

CHAPTER

1

# STANDING UP *and* *wandering around the classroom*



## WHY DOES HE/SHE DO THAT?

Because he/she has trouble controlling himself/herself and his/her impulses to stand up and move.

Because he/she has a need to do several things, to be forever active and in constant motion.

Because he/she moves whenever he/she wants to and cannot understand the reason why he/she HAS TO stay still.

## WHAT TO DO

- ✓ Create a quiet corner
- ✓ Introduce regular breaks into the lesson
- ✓ If the child stands up WITHOUT disturbing, ignore him/her
- ✓ Assign the child small tasks so that he/she can move (hand out materials to classmates, go to the school office, etc.)
- ✓ Allow the child to leave the classroom once every hour
- ✓ Be patient

## WHAT NOT TO DO

- ✗ DO NOT expect the child to stay still
- ✗ DO NOT write the child up
- ✗ DO NOT make the child skip recess time
- ✗ DO NOT scold the child
- ✗ DO NOT raise your voice
- ✗ DO NOT forbid the child to leave the classroom once every hour

## Analysis of the problem behaviour

When the need to move becomes urgent, almost uncontrollable, the child stands up and begins his/her «perpetual motion».

Children with ADHD have difficulty in controlling themselves and managing this impulse. Remember it is not a provocation of rudeness nor disobedience, but a physical need. The way these children feel this need is atypical compared to the others and they are not able to inhibit it.

Being hyperactive means doing several things — usually too many — at the same time and therefore being in «hyper» activity.

It makes little sense to expect the child to have self-control in class, because self-control is not an inborn ability. It is therefore necessary to get the child used to the pace of the classroom work with constancy and patience. These children never stay still. They lack «social intuition», that is they do not instinctively understand how they should behave. The fact that everyone is seated is not enough to convince them to remain seated: they think those who do not constantly stand up are «strange»!

They get bored remaining seated because they think it is something meaningless: «I can listen to the teacher standing, I can write standing with a knee on the chair, I can slouch at the desk... what's the problem?». This problem behaviour usually arises in the first year of primary school and persists, in a less marked way, until the third year. In pupils with severe ADHD, instead, it may persist in the following years too.

First of all, it is important to define the problem behaviour. Simply saying that the child «does not remain seated» is maybe too generic, because in class you could encounter these situations:

- the child stands up frequently
- the child stands up and asks for permission to leave the classroom
- the child wanders around
- the child leaves the classroom without permission.

### **How to intervene**

Give the child the following

#### **Rules**

- I can stand up from the chair, but if I stand up I must be quiet and not disturb the others.
- I can leave the classroom only with the teacher's permission.
- I can leave the classroom once every hour.
- I can leave the classroom for the first time half an hour after the lesson has begun.
- I can remain outside the classroom only for 5 minutes.

NB: Bathroom breaks are allowed once every hour, unless the child is unwell.

**Remember** these rules should be applied by all the teachers, or you will lose credibility with the child.

TEAM UP!

### **Structure**

- Organize the lesson alternating «classwork-break-classwork-break-classwork-break»: classwork periods should last about 30-60 minutes (breaks included).
- Before starting classwork tell the child how long and how difficult it will be.

- Use sensory materials to maintain the child's attention.
- Plan work breaks. It is not advisable to let the child have a break when he/she seems to be tired or becomes unmanageable: you risk that he/she «will become unmanageable» just to avoid working. (NB: the child should not ask for a break, but you have to understand when he/she needs to stand up and have regular breaks.)
- Create a quiet corner with cushions and/or soft rugs (Ch. 2).
- Use a timer or an hourglass to mark time.

### **Monitoring**

<b>BLACK DOT</b>	if the child stands up and wanders around the class more than 5 times in a lesson
<b>RED DOT</b>	if the child stands up, wanders around the class and needs to be scolded at least 3 times
<b>YELLOW DOT</b>	if the child stands up and has trouble sitting down again without being scolded
<b>GREEN DOT</b>	if the child stands up briefly and then sits down again without being scolded

### **Reinforcement**

Remember positive social reinforcement at the end of a break, when the child starts working again and at the end of each lesson.

After 5 green dots the child may be the first in line to go to the canteen or to the yard, spend 10 minutes in the quiet corner or choose a movement game to play during gym class.

No reprimands nor punishments: they would only worsen the oppositional component.

## **Educational pact**

When talking with the child's parents about what was observed and monitored in class, they will probably tell you that also at home the child has trouble remaining seated when having a meal or watching TV, that he/she never stays still and never stayed still even in nursery school.

Agree with them about the benefits of working on the self-regulation of motor impulses in situations requiring it (while having a meal, in a waiting room, on the train, on the bus, in the classroom, at the desk, in church if practicing, etc.) and propose to use also at home the method of positive reinforcements and collecting dots with interesting and motivating rewards.

## **The expert's advice**

Even if you are tired because of their motor restlessness, which is often not limited to the time spent in the classroom but also arises in the canteen, at recess, etc., try to not «leave the relationship» but rather to increase your authority, without screaming and scolding the child.

- ① Do not force the child to remain seated or he/she will hate you.
- ② NEVER let the child hate you.
- ③ Before being caring be authoritative, but never authoritarian.
- ④ Do not impose useless prohibitions (for example, forbidding him/her to stand up): teach social appropriate behaviours and those that are inappropriate and unacceptable.
- ⑤ In this case it is useless to write the child up: the child would do anything to hide it from his/her parents and you would therefore reinforce a negative behaviour.



















