



# **TOURETTE SYNDROME ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA, Inc**

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## **CLASSROOM STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN WITH TOURETTE SYNDROME**

**The teacher's attitude and response to the symptoms of Tourette Syndrome in a student may make the difference between successful integration into learning and a disillusioned child with entrenched learning difficulties. How a teacher responds to the behavioural and physical manifestations of TS is critical to classroom success.**

**Here are some helpful strategies for working with a child with TS and associated conditions, such as ADD or OCD(Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), which can occur concurrently with TS. –**

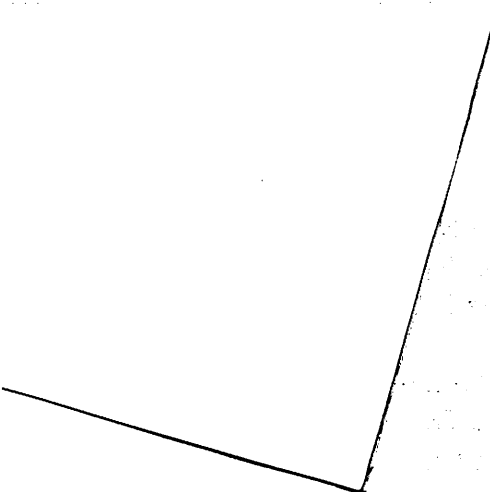
- 1. Remember that vocal and motor tics are involuntary – the child does not want to display tics in class. The effort to suppress them is enormous and may distract from classroom attention.**
- 2. Try to respond without anger or annoyance to the appearance of tics. Your response may set the tone for the class response.**
- 3. Try to acquire resources that explain TS so that other students can understand the condition and this will reduce teasing and abuse. Educate yourself on the condition so that you can make your students aware.**
- 4. Very disruptive tics may affect children seated near the TS child. Short breaks out of class allow the TS child to vent tics in privacy. Send the child on a message or to the toilet. Taking turns in sitting next to a TS child may reduce the frustration of other children.**
- 5. Develop a signal that only the TS child knows, so he can indicate he needs 'time out' before the tics get too obvious or loud. Tics are preceded by urges the child recognises; they can be held at bay, but not for long.**
- 6. If moving the child in class is the only solution, try to place the child away from other distractions, i.e near the teacher, away from windows, reading groups etc.**
- 7. Sometimes it aids TS children to have a sensory toy or item to keep hands busy – a squeeze toy or small ball to squeeze often helps focus concentration elsewhere, whilst the hands are busy.**
- 8. Help the child to find a private place to vent tics, a staffroom or reading room or section of schoolgrounds. Trying to suppress the tics for long periods can build up tension and stress which aggravates tics.**
- 9. If tics are very disruptive, do not ask the child to recite in front of class.**
- 10. If work in class progresses too slowly, modify the task – the TS child may only be able to complete every other question on a page.**
- 11. TS children often have motor/visual deficits and handwriting is quite often poor. Do not grade on handwriting or spelling.**

12. As it may be impossible for a TS child to take notes during classes, having a classmate with legible writing put a carbon in their book to duplicate notes is often very helpful, as the TS child can then turn attention to the topic, whilst still having readable notes for later revision.
13. An alternative is having a laptop computer for use in note taking.
14. For oral presentations in class, it may be better to allow the TS child to do this at home and provide a taped presentation which can be listened to in class.
15. Allow homework essays to be done by computer as this will normally take less time than having the TS child produce handwritten reports.
16. Allow the TS child un-timed tests and/or tests in a room alone to reduce the stress associated with testing which often exacerbates symptoms.
17. Avoid giving complicated directions in several parts, break assignments down into smaller pieces and have the student bring completed sections in to be checked, instead of giving weeks of notice for projects due.
18. Math can be a problem because of illegibility and handwriting difficulties. Use of graph paper can overcome this as students can follow columns more easily. Turning lined paper on its side has the same effect.
19. Do encourage parents to discuss current symptoms or any change in symptoms so that you know what to expect in class.
20. TS children often become socially isolated because of their condition. An alert teacher can encourage friendships and working together.
21. Children with TS often respond better to work that engages multiple-senses. Computer programmes are very good at this if structured educationally. Video/computer games are often too stimulating and produce over-excitement which can bring on symptoms.
22. Children with TS are often artistically advantaged. Musical and artistic pursuits should be encouraged in these children as the focus required for this type of activity seems to reduce or eliminate symptoms temporarily.
23. Keep an open mind and sense of humour – they are invaluable!!

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*Tourette Syndrome affects thousands of Australians and is characterised by involuntary body movements and vocalisations called 'tics'. Tourette sufferers are normal in every other way.*

*(Registered under the Charitable Fundraising Act CFN 10232)*



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