

# Visit With the Utays

September 2010

*School Psychology and Education Specialists*

*Dr. Joe Utay, Director of Counseling and Evaluation Services for Total Learning Centers and former professor for Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Department of Counseling, is a graduate of University of Pittsburgh, a school psychologist, marriage and family therapist, author, national speaker, and father.*

*Dr. Carol Utay is Executive Director of Total Learning Centers. She is also a graduate of University of Pittsburgh and an expert in learning and special education. "Dr. Carol" has experience as a principal, Orton-Gillingham reading therapist, teacher, consultant, national speaker, professor, author, and mother. She is a recognized national Athena Award winner for community service.*



## ADHD or Typical?

### Research says early attention problems predict later achievement

Dear Drs. Utay,

**"I'm worried about my son. He's always been very active from the moment he wakes up to the time when I finally get him to bed. But after a few weeks in kindergarten, his teacher asked me to speak with her about his performance. She told me that while he is very bright, he can't seem to stay focused on one task for too long. My husband thinks that's normal for his age, but I'm not sure. I thought he was just energetic. Should I be worried? Please help me!"**

The first thing to do is calm down. Your son has the benefit of a parent who is concerned with his education. While your husband may be correct, inattention, hyperactivity, and an impulsive nature may be signs of a deeper issue than just acting "normal for his age."

If you feel like your son is having difficulty this early in school, imagine what it will be like in a few years when he is trying to learn complex lifelong skills. In fact, a recent study at the UC Davis School of Medicine concluded that of all the characteristics present in a child, inattentiveness was the biggest factor in predicting scholastic performance. The researchers tested 700 students on a varied range of characteristics as they progressed through school. They even found that IQ was less indicative of school success than attention and memory.

We believe that the best thing to do now is to take your son to his pediatrician or a psychologist who specializes in learning differences. While his attention problems may stem from something as simple as a new best friend or an interesting toy in the classroom, it might be attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. Or, maybe the issue is really memory or how his brain processes language. An expert will be able to identify the root of your son's attention issues and offer a wealth of resources that have helped parents and students in similar situations.

When it comes to children who MAY need help, taking action now when young is not being over-reactive but rather responsibly proactive. A child will notice but won't tell you that their attention span isn't on par with the rest of the students. That is something you have to determine for yourself. Ignoring the situation may or may not widen the gap between your son's and peer's achievement. But, why risk it?

Remember, even if it turns out he has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, it is not a disability, but rather a "learning difference." Remaining calm knowing that research and experience supports your decision to do something rather than wait and see, is one more way to help your son prepare today for success tomorrow.

For more information on improving attention to maximize future success, contact Total Learning Centers at (724) 940-1090. If easier, email us at [success@TotalLearningCenter.com](mailto:success@TotalLearningCenter.com). Visit us at [www.TotalLearningCenter.com](http://www.TotalLearningCenter.com) and follow Dr. Carol Utay on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/carolutay>.

Recently honored by Parent Advocates for Learning Support for **"outstanding dedication, passion, and commitment in meeting the learning needs of all children."**

**Total Learning Centers was voted AGAIN Best Tutoring and Best SAT Prep by Nickelodeon's Parent Picks.**

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