

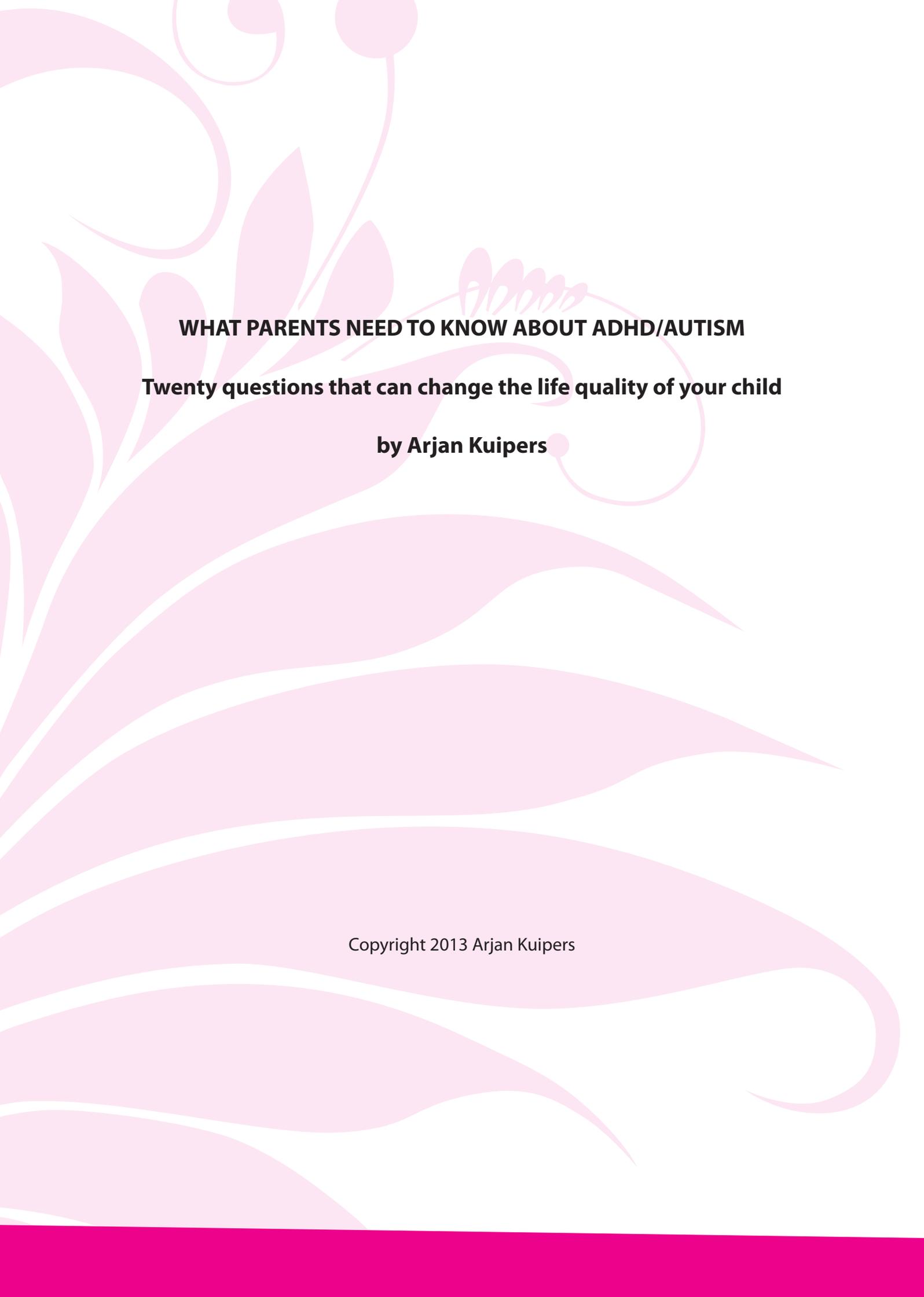


**Arjan Kuipers**

## **20 TOP QUESTIONS**

every parent should ask about ADHD/Autism

What Parents Need to Know about ADHD/Autism



**WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT ADHD/AUTISM**

**Twenty questions that can change the life quality of your child**

**by Arjan Kuipers**

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## Introduction

*Many of you, parents with children that have an ADHD/ autism diagnosis, have deep-rooted questions that remain unanswered, or at least unsatisfactorily answered. Questions such as, "Will my child ever be happy, will my child be able to succeed at school?"; "When will the tantrums stop?"; "Why does my child not have the focus to do what I ask?"; or "Will my child have lasting relationships or be able to deal with the social-emotional challenges in this world?"*

The answers to these questions may not solve your child's problems, but they may make it possible to improve the situation for your child, you and the rest of your family.

The aim of this little book is to answer some of the questions that you have and make the situation easier for all of you. What I set out to do was to provide you with a pocket guide to a better future and increased possibilities for your child with ADHD and or autism.

What you have probably not realized is that when you got answers to your questions in the past, those answers were colored. What I mean by this is that the answers were based on conventional viewpoints and certainly did not take into account new insights from research and clinical experience. Only a limited number of professionals have had access to this information and used it to improve the situation for children with ADHD/autism.

What you will find here are answers that take this newly-gained knowledge into account. Above all, this manuscript is meant to make you aware of the possibilities, to give you new hope, and to direct you in your quest to find solutions that make lasting change possible.

In this book, I have compiled and reflected on my personal clinical experience of over twenty years, as well as the insights that I have gained from some of the leading researchers and clinical experts who deal on a daily basis with children like your child.

Yours in health,  
Arjan Kuipers

## Chapter 1: Explaining ADHD and Autism

### What Is ADHD/Autism?

What is ADHD? What is autism? Are they just a series of behavioral characteristics by which we diagnose them – or is there much more going on?

When you ask that question to a group of people who deal with ADHD and autism in a conventional way – psychiatrists, psychologists, educational specialists, neurologists and pediatricians – you get all kinds of answers.

What you hear most is that ADHD and autism are made up of behavioral characteristics, which is how ADHD and autism have traditionally been defined. We have been focusing on behavior and cognitive development, and that is the way we have described ADHD and autism.

But the truth could not be further away. Children and adults with ADHD or autism are not just a collection of behavioral symptoms and related problems, because once you start looking at children and adults with ADHD or autism, you start seeing that there is much more going on.

