

June 2008

F.O.C.U.S. Newsletter

In this issue

*June Meeting Highlights

*See you in September!

*Article: *The Defiant Ones*

Next Members' Meeting

September 9, 2008
10:00-12:00
F.O.C.U.S. Office

*Due to Summer hours, please call before you stop by the F.O.C.U.S. Office.

Focus on Children's Understanding in School

June Members' Meeting Highlights

As we head into the summer months, the conversations during the F.O.C.U.S. meeting on June 10 centered on summer classes and camps, as well as preparing for the next school year. In regard to summer classes and camps, the group discussed how to explain to our children why they need to attend. We also discussed what to consider when choosing among summer opportunities. Although there are many benefits of these summer opportunities, an important result is that the child develops a sense that there are others "like me," and begins to have an understanding of his/her needs. There are several summer camps in the United States that are designed for students with ADHD and/or learning differences. "Tips on Trips and Camps" can be found online, and provides links to such camps, including SOAR and Wilderness Adventure.

For more information on summer camps in Hong Kong,

F.O.C.U.S. members are invited to review camp brochures and literature in the F.O.C.U.S. office. Some examples are Super Camp, Outward Bound, F.O.C.U.S. reading and social skill classes, as well as local school summer classes.

As parents of students with unique needs, we know the importance of a good match between our children and their teacher. Our group discussed various avenues of explaining our child's profile to next year's teacher. Writing a letter to the teacher is an excellent way to begin communication with the teacher. However, we noted that the letter should be a short report, possibly with bullet points instead of long paragraphs. The timing of the letter should also be considered; teachers are extremely busy the first few weeks of school. Some items to include in the letter to next year's teacher include:

- Strengths
- Areas of Need

- What works at home
- What has and hasn't worked at school
- Attached psychology report

The group also discussed some new options for the monthly F.O.C.U.S. meetings, beginning in September. Some ideas include:

- Opportunities for community service and peer mentoring
- Asking schools to host an occasional meeting
- Offer afternoon and/or evening meetings in different locations
- Offer F.O.C.U.S. classes for children on topics such as time management, organizational skills, and study skills.

See you in September! In the meantime,

- F.O.C.U.S. will be raising its' membership application fee in September (\$350/individual, \$1000/5 Corporate Members, \$3000/unlimited Corporate Members)
- The F.O.C.U.S. website is being improved.
- Look for YOUTUBE video on F.O.C.U.S. this Summer.

Cathy McSweeney, Educational Director of F.O.C.U.S., prepares to leave her position, we offer our sincere thanks and gratitude. Cathy's dedication and efforts to advance the mission of F.O.C.U.S. have improved the educational knowledge and opportunities of many teachers and children in Hong Kong.

F.O.C.U.S. Centre

2909 Pacific Plaza
418 Des Voeux
Road West

PHONE:

852 2849 8218

FAX:

852 2849 8218

E-MAIL:

info@focus.org.hk

<http://www.focus.org.hk>

F.Y.I.:

If you were unable to purchase books at the Conference, they are on sale at the F.O.C.U.S. Office:

Attention Deficit Disorder

By Dr. Thomas E. Brown (\$170)

Overcoming Dyslexia

By Dr. Sally Shaywitz (\$128)

THE DEFIANT ONES: OPPOSITIONALITY

Dr. Gabor Mate

Children with ADD are often described as willful, stubborn, oppositional, and defiant. My son/daughter has such a strong will, parents say, I cannot get him/her to do anything.

While it is true that ADD children tend to resist adult authority, they do it not because they have a strong will, but because they lack a sense of independent will. What they are exhibiting is *counterwill*, a natural resistance to pressure on the part of somebody with an immature sense of himself or herself. They oppose automatically and unthinkingly, because a true sense of who they are and what they want is missing. *Counterwill* is a force of nature, put in place as a fence behind which the vulnerable little plant that is the child's sense of self can develop. The more ferociously oppositional the child, the poorer the sense of self and the weaker the actual will. What seems like will when it comes to insisting on this or that desire being satisfied is only the compulsive attachment of a child, not the true and autonomous will of a mature individual. A person with truly strong will is in charge of their desires, a person with an underdeveloped sense of self is controlled by their desires.

The problem with *counterwill* is that parents and teachers often mistake it for innate oppositionality. When we perceive oppositionality, we increase the pressure. But *counterwill* is a natural phenomenon, beyond the conscious will of the child. In nature, for every force there is an equal and opposite counterforce. So the more pressure we put on, the more oppositionality we generate in the child. A vicious cycle is set up, which no one can possibly win. Mutual resentment and increased pressure and increased oppositionality are the usual outcomes. The relationship between child and adult is undermined, with the result that children withdraw more and more into the peer world. The more they do so, the less they care what adult think or do. Thus they become even more oppositional, and in extreme cases, anti-social.

Only the adult, armed with compassionate understanding, can break the cycle. Once we understand the dynamic of *counterwill*, we can disengage from the interlocking trap of pressure-counterpressure. We defuse the child's need to oppose by warming up the relationship, rather than by techniques that aim to force the child to be different. Rewards and punishments are equally futile, because the child experiences them both as forms of pressure. *Counterwill* will build up even in face of positive rewards. The ultimate goal is to foster the child's innate sense of motivation.

Have a safe and happy Summer!