



Amitabh Mohan, Chief Editor

PREFACE

Dear Reader

It is amazing to see the wide research going on in the field of psychology. Departing from the roots of philosophy, it has made an independent identity of its own and with every passing day it always has something new to offer in all realms of our lives. A recent study on child's attention throws light on Sluggish Cognitive Tempo (SCT). A growing body of evidence suggests that SCT is a distinct behavioural pattern, different from ADHD. Children with SCT face several difficulties such as being slow to complete tasks or generally slow-moving, lacking initiative, appearing drowsy or sleepy, appearing lethargic, and appearing frequently lost in thought or "day-dreamy." It is time that we stop labelling each and every child exhibiting such behaviour as a potential candidate for developing ADHD. Rather, we should aim at better characterisation of the behavioural characteristics of sluggish cognitive tempo and determining whether and to what degree symptoms are distinct from ADHD and other childhood disorders as SCT symptoms also seem to have a real, functional impact on children's behaviour and psychosocial competence. In this newsletter, an effort has been made to provide insight to teachers and parents about ways of dealing with children having sluggish cognitive tempo in order to provide support for building their academic and social functionality and peer competence and making their world a happier place to live in.

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Sluggish Cognitive Tempo - An Insight

Does one child of your class take the whole period to do math that other kids complete in 10 minutes? Does she often do poorly on tests even though she knows the material? Are multi-step directions hard for her to follow, especially when there isn't much time to get the task done? Or does she seem to live in her own dreamy world?



While there are plenty of possible reasons for these struggles, but one of the most prevailing reason may be the child suffering from *Sluggish cognitive tempo* (SCT) or **Concentration Deficit Disorder** (CDD). It is a cluster of symptoms that may comprise a novel attention disorder which is distinct from ADHD. It is characterized by mental foggy, dreaminess, hypo-activity, sluggishness and a slow working speed or processing speed.

Processing speed is the pace at which one takes in information, makes sense of it and begins to respond. This information can be visual, like letters and numbers. It can also be auditory, like spoken language. It's rare for someone to have difficulties in only one of these areas. Slow processing speed affects learning at all stages. It can make it difficult for young children to master the basics of reading, writing and counting and it impacts older children's ability to perform tasks quickly and accurately. Slow processing speed can affect kids in the classroom, at home and during activities like sports.

Barkley found that while children and adults with SCT had some deficits in Executive Functions (EF) in everyday life activities, they were primarily of far less magnitude and largely centered around problems with self-organization and problem-solving.

Children might have trouble with:

- Reading and taking notes
- Listening or taking notes when a teacher is speaking
- Solving simple math problems in their head
- Completing multi-step math problems in the allotted time
- Finishing tests in the allotted time
- Finishing homework in the expected time frame
- Doing written projects that require details and complex thoughts
- Keeping up with conversations



Word Power

"Augmentative and Alternative Communication" (AAC)

The term "augmentative and alternative communication" (AAC) is used to refer to alternative communication methods that can support a child's efforts to communicate. AAC includes all of the ways we share our ideas and feelings without talking.

People with severe speech or language problems may need AAC to help them communicate. Some may use it all of the time. Others may say some words but use AAC for longer sentences. AAC can help in school, at work, and when talking with friends and family. There are two types of AAC—

Aided Systems

An aided system uses some sort of tool or device. There are two types of aided systems—basic and high-tech. A pen and paper is a basic aided system.

Touching letters or pictures on a computer screen that speaks for you is a high-tech aided system.

Unaided Systems

These include gestures, body language, facial expressions, and sign language.

Symptoms of Sluggish Cognitive Tempo

- Daydreaming excessively
- Trouble staying alert or awake in boring situations
- Easily confused
- Spacey or "in a fog";
- Mind seems to be elsewhere
- Stares Blankly into space
- Lethargic, more tired than others
- Underactive or have less energy than others
- Slow moving or sluggish
- Doesn't seem to understand or process information as quickly or accurately as others
- Apathetic or withdrawn; less engaged in activities
- Gets lost in thought
- Slow to complete tasks
- Forgets what he/she was going to say
- Needs more time than others
- Lacks initiative to complete work or effort fades quickly
- Hard time putting thoughts into words
- Processes information not as quickly/ accurately