Children with ADHD and autism have physical problems as well as emotional problems, chemical imbalances as well as cognitive problems. They have brain imbalances. They have motor problems and they often have psychiatric problems. They have immune problems and gastrointestinal problems. They can have eating problems, they can have sleeping problems, they can have epilepsy and we can go on and on.

Over the last 10 to 20 years, research conducted outside of the traditional fields that deal with ADHD and autism has shown that the whole body is involved. We now know from some of the leading experts that autism is not just a neurological, brain-based problem. It is a whole body problem. To a lesser extent, this is also true of ADHD.

If you go beyond the traditional descriptions of ADHD and autism (which really do not explain what is underlying these children's problems), you see that there are problems going on in the whole system, in the whole body instead of just a series of behavioral characteristics by which these conditions are diagnosed.

ADHD and autism are really a collection of physical, chemical, cognitive and emotional problems that are associated with characteristics and behaviors that are outwardly apparent.

### Redefining ADHD and Autism

Traditional practitioners have not been talking about the sleeping problems that ADHD and autistic children experience, or the movement problems. They have not been talking about the imbalanced motor development that we often see with these children, and they have not explained why these children, especially the autistic children, have more-than-average chances of epilepsy. Why it is that there are more immune problems with these children? Why it is that there are more problems with the gut? Why do these children have more balance problems than the average child?

These questions have not been asked or answered through traditional medicine, but we now know from research that these issues exist and we really think that ADHD and autism should be redefined.

Behavior is only one of the aspects that we see with these children. It's really all the physical problems, all the chemical problems, all the immune problems and the brain imbalances that we see, together with the behavioral characteristics, that make up ADHD and autism. And the diagnosis you get depends on the variety of problems that you see and where, exactly, these problems come from (for example, in the right brain).

The traditional approach of just describing the behavioral characteristics is really not sufficient. To understand what is going on with these children, we really have to start looking at all the other aspects. Once we start doing that, we will have a better window through which we can find solutions or improve the quality of life for these children.

### How ADHD, Autism, PDD-NOS and Asperger Are Related

In most people, ADHD and autism are not directly related, even if we know that some of the children with ADHD or autism have both diagnoses. However, these two conditions are very close to each other. In fact, they actually overlap at the extreme ends of both spectrums.

In the new psychiatric diagnostic statistical manual, the DSM-5 manual, autism will be mentioned in concurrence with PDD-NOS and Asperger. All three are grouped together and the names autism, autism spectrum disorder are one and the same and include autism, Asperger and PDD-NOS.

In the past, PDD-NOS has been separate from autism and Asperger. PDD-NOS was and is a very commonly-used terminology for all those children who have some aspects of some conditions within the autism spectrum (which includes ADHD as well) but cannot really be classified under autism or Asperger. PDD-NOS is, for the most part, a waste basket of everything that is not autism or Asperger; hence, the term “pervasive developmental disorder not otherwise specified.”

An Asperger child is an autistic child who is often of higher-than-average-intelligence and is usually more verbal than the average autistic child. Asperger children are often able to go to a regular school, but still have a lot of social and emotional challenges.

With the new psychiatric manual, they are all grouped together. Autism is synonymous with all three conditions, and they have changed the criteria for calling something “autism.”

Where does ADHD (which includes ADD) come in? Well, it is included within the autistic spectrum – a spectrum that includes developmental and coordination problems, some learning problems that are not dyslexia (including obsessive compulsive disorders and Tourette syndrome), as well as Asperger, autism and PDD.

All these conditions are very closely linked and there’s a lot of overlap. This is why some of the children who get a diagnosis get multiple diagnoses. Basically, if the people who assess them in order to give a diagnosis check off enough boxes (usually of behavioral characteristics), the children wind up with multiple diagnoses.

The diagnosis is really just a name attached to a collection of behavioral characteristics and does not explain anything about the real underlying problems. One of the underlying problems is the global decrease in function of the

right brain which we see in most of the autism spectrum disorders. That’s why they are grouped together. Not only is there a commonality in terms of behavioral characteristics, there is a commonality in terms of a decrease in brain function. Functions controlled by the right brain, such as spatial orientation, concentration, attention, understanding the big picture, having insights, understanding what something means, are usually not as good as in the average child.

In reality, in most of these children we see that they all have very clear signs of right brain dysfunction. Not diseases, but functional problems in the right brain. The right brain has not caught up as well as the left brain. It is slightly behind in its development, or some genetic expression has not taken place.

All of these problems have characteristics of right brain problems, such as difficulty interacting with the environment socially and emotionally. A lot of these children have some form of concentration or attention problem and they often have difficulty with organization, motor skills, using their big body muscles and orientating in space. They also often have immune issues, another area that is regulated in the right brain.

So, there’s a lot of overlap and, depending on what area of the brain is affected and the extent of the decrease in functionality of the right brain, the diagnosis will be different.

### **The ADHD/Autism Epidemic**

ADHD and autism seem to have become epidemic. There are a lot of theories about this and I think the truth lies somewhere in the middle of all the explanations.

What I hear, read and see in the news on a daily basis is that a lot of the experts believe the explosion in ADHD and autism is because we are much better able to diagnose these conditions. We are much more fine-tuned to picking up ADHD and autism at a younger age. Also, a lot of the parents of children with ADHD and autism find out that they themselves have a form of ADHD or autism which was never diagnosed until they saw what was happening with their child and recognized it as what has happened with them. Because these parents are functioning at a pretty high level, they really have no need to get this diagnosed.

But when they do, it gives them a much better understanding of what is going on in their life and it's easier for them to seek help for the problems that they are facing.

This is just one aspect of the epidemic. The other aspect is that as the criteria for ADHD and autism becomes much broader, we include many more people. A lot of children who have had real brain damage in the past, or were suspected to have had brain damage, are suddenly included in the autism/ADHD group. We see that a lot of the parents are also included now; especially people with Asperger. We have become much more refined in the way we diagnose and describe these problems.

But when you really look at it, diagnostic improvement only explains a certain percentage of the increase – and certainly not the largest percentage. There are other things going on in our society that probably play a much, much bigger role and explain why these problems have become epidemic and why medication and behavioral approaches to these problems have not worked as of now.

Yes, there is a strong genetic link, both for ADHD and autism. But we also know that in less than half of ADHD and autism cases this is determined by genetics only.

