary instructional method.
- Students with attention and memory problems often find a tape recorder useful to supplement or clarify their class notes. The use of a note taker may also be appropriate.
- Allow for extended time in testing or in short segments; the student may also benefit from an alternate testing location.
- Students with attention difficulties often find that a short break or being able to stand during a lecture assists them in focusing their attention.
- Use overhead, chalkboard, or handouts for new or technical vocabulary/concepts.

Compiled by the LSU Shreveport
Student Development & Counseling Center
797-5365; ADM 220