



**The situation:** Luke is a 10-year old boy who attends church about twice a month. When it's time for the lesson, Luke squirms in his seat and often pokes other kids. Luke often talks when he's not supposed to, even after several requests to stop. Sometimes Luke will blurt out the answer to a question, rather than wait for the teacher to call on him.

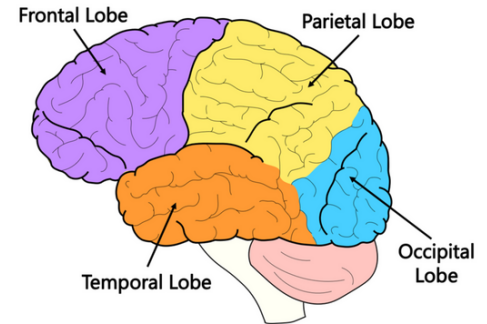


The teacher has had 2 conversations with Luke and his parents. Luke tearfully apologized during the second conversation, saying he doesn't want the teacher and other kids to be mad at him. Luke's parents grew up in the church and very much want him to be part of children's ministry, and eventually the youth group. The teacher has noticed that some of the other kids ignore Luke when he shows up, and choose to sit away from him.

## What is ADHD?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is characterized by inattention, hyperactivity, and impulsivity, more than is normal for their age. About 9% of kids ages 4-17 have ADHD.

Source: NAMI.org



**What's happening inside Luke's brain:** The frontal lobe helps people organize, plan, pay attention, and make decisions. Parts of the frontal lobe may mature a few years later in people with ADHD. Some structures in the brains of children with ADHD can be smaller than those areas in the brains of children without ADHD.

Source: American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry

## Isn't Luke just misbehaving? How to spot ADHD vs misbehavior:



- you can tell the difference between "Luke can't" and "Luke won't"
- Luke expresses genuine sorrow or embarrassment from his actions
- Luke's family is aware of his behaviors, are working with him to develop more mature behavior
- Luke has been corrected 3 or more times for the same behaviors.

## How does ADHD impact Luke?

- short attention span
- easily bored
- fidgety or doesn't sit still
- talks non-stop
- touches everything
- blurts out answers
- doesn't take turns well

**Fact: Many kids with ADHD have poor "executive functioning"**



## In children, poor executive functioning looks like...

- ...acting out for attention, not realizing long term consequences the attention brings
- ...can't follow directions with several steps
- ...underestimates the amount of time needed to finish a task
- ...talks excessively
- ...has a hard time organizing and communicating thoughts
- ...overreacts to minor conflicts
- ...doesn't understand the impact of his or her actions on others
- ...has a hard time coming up with solutions to problems when frustrated or stuck



## How Can I Help?

### Support each others' weaknesses!



#### Suggestions for Classrooms

neutral colored walls || neutral decorations  
|| good signage to classrooms and worship center || visual schedule in classroom



#### Best Practice Tip: Universal Design

Universal Design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, disability status.

What works for one works for all!

#### Plan Your Sunday School Lesson with ADHD in Mind

- Place high energy activities at end, not beginning
- Utilize visual schedule or a checklist so kids know what to expect
- Plan activities that are action-oriented, need participation, and build relationships with others
- Allow for movement



#### Help Luke grow in his relationship with Jesus...

- Engage Luke and classmates with scripture memory and other challenges. Why? Hearing biblical words and themes can significantly improve executive function.
- Classroom time: use only 1-2 engaging objects to hold Luke's attention.
- Simplify classroom decor so Luke can focus on the lesson and teacher.
- Create a simple daily discipleship plan for Luke to help him make discipleship part of his daily routine.
- Give Luke opportunities to serve others using his gifts and interests.

#### Volunteers to recruit for children's ministry:

- Mature Christians who can foster spiritual growth and maturity
- Special education teachers
- School counselors
- Psychologists
- Parents with adult kids with ADHD
- Adults with ADHD
- Grandparents with experience with ADHD



We who are strong in the faith ought to help the weak to carry their burdens. We should not please ourselves. Instead, we should all please other believers for their own good, in order to build them up in the faith.

Romans 15:1-2 GNT



The practice of religious faith can actually strengthen a person's self-control.

Source: Religion Replenishes Self-Control, Psychological Science, May 2012