There are other environmental factors, so-called epigenetic and environmental factors, that seem to play a much bigger role than genetics. Our diet, the way we eat, the content of our foods, the toxins in our environment (including pesticides), the stress levels that we have to deal with, the way families work, the way people interact, has become very different from what it was.

One of the other big factors – one we have caused ourselves – is that we spend less time using our physical body, and using the body is very important for our brain development. And we now think that this is one of the factors that has caused the explosive growth in ADHD and autism. It is not so easy to accept, but it may give us insight into how we can approach these problems.

Yes, the epidemic is there but the epidemic is not caused just by refined diagnostic means. In my opinion, there is not just one factor that is the single most important because in all children there are different factors at play and we have to look at all these factors.

## Chapter 2: What Causes ADHD/Autism?

### Genetics and ADHD/Autism

Genetics are no longer considered the main cause of ADHD and autism. Now, at first this statement may seem controversial – or even pretentious – but I’m going to explain to you that it is not.

We all have a predisposition to certain disorders and diseases. Often we don’t know about it and we usually don’t get them, but there are a lot of other factors that really determine if you’re going to get a particular disorder and to what extent you get it.

ADHD and autism may have a very strong genetic link. There is a very strong tendency for people who have ADHD and autism to have family members who have a form of ADHD or autism, as well. But other factors are really even more important.

Until very recently, we all believed that ADHD and autism could not really change. We believed they were genetically determined. Some people were predisposed to it and when they had it, they kept it.

Up to some years ago, all the evidence pointed in that direction. After all, medication and behavioral approaches to ADHD/autism didn’t change the occurrence of the conditions. The explanation was partly that it was because of genetics.

Fortunately, in the last 10, 20 years, a lot of other research outside of the field that is dealing with ADHD and autism has shown that even when there is a genetic predisposition, other factors count for more than 50% in determining the extent to which someone gets ADHD or autism, and/or if they will develop it at all, even if it is in their genes.

What are the other factors? You have to think a little bit outside of the box. They are factors we deal with every day that have changed tremendously over the last 10, 20, 30 years.

We think there are certain environmental factors that actually influence our DNA material and the expression of the genetic material. These factors are: chemical factors,

nutrition, and toxins in the environment. In fact, some recent studies have shown that there are a significantly high number of people with autism living in streets near exits to highways, and that there might be a link with between autism and areas where there is air pollution from heavy metals and other toxins.

Another factor that has an effect on what happens with genetic predisposition is physical movement, which is something most people have never thought about. Certainly, the people that conventionally deal with ADHD and autism have never paid attention to this; they have not even paid attention to the other factors that I just mentioned.

Movement protects genetic material. We are made to move. We are made to stand upright and use our bodies. Moving around in an upright position actually protects genetic material. It actually protects our brain and nervous system. The activation of our bodies actually activates our brains and nervous tissue and keeps them healthy, more stable. In that way, we also protect the genetic material in our cells.

Psychology and stress also play a role. For example, we know that stress can influence genetics. When there’s a lot of stress, the genetic expression can change. Some genes can get switched on or off, or parts of the genes get switched on and off. Combine this with a predisposition and you can suddenly develop a disease, while if you do not have this predisposition the same stress (or toxins or lack of nutrients), does not do anything. This is the reason why someone can get lung cancer by smoking a couple of times a week and someone else can smoke his whole life and not having the predisposition and not get lung cancer.

So, what we understand now is that ADHD and autism are not fixed, they are not just determined by genetics. There are a lot of other factors that have a much bigger influence on what’s really happening than we have ever thought possible.

This also means that there is much more possibility for changing ADHD and autism. Once you begin to understand which factors are at play with your child, it will really give you hope.

### **ADHD/Autism and Immune Problems**

One of the recent insights into ADHD and autism is that in children with ADHD and autism there are more immune problems than in the average population. Some experts even go so far as to say that problems in the immune system are one of the leading factors that cause ADHD and autism.

How can that be? First of all, over the last 10 to 20 years, we have become more aware of what is going on in the immune system. As a result, we've started to see the relationship between the immune system and other health problems much more than we could in the past.

The second factor is that our environment, the environment that we have created by modifying the staple foods in our diet, has caused or is related to immune problems.

Third, the brain imbalances that we see in children with ADHD and autism, where the right brain has a relative decrease in function, can also be directly linked to a disturbance in the ability of the immune system to regulate itself. When the right brain does not function as well as the left brain, this may cause depressed functionality in regulating the immune system.

We do know that immune system problems are related to the problems that we see in a great number of children within the autistic spectrum. We know that these children are more vulnerable to immune problems because of the gastrointestinal dysfunctions that we see in them. The chronic reactions that we see in their intestinal system (which may also be triggered by the lack of proper food) may trigger chronic immune system problems that affect the central nervous system – the brain. And we know that the imbalance in brain function, as well as other factors in the environment, has a direct effect on dysregulation of the immune system.

In summary, immune system problems are inseparably linked to problems within the autism spectrum, but we have only started to understand what is causing these problems and how they are related to the chronic whole body problems that we see in children with autism and ADHD.

### **ADHD/Autism and Pesticides**

Perhaps most of the people with ADHD and autism do not have pesticides as the direct cause for their problems, but it is a fact that pesticides can cause a lot of problems, including ADHD, and may contribute to autism as well. What we do know is that there have been studies done that show a direct link between exposure to high amounts of pesticides and the behavioral characteristics that are typical for ADHD and autism.

We also know that if the mother is exposed to pesticides around the time of birth, this may cause the child to have characteristic behavioral symptoms for ADHD and autism.

So, pesticides are linked to these problems and I think it's important to realize that you don't have to live in a rural area to be exposed to pesticides: we are all exposed to pesticides. In a lot of urban and suburban areas lawns and shrubs are sprayed with pesticides. In farming communities there are a lot of accidents and higher exposure to, for example, the organophosphates that are used for crop growth and crop protection.

You also need to realize that a lot of the foods that you eat have pesticides and other protective chemicals on them. Simply rinsing fruits and vegetables is often not enough. For example, you may think that if you remove the peel from an orange you remove the pesticides, but the actual process of peeling the orange can rub the pesticides off on your hands and you will ingest them or take them to your mouth in a different way.