SCT has been a matter of controversy for decades. Originally, it was thought that only a subset of the inattentive type of ADHD manifested SCT and that it was apparently incompatible with hyperactivity. But new research showed that SCT is also frequently seen in the combined type, in some with the hyperactive-impulsive type and in individuals who would not receive an ADHD diagnosis. Some think that SCT and ADHD produce two different kinds of inattention: While those with ADHD can engage their attention but fail to sustain it over time, people with SCT seem to have difficulty with engaging their attention to a specific task. Some of the primary differences between Inattentive ADHD and SCT are also that SCT includes poor motivation, low self-esteem and low energy levels. Accordingly, the attention style in SCT may be more halting and sluggish, whereas in ADHD it is jumpy and flighty. As per Dr Russell Barkley, a leading proponent of the SCT theory – he calls the condition "the second attention disorder" – between a third and a half of all those diagnosed with the inattentive subtype of ADHD are, in fact, suffering from SCT, and about the same number again remain undiagnosed.

We as caregivers need to keep one thing in mind that children who are suffering from this lethargy is not intentional or a physical fatigue rather it is mental state which is not under ones control and so we have to take necessary steps to understand them and help them out in their lives.

Idea – *An idea that can change your teaching*

Tips to deal with SCT Children

As teachers having one or two students of **Sluggish Cognitive Tempo** (SCT) some times become very frustrating because though we put all our efforts the desirable result we never get. The other problem we also may face is that lack of awareness about this disorder as a result most of the children suffering from such problem are over looked. As a teacher we need to identify such children and also need to equip ourselves with effective pedagogy. Here are some tips that a teacher can use in class to cater the need of SCT children.



- **Brain Exercises:**

Simple games like Memory, Concentration and crossword puzzles can improve attention, focus and working memory—the three executive functions of the brain. Scientific studies using brain imaging techniques show that as a specific exercise is practiced over and over for a while, new brain pathways are actually developed and strengthened—which improves executive function.

- **Positive Statements:**

Teach the child to use positive statements to change how she/he thinks about herself/himself and how to handle the challenges of life. This is called "positive self-talk." If your child with ADHD or SCT has low self-esteem, teach her to let go of negative self-talk.

- **Relaxation Techniques:**

Relaxation training, including deep breathing and the use of simple methods of bio-feedback, helps reduce anxiety in kids and improves mood. This ends up improving not only academic achievement, but other aspects of your child's life as well.

- **Use Rewards:**

The use of simple rewards can work miracles in motivating a child toward success. Combined with other tools, your child can make a turnaround and move in the direction of becoming a more successful and a much happier person.

- **Create a Class Work Station:**

Place the in a class room that is free of visual clutter. Keep distracting sounds to a minimum. The goal is to make the child's learning environment as efficient as possible so there is less information to process.

- **Encourage The Child's Strengths and Interests:**

This could help kids with slow processing speed or SCT move more quickly on assignments. For example, if the child loves football, writing about that might take him less time than writing about a topic that is less interesting to him.

- **Give More Time for Tests:**

A private space can also help because many kids with these issues like to talk aloud as they're working through test questions. Aim to give your child enough time to practice and fully learn a new skill without bogging him down by overdoing it.

- **Change the way you give directions .**

For example, it may help to give directions one step at a time. Giving directions in more than one way can help too, such as writing them down *and* saying them out loud.

- **Practice new skills until they become automatic:**

The more familiar the child becomes with a task, the greater the chance of improving processing speed. But the trick is helping your child find a balance between over learning and feeling overwhelmed.

At the end the most required thing to teach SCT children is the patients of mind and perseverance of the teacher who is ready to go to experiment with convention pedagogy.



HLS Workshop on Learning Disability

Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia or Specific Learning Disability are few terms that are commonly heard in the education system. As learning disabilities take many forms, teachers must be prepared to think on their feet and learn to identify and manage the requirements of each child in their class.

At HLS India, we have a training module on 'Managing Learning Disability in Classrooms'. This workshop gives a holistic psychological guidance about Specific Learning Disability and how to distinguish it from other types of special needs children. This will also equip teachers with effective strategies to deal with these children and enable them to overcome his or her limitation and excel in their lives. All our training programmes are participatory and experiential. We include a variety of methodologies to ensure a holistic training approach.

To organize a workshop on 'Managing Learning Disability in Classrooms', contact our office on the numbers given below.



Dreamers are Believers

Believers are Achievers

Amitabh Mohan



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