

SHARPEN YOUR ATTENTION

“May I have your attention please...” Time and time again we have heard that announcement. We have heard it explicitly: in airports, from the podium at events, from teachers and coaches, from the voice of the principal through intercom speakers. The constant murmur of “may I have your attention please...” comes not only through words and announcements but also in the stresses and responsibilities of daily life. No announcement from any stage can be as compelling as the “may I have your attention please” that comes from an infant in distress, a teen in rebellion, or a spouse in avoidant silence. So many pressures and so many people competing for our attention...how do we attend to them all?

Here is where the brain goes to work. The brain’s task is to provide a sorting system that is both fast and effective in determining where we need to direct our attention. In many cases, before we are even conscious of having seen, heard, or smelt something...we have already assessed how important it is for us to attend to it. Actually, our brain, without our conscious awareness has assessed how much attention to give it. Our pre-historic ancestors needed a brain that could notice quickly and rightly, what path led to the saber-tooth tiger and which led to the food. Today, a brain that is working at its best will quickly and rightly be able discern what gets our attention. A well-functioning brain knows the difference between alarmed, alert, at rest, and asleep...and it allows for them all.

Sometimes the brain develops habits that interfere with its sorting system. Sometimes such habits are labeled as Attention Deficit Disorder or processing disorders in both children and adults. In children such habits of brain look like learning disabilities, conduct problems, or other emotional and impulse control problems. In teens and adults the sorting habit can look like anxiety or depression, impulse control problems, high risk taking or avoidance of responsibility. For seniors, sometimes normal shifts in attention and sorting habits of the brain are mistaken for more severe memory loss problems. Early identification and intervention can be helpful in maintaining alertness.

Rather than focusing on the label, a focus on how the brain’s sorting habits impact how we pay attention allows us to make choices to improve our brain’s health. **Neurofeedback**, an application of biofeedback to train the brain to work more effectively is an effective approach to improving attention in children and adults. For many people neurofeedback is as effective as medication in helping with ADD, ADHD, anxiety and depression - with longer lasting results and no side effects. At the **Brain Health Center**, we can assist you in determining if neurofeedback is an appropriate to attention problems that are interfering with your success and happiness. If so, our **Brain-sharpening**, like going to the gym, improves the functioning of the brain, by keeping the brain flexible to do its work of sorting and attending. Call us to make a consultation appointment.