Now, these pesticides are normally broken down in your body, but if you have challenges with your health and your immune system, as a lot of these children do, the actual ingestion and exposure to these chemicals can have a more profound effect than it has on people who do not have underlying issues.

So, you have to be aware that pesticides can play a role in what's happening in children with autism or ADHD, who are already more vulnerable. Exposure to pesticides can upset their nervous systems and cause or make worse the behavioral characteristics that are associated with ADHD and autism.

What can you do? Well, we know for a fact that fruits and vegetables are extremely important. You should not avoid them (most of us should eat more of them), but you should try to get produce that has been produced in a more natural way, without chemicals and without the use of pesticides. This is a much better way to make sure that the pesticide load does not add to all the other underlying problems in your children and in yourself.

### **ADHD/Autism and Vaccines**

I think most of you are aware of the fact that there have been concerns about vaccinations in relation to autism and, to a lesser extent, ADHD. Why is this?

Vaccinations may be a cause of concern because until recently one of the substances in vaccinations was a mercury solution called Thimerosal. Mercury is very toxic. It's actually one of the most toxic substances that we know. It has raised concern because we know that in a number of children with autism there has been a link between the moment they got vaccinated and the moment the behavioral, outward signs of autism started.

However, I want you to be aware that in most of the cases where there seems to be a link between vaccinations and the development of ADHD/autism, the relation may be a little bit different than what we think.

In children who have a predisposition for ADHD or autism (there is ADHD or autism in the family), the genetic makeup is such that they may develop ADHD or autism the moment they get vaccinated, and there seems to be a direct link between the vaccination and ADHD or autism. However, it may be that other factors in the environment may have triggered ADHD/autism as well.

What this means is that if you have a child who seems to be predisposed to ADHD or autism and you go through a vaccination scheme, you may have to be more careful with it.

I'm not against vaccinations; they are one of the reasons why a lot of serious diseases have been eradicated from modern society. But vaccinations probably have side effects as well. So if there is ADHD/autism in your family or your child is more vulnerable at the moment they are getting the vaccinations – if they have the flu or a cold, or

are exhausted from lack of sleep, or have poor nutrition, or are predisposed to certain diseases – the vaccination may actually trigger problems.

So, while it seems that there is, in some cases, a direct relation between the start of autism or ADHD and vaccinations, in reality there were probably underlying problems already. Of course, in a small number of children, the vaccinations may be the only reason they developed the condition.

A lot of children, especially within the autism spectrum group, go through chelation therapy to remove heavy toxins from the body and this does seem to have an effect on some of them.

So, is there a relation between vaccinations, ADHD and / or autism? Yes, there seems to be a relation. Vaccinations seem to be one of the factors that can contribute to ADHD or autism and in some children they are the primary factor. In reality, for most children, vaccines are only one of the factors that contribute to ADHD and autism. You also have to be aware that vaccinations, even if they have taken out some of the mercury solutions, can be a trigger for the further development of these problems.

### **The Link between Food and ADHD/Autism**

Much has been said in the media about ADHD and autism and I'm sure you have come across some articles or programs explaining that the behavior of children with ADHD/autism can be linked to food.

Can food be one of the causes of ADHD and autism?

First, I want to say something about some studies that have been done about the importance of proper nutrition. I think we are all aware that a lack of proper nutrition, a lack of proper minerals and vitamins – the basic building blocks of the body – can cause problems. It can cause very severe diseases and, if it continues over many years, can even cause cancer.

Some studies have very clearly shown that, for example, in prisons, where there are a lot of behavioral issues, if the inmates' diets are changed and they get proper nutrition, that has a significant influence on their behavior.

Now, interestingly enough, a lot of inmates do have ADHD or some form of autism. They have more problems with social and emotional interaction with their environment. They are often not aware of what they are doing to other people and they go too far in certain situations. So, it's not so strange that I mention studies on these groups of people, but it just shows how big an impact proper food can have on behavior.

Some studies have also shown that if you correct the diet of children, for example, with ADHD, it has a significant effect on their behavior. These studies took out all the foods that we know or suspect have an effect on the immune system or are allergenic. Reducing these foods in the diet can have a profound effect on behavior. So, it is well worth looking into the link between food, ADHD and autism.

From a personal perspective, I do not think – and I have not seen in the last 20 years – that food is the real cause for most children with ADHD and autism. There may be individual cases where food can be directly linked to the problems that we see in these children, but in most cases, it is just one of the factors that contribute to the behavioral characteristics that we see.

This may actually be a bigger problem than in the past because the processed foods we eat do not consist of the nutritious whole foods that our body was built to deal with. Fruits and vegetables, for example, do not contain the same amount of vitamins and minerals as they did 30 or 40 years ago because of the way we now grow and produce them. To get the same amount of vitamins and minerals, we have to eat more. And this can be very difficult with children, especially children who already have issues with texture and taste and are picky eaters.

While food probably contributes to the behavior and characteristics that we see in these children, it is probably not the direct cause in most cases. However, what may have a direct effect is that the foods that we eat may actually have a detrimental effect on the immune system and cause adverse reactions leading to chronic, physical, brain problems.

So, to conclude, yes, there is a link between food and ADHD and autism; but, in most cases, food is just one of the fac-

tors that we have to take into consideration when we start looking for solutions for children with ADHD and autism.

### **Gluten and Autism Spectrum Disorders**

I think you are well aware that gluten sensitivities and gluten allergies are topics that we hear about more and more. Many articles you read, as well as many radio and television shows, deal with gluten problems.

Now, this may seem a little bit like some new trends we see. Fibromyalgia, whiplash or ME and chronic fatigue syndrome are all things we heard about for some time and then faded away in the background. That may well be the case, but let me assure you that the problems with whiplash and chronic fatigue syndrome, ME and fibromyalgia are real problems.

The problem is that traditional, conventional medical professionals cannot deal with these issues because they go beyond what traditional medicine has learned. That is, they go beyond the disease model. As a matter of fact, it is safe to assume that most problems that people experience are functional problems and are not diseases. More than 90% or maybe 95% of the problems that people experience are problems involving how their body, mind and chemistry functions and interacts with other parts of the body.

Gluten is certainly in the news, I don't think it's a fad, it is a real thing and I think after my explanation you will understand why. Gluten is a part of all of the grains that we ingest. They are part of rice products and part of all of the products we eat that contain grains.

