

When your third grader comes home from school, forgetting his assignment, you might ask, “Why can’t you just listen?”

When your teenage daughter goes off like a fire-cracker when you tell her to clean her room, you might ask, “Why can’t you just listen?”

When your partner can’t discuss family finances without becoming angry and defensive, you might ask, “Why can’t you just listen?”

When you are anxious and depressed, and ignore positive messages, you might ask yourself, “Why can’t you just listen?”

While there may be many reasons why people can’t listen, one common reason is a faulty attention system. Our brains are built to tune in to those things that are important and to attend less to messages that are less important. We are constantly assessing information that comes into our brain. Is this something to attend to? Is it something to remember? Is it something to act on? When our brain is working properly we can focus on what we need to and all the rest becomes background noise, overshadowed by the focus of attention.

But...when the attention system is “on the fritz”, either because of attention deficit disorder or overload...we lose focus. If a person is too stressed, too busy, too hooked in to electronics, too sad, or too tired- the attention system becomes overloaded and fails.

If you listen to the radio when you drive, you have had the annoying experience of being engrossed in a song or talk-show, just as you begin to move out of range for the station’s signal...and without touching the dial you are listening to something else! That is very much like the answer to your questions, “Why can’t you listen?” It isn’t that your child, teen, or partner isn’t listening...it is that the tuner in their brain can’t keep your signal focused as other signals move in.

At Brain Health Center, we work with clients of all ages to help them sharpen their attention systems in order to rid themselves of the static that blocks their joy, impedes their academic, professional or athletic success, or stands in the way of satisfying relationships.