Gluten probably has not been as much of a problem in the past as it is now, and there's a reason for this. Modern society dictates that we need a lot of food produced. We don't produce our own food anymore. To increase production, we have started to modify the foods that we eat. We have modified the most common grains that we eat. Amino acids, the building blocks of proteins, have been added to the contents of these grains so they grow better, are more disease resistant and yield a better harvest.

However, there's one problem we didn't realize when we started doing this. It looked very promising, but we forgot that our bodies have not evolved to deal with man-

made changes in our food chain. Biologically, we can deal with the old varieties of grains, but we cannot deal with the modern varieties of grains as well. That, in and of itself, does not necessarily have to be a problem, but on top of that, there are other factors. For example, the constant and ongoing stress that we experience in our society, especially for children who are already predisposed to other problems (such as children with ADHD and autism). Then, it suddenly does become a problem.

If the gastrointestinal system starts to be a little bit inflamed because your brain function is overstressed and you do not regulate your blood supply to your gut and the release of mucous to lubricate your membranes, then you can start creating a vulnerability in your intestinal system. Then on top of that, suppose you start to eat products that enhance this inflammatory process (for example, the highly-processed foods you get at McDonalds). In this case, you create an inflammatory state in your gut which is worsened by the modified grains you eat. This then starts to trigger inflammatory processes that can trigger immune processes that really influence how the rest of your body, how your brain, and how your nervous system react.

This is taking it very far, but in some people it may trigger and actually cause inflammation in the brain tissue – and we know, for example, that gluten has a great affinity for the central nervous system and the thyroid gland.

Make no mistake; this is not something you will necessarily notice in your gastrointestinal intestinal system. What happens in there is not noticed very often. It's only when your stomach starts bloating and distending, which may happen when people eat milk products that they cannot handle, that you start to feel pain. However, if there's a chronic inflammatory process in process, you don't necessarily notice. You may get some foginess in your head and you may not feel so well, but you cannot relate it to your intestinal problems.

Gluten is suspected to play a big role in a significant number of children with ADHD and autism. In some children, it will be the major cause for the ADHD and autism-related problems; but, in reality, it's probably just one of the factors that we have to take into consideration when starting to address the many roadblocks to lasting change. I have

found in the last twenty years that it is absolutely necessary to look at sensitivities to food (and gluten in particular) to provide the best possible basis for lasting change in children with ADHD and autism. So, gluten is related to ADHD and autism in many cases and in a significant number of children it is one of the factors that we should look at and modify, particularly with children who have already been predisposed to having a problem with the digestion of grains. We also know that studies have shown that when grains are removed from the diet of children with ADHD, it has a big effect on how they feel and how they behave.

### **Brain Imbalances: A Better Explanation for What's Going On in Children with ADHD/Autism**

The development of brain imbalances seems to play a big role in the majority of children with ADHD and autism. This is something that we have started to know more about only in the last 10 to 15 years. There had been some research related to other areas of health before that, but we've now started to understand that in most children with ADHD and autism – in addition to all the other underlying problems – there are imbalances in the brain function that explain why they have certain behavior, why they react the way they do to the outside world, why they have problems with their orientation and why they have problems with their general health.

The brain makes it possible for us to survive. It receives and it transmits information and it needs a constant supply of fuel. It needs oxygen and it needs constant activation. Most activation of the brain, especially in a child whose brain is developing, comes from the movement system. The reason we have such developed brains is because we stand upright. Our brain started to evolve into a much more complex mechanism the moment we started to stand upright.

That's also the moment when we think language came about. Just look at your own child. When your child is lying down, crawling on the floor and not sitting upright or standing upright, his or her language has not developed yet. The language development starts to really explode the moment your child starts to be more upright. The evolution of the human has been the same. This is also the reason why the lower life forms or the less complex life forms do not have the complex language that we have.

Now, in most children with ADHD and autism, we see that the right and left brain function are not matched up as they should be. The brain ideally functions in equal ways. The right and left brain function are pretty well matched, although everyone has some imbalances, which is fine because you can compensate when you lack a little bit on the right or left side.

To help you understand what happens when there are more-than-average imbalances in brain function, I will have to explain a little bit about the left and the right brain. Then you will really start to understand where the problems of children with ADHD and autism come from.

When children have imbalances, it doesn't matter if they have imbalances at the high functioning level or at the low functioning level. What I see on a daily basis is that when the right and left brain are working synchronously, they are sort of at the same level. Even when people do not have a very high capacity, if they function to their full capacity, they are able, within their own limits, to function and there are no conflicts.

When people have problems at a high functioning level, they have a lot of capacity and their intelligence scores are way beyond average, but if they have more than just a little imbalance between the left and the right brain, there is a conflict and it is this conflict that is causing the problems.

In children with ADHD and autism, it is the left brain that is the high-functioning side, and it is the left brain that is geared toward details and language. Language, per se, is not the big problem, even though children with ADHD and autism may have problems in communicating. The left side also is geared toward dealing with oneself and dealing with the fine motor skills. This is why children with ADHD/autism love computers, television and smart phones.

Their world is small because they do not have an outward communicative ability and they lack social and emotional skills. This is because those abilities are more of a right brain skill set. The right brain deals with outward communication, the way we interpret the intentions of other people, our social and emotional skills. It is also our negative brain.

The left brain is the positive brain, which is why a lot of children with ADHD and autism do not see problems themselves. They are positive; they approach everything, even if they don't know how to deal with the situation. The right brain is more the withdrawal brain and it deals with outward communication. It helps paint the big picture. It helps you understand what is asked of you and the meaning of something you are doing. It also can organize complex information and make sense out of it.

In children with ADHD and autism, that is exactly what goes wrong. On average (it varies depending on the diagnosis and the severity of the diagnosis), children in the autistic spectrum have right brain problems. Their right brain functions less in comparison to their left brain and it is this discrepancy, this difference, that causes the real problems. It's like two computers that have to exchange data and work closely together on the same project. One has a high-powered processor and the other an older and slower processor. When too much data is entered too fast, things get to be too much, and the side of the brain that functions well will take over the tasks and say, "I will do it, you can just stay where you are, I am much more efficient;" not understanding that it gives complications to the outside world.

These imbalances in brain function are a much better explanation of what is really going on with these children. The behavioral description that is part of an ADHD or autism diagnosis does not explain anything. These brain imbalances, together with the other bodily dysfunctions, like immune problems and gastrointestinal problems, really explain why these children are so sensitive, why they are vulnerable and why problems do not subside and instead stay the same. For example, when the right brain functions less, the immune system is under less control. It causes these children to not see what effect their actions have on other people. They cannot understand the expressions of other people as well. They cannot break their actions, they overshoot. They are hyperkinetic in their movements and in their activity, and they can't stop themselves because the right brain is the one that needs to stop them.

It is also the right part that orientates you in space and controls the big muscle groups. This is why, for example, dyslexic children are often better athletes – their right

brain functions very well. They are the athletes of the world because they have full control, full spatial control; they have full control over their big body muscles.

This is something, on average, that children within the autistic spectrum do not have. They do not have fine-tune control over their big muscles, their balance, or their spatial orientation. And orientation in space is also needed in interactions with other people.

This short explanation shows that the imbalances in brain function, together with the chronic inflammatory reactions that you see in the body, as well as the immune issues, give a much better explanation of what's really going on with children with ADHD and autism than the conventional model which describes behavioral characteristics and cognitive profiles.

## Chapter 3: Medication and Autism

### Medication as a “Solution” to Autism and ADHD

Is medication the only solution to ADHD and autism? In other words, are there other ways to change or influence ADHD and autism for the better besides using medication?

Let me start off by saying that it is important to realize that in certain individual cases where things really get out of hand and we need acute help, it is great that there is medication.

However, this is not the way to change ADHD and autism for the better in the long term because it does not really change the underlying causes. To be quite honest, in the 70 years since the term autism was coined (a little bit less for ADHD), the approach has not really changed. The approach has been one where pharmaceuticals have been used in an attempt to influence behavior. But medication has not turned around the epidemic. Nor has it turned around what’s happening with children with ADHD and autism.

Luckily, there are other ways to influence ADHD and autism. I’m not saying that we have found ways to cure ADHD and autism. In fact, ADHD and autism are not diseases; they are functional problems with the brain and the body; they are whole body problems, not just behavioral characteristics.

We know now that there are many other factors besides medication that really determine the outcome for children with ADHD and autism; factors such as being physically active, which our children do not do as much as we or our parents or grandparents did. They grow up in a sedentary way. Our brain functions at its top level when we stand up and move around. When we sit down, when we watch television, when we use computers and smart phones for a big part of the day, we are short-changing ourselves, our bodies and our brains. Lots of physical activity can make a big difference.

Some solutions can be found in nutrition, in what our children eat. We can protect them with nutrients that protect their bodies by buying biological fruits and vegetables that do not have the pesticides that can cause behavioral

problems. We can help them by looking at the immune problems that are much more common in these children than in the average child, by looking at the psychological circumstances that the children live in, by looking at ourselves as parents. How busy are we? Do we have enough time to be a role model for our children? Are we doing the thing that we love to do most or are we unhappy with our life and do we reflect that to our children? These are very important questions and they really do influence what’s going on with our children.

So, it is not medication that will give the answer to solving ADHD and autism. It is looking at all the other factors, particularly the imbalances in brain function that we know play a big role in what is happening in children with ADHD and autism. Starting training to reduce the brain imbalances can make a big difference in the quality of their lives, even if you cannot reduce everything for every child. Looking at all of the immune system issues and starting to take away certain substances that trigger immune issues can help. Providing the body with the right nutrients will protect the body and reduce the reactions that we see in the body. Changing our own behavior, giving our children control of their lives and letting them see what they can do themselves to change their behavior, and setting rules are all things that will really change the quality of life for children with ADHD and autism.

### Why Medication Does Not Solve ADHD/Autism

We are all aware of the enormous increase in the use of medication for children with ADHD and also with autism. Even if there’s no really specific medication for children with autism, we know that the pharmaceutical industry is desperately seeking to find medication that can handle these problems.

If you have real insight into what autism or ADHD is, however, you quickly realize that medication, in most cases, will only solve part of the problem. ADHD and autism are much more complex than just the behavioral characteristics for which the medication is usually used.

Now, I’m the first one to say that it is good that there is medication, because in a number of children the medication is very necessary to control the situation. When things get out of hand, crisis management is needed, and that’s

where medication comes into place. It should, however, never become the first choice of treatment or approach to the problems that these children experience.

Let me explain a little bit more about the use of medication. First of all, I think we all realize that the use of medication has not stopped the worldwide epidemic of ADHD and autism. Medicine is used because the traditional experts are the ones that prescribe drugs (such as Ritalin), as well as the psychiatric medications that are used by a number of autistic children when their thought processes or sleep processes get out of hand.

Some children with autism use anti-seizure medication because a significant number of children with autism have some form of epilepsy, which is related to the processes that are going on in the brain. When these things get out of hand, medication is the first choice and should not be avoided because it is very necessary to maintain as normal a situation as possible for these children.

In most other cases, it is better to look at the real underlying problems.

Medications usually give only a temporary lull in the behavioral characteristics that we see. Children with ADHD may be better able to concentrate and have fewer difficulties at school because they can take in all the information that comes to them. They also may be better at controlling their emotions. Their behavior and their thought processes do not get out of hand.

However, when you take the medication away, the situation is the same as before. Also, with most medications we see that over time the effect will decrease as the body adapts to it. Children may develop a decreased sensitivity to the substances in the pharmaceuticals that these children get and the effects decline.

So medication is just one choice in approaching these children's problems. When you look at their real physical underlying problems and their immune issues, the medication that is presently used is not the answer. Medication available currently will never be able to change the imbalances in brain function and the physical problems that these children experience and will, therefore, not change ADHD and autism.

## Chapter 4: Common Issues in Autism

### Why Children with ADHD/Autism Have More than One Problem

Parents often ask, "Why do I see more going on with my ADHD/autistic child than I see in my other children or the children that my child goes to school with?" "Why is my child ill more often, how come my child has problems with motor function, balance and orientation?" "Why does my child have sleeping problems, epilepsy or difficulty concentrating?"

There is certainly a lot more going on in these children than just behavioral characteristics because autism and ADHD have other underlying problems, including immune issues and physical problems such as motor function, balance and spatial orientation.

One of the ways that we can start diagnosing ADHD or autism at a very young age (especially autism) is to look at movement patterns. The way children with ADHD/autism move, react and interact with their surroundings is different from what we see with, on average, 80% of other children.

It is not surprising that the typical child diagnosed with ADHD or autism has other problems as well. From my personal perspective, I think we have only just started to get a good picture of what is going on.

We need to realize that every child with ADHD and autism is unique and that the only common factor is the behavioral characteristics that define them as having ADHD or autism.

I, personally, have never seen one child that resembles another child with a diagnosis of ADHD, autism, Asperger or PDD-NOS. While there may be commonality in behavior or some of the characteristics by which ADHD and autism are defined, they are all individuals and the rest, probably more than 99%, is completely unique.

It is not strange that we see chronic immune and gastrointestinal system problems in these children, or chronic sleeping and motor development problems, or epilepsy, because these problems come from the other issues that

are going on. These children have imbalances in brain function that actually cause problems with their motor development, their orientation in space and their orientation towards other people. So, it is true that most of these children can have other problems.

### Problems with Concentration

A problem with concentration is one of the most common features that I see in children with ADHD and autism. It is a common fact that children with ADHD and autism have, on average, more problems with their attention, focus and concentration.

Why is this? It cannot be explained by the behavioral characteristics that caused their diagnosis. Instead, it is something that often coexists with the behavioral characteristics. In addition to being a part of ADHD, it is often also a part of the life of children with autism and it really causes a lot of problems, both in what's happening at school and in their normal day-to-day lives.

As you know, children with autism spectrum disorders such as autism, Asperger and PDD-NOS, have problems with their right brain. The right brain is not functioning as well as it should. Due to problems with their immune system, they often have chronic inflammatory issues in their brain tissues which makes them less capable of dealing with the same amount of information that other children are capable of dealing with. They get overloaded much easier.

One of the characteristic things that the right brain does is control attention and concentration. This is especially the case when it comes to new situations. When we learn new things or explore a new environment, it is the right brain that is specialized in this. The left brain, on the other hand, is responsible for focusing on details. This is why many children in the autism spectrum are good at computer games or develop an obsession with a certain topic – that's the left brain.

It is the relative difference in function between the left and right brain that causes the real problems because when one part of the brain is functioning better, it actually presses the other part away and starts to ignore it.

The better-functioning part of the brain starts to engage more actively in everything that the child does, including concentration. However, concentrating on small details or one specific topic is not enough in our day-to-day life. We need concentration and attention to new things, to more complex things, to the meaning of the whole, to the meaning of the big picture and we need our working memory to work with our attention and concentration.

So children with ADHD and autism will run into problems. When something interests them, they may be able to concentrate. But in normal day-to-day school situations a lot of things are happening. Other people are talking or shifting in their chairs and things are happening outside as well. So they may not be able to sustain focus and because their focus is shifting all the time, they are not able to concentrate.

We know that in these children, if you really look at what's happened from when they were born to when they present symptoms, we often see in their development early indications that they have problems with concentration. You can see this in body movements. Eye movements, for example, will be able to tell you if they are capable of staying focused on what is happening outside of them.

So, children with ADHD and autism have many more problems with concentration, attention, and focus than the average child because of the imbalance in their brain function, in addition to the increased fatigability of the brain that we see so often in these children.

### **Inability to Succeed at School Despite Above Average Intelligence**

In addition to children with above average or average intelligence, this topic also pertains to children with below normal intelligence because in many situations they are not able to grasp the intention or the meaning of what is happening, even if they succeed at a lot of other things at the same time.

To put things into perspective, a lot of children with ADHD and autism do have normal intelligence and go to normal schools. In fact, some of them even have greater than average intelligence.

In order to really understand why many of these children don't succeed at school, you have to understand what is happening in their brains.

The intelligence that is measured by a lot of the tests that are out there is the IQ, the intelligence quotient. This is what we normally mean when we talk about intelligence testing.

IQ is only one part of our intelligence, of course. We have a lot of different sorts of intelligence. We have social and emotional intelligence. We have intelligence to grasp difficult subjects. We have physical and sexual intelligence. Since IQ is only one of the many sorts of intelligence, it is all relative, but IQ is the way we measure intelligence at schools. And the IQ is traditionally confined mainly to the left brain, the linear thinking part of the brain.

We know that in children with ADHD and autism it is the right brain, the opposite part, that is usually not as effective or as well integrated as the left brain; and when that happens, the left brain takes over. The left brain starts to be more engaged and you see the typical pattern of ADHD and autism behavior in children because of this.

A typical example of an intelligence test that many people are familiar with is the so-called WHISC (Wechsler Intelligence Scale) test. In this test, we often see a profile that includes a "verbal" part and a "performal" part. In the verbal part of the testing, it is predominantly left brain functions that we are looking at, and the performal part says, on average, more about the right brain. And we see that a lot of children with ADHD and autism have a difference, a disassociation between their verbal and performal scores. Not all of them (some have an overall decrease in intelligence, both in the verbal and the performal parts), but, overall, we see a so-called verbal, performal discrepancy – in which the performal (right brain) scores are relatively lower.

When this happens, we know that the right brain is not engaged as well as the left brain. In practical terms, this means that the capacity to think in a logical, structured linear way is enhanced, while the capacity to see the big picture, to get the gist of what is meant, is compromised because the right brain is not as active as the left brain.

This proves to be the case even when questions are asked in slightly different way to make them easier to comprehend. Even if it is something a child has learned very well, it is difficult to comprehend it if the question is asked in a different way. The ability to organize thoughts and the capacity to process more things at the same time is compromised in these children because the right brain is not as active as the left brain.

For a lot of children, this also explains why – even if they have good, normal, slightly below normal or even above normal intelligence – they are not able to succeed as well as you might think. The inability to organize, to comprehend, to think outside of how they have learned material, the way they pay attention, and their concentration is all linked to the right side of the brain.

Children with above normal intelligence may not have problems when they go to primary school. Because they are so intelligent, during the first school years they can compensate, so it will not show. But when they get to a higher form of education, they may get into trouble because when there's much more asked of them, they suddenly cannot compensate anymore.

So, even if these children seem to have normal, or even above normal, intelligence (which is the case in a lot of these children), they get into problems because of the imbalances in brain function that we see.

Another aspect related to lack of success in school is that a lot of these children have other issues going on. Gastro-intestinal (digestion) issues and immune issues affect how well the brain is able to function. We know that some immune issues that you cannot see on the outside may lead to chronic inflammatory processes in the central nervous system, which makes the brain less capable of dealing with the same kind of information that other children are capable of dealing with.

So, all in all, even if children with ADHD and autism have normal, or even above normal, intelligence they run into problems because of brain imbalances, as well as the other physical and immune issues that they are dealing with.

## **Social and Emotional Problems**

Why does my child cause problems when interacting with other people? Why does my child not understand what I am asking of him or her? Why does my child have outbursts, why can't my child not react normally to what's happening? Why does my child withdraw from the outside world and the concerns that go hand-in-hand with it for the future?

Social and emotional problems are one of the hallmark signs of ADHD and autism. Both ADHD children and children with autism spectrum disorders have big problems with how they behave and how they interact with their environment. They have difficulty giving appropriate responses, understanding what others ask from them, and knowing how to react to other people and the environment.

To understand this, you need to understand that this cannot be explained by the behavioral characteristics that define ADHD and autism. The behavioral characteristics describe problems, but do not explain at all why there are problems with their social and emotional interactions.

One of the issues that is characteristic for children within the autistic spectrum is that all of these children seem to have issues with how the right brain develops. The right brain has a very specific part that deals with how we read other people, how we understand what other people mean, whether they mean well or do not mean well. The part of the right brain called the mirror neuron part enables us to mirror someone else's emotions and become capable of reading the emotions of other people. The right brain is also the part that gives us the capacity of fine-tuning how we interact with our environment. In addition, when this system functions well, it is a very fast system because it is very important for us to interact and respond very quickly to what other people mean.

In children with ADHD/autism, the right brain is not, relatively speaking, as well developed as the left brain.

So, on average, these children do have more social and emotional problems. When they are smarter than average, when they grasp their intelligence, they can compensate and can learn how to behave. This is one of the

reasons why a behavioral approach to ADHD and autism does work. However, in the end, it really doesn't change things because it still addresses the parts of the brain that are working very well and often very, very well, indeed. But when these children become overloaded, they start to have problems because the right brain is not as well developed and the right brain gives us the capacity to interact socially and emotionally with our environment without having to think about.

Of course, there are other issues, as well. If you have problems with your immune system, which a significant portion of these children have, your brain can become much more sensitive to what's happening in the environment and make you withdraw, or overreact, or react in inappropriate ways.

So, all in all, these children have social and emotional problems mainly because the part of the brain that specializes in social and emotional interactions does not function at the same level as the part of the brain that specializes in details. There's no disease in most cases, but the right part of the brain lags behind and this lag, this imbalance, means that your child is more challenged in this area.

### **Sleeping Problems**

We know that a significant number of children with ADHD and autism have sleeping disturbances. They have difficulty going to sleep, they wake up during the night and they wake up too early. In short, they have sleeping problems.

Why is this? One reason is that a great number of these children have restless brains. Their brain activity is greater than it should be.

One of the reasons you can fall asleep is that when you lie down, the stream of information to your brain and your postural system decreases, and when your brain activity decreases, you can start falling asleep.

In children with ADHD and autism, the activity in the brain can be so great that they cannot fall asleep. How is that possible? They are often not able to break the input of information that is flowing into their brains. Their thoughts can go around in circles, their actions and their activity can go on and on and they have difficulty breaking themselves out of the cycle.

Again, this is a function of the right brain. One of the primary tasks of the right brain is to stop excess information or activity that is not needed at that moment. This enables you to break away from activity that you are doing, to stop yourself in what you are doing.

The right brain allows us to focus on one issue consciously while it filters other information away.

Children with ADHD and autism are not capable of doing this as well as other children or adults can. When they lie down, the activity in the brain just continues and they can't break away from that activity. On top of that, a lot of these children also have chronic inflammatory processes going on in their brains, which makes the brain more vulnerable to any input that enters and also makes the brain more restless. This is also the reason we find a significant amount of children within the autism spectrum who have epileptic activity.

So, children with ADHD and autism often have sleeping problems. They have more sleeping problems than 80% of other children. In short, this is because of the decreased capacity of their brains to dampen unnecessary activity. They are not as capable as other children at taking away the excess information to get the brain to rest when they lie down.

## Chapter 5: Helping Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders

### Changing the Life of a Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder

This is probably the most important question that we can ask related to ADHD and autism spectrum disorders. Over the last 70 years, we have not been able to stop the occurrence of ADHD and autism. The traditional, conventional treatment, training and coping mechanisms have certainly not stopped the ADHD and autism epidemic.

Traditionally, we have used medication and behavioral training to deal with ADHD and autism. We have also considered ADHD and autism fixed problems that could not be changed. We thought that, with a bit of luck, a child might outgrow it or deal with it better when he or she became an adult. In reality, of course, we know that is often not the case.

Fortunately, through research and the newest clinical insights that we have gotten over the last 10 to 20 years, we know that ADHD and autism can be influenced, that they are not considered – or have to be considered – fixed problems for most children with ADHD and autism.

Why is this? We have learned, for example, that in the majority of ADHD and autism cases there are other factors, which can be influenced, at play. In the past, we thought, OK, in most children with ADHD and autism, genetics have determined that the child got the ADHD or autism and it is a fixed problem that you cannot influence. We now know that this is not true. We can influence, even if there is a genetic predisposition. There are factors called epigenetic and environmental factors that we can influence.

How can you do that? Change the situation for these children. Some examples are looking at what you eat, looking at the psychology that surrounds the way you deal with emotions, looking at the psychology of your child, thinking about increasing physical activity, determining the best kind of physical activity, and considering how you can take away the one-way repetitive stimulations that cause an increase in the imbalances in your child's brain function. If you take those factors away, you can start influencing your child.

What this means practically is to start looking at the immune problems that your child experiences. Immune problems have been powerfully linked to autism spectrum disorders and you can deal with this in your home situation if you look at the developmental problems that your child has experienced. We know, for example, that there is a relationship between the development of the nervous system, postural development and brain development. When this is off, when a child misses certain developmental steps or has an unbalanced growth in a particular development area, this has to be dealt with. If you deal with this, if you retrain this, you will influence how the brain develops.

Look at your child's nutrition. Are there certain foods that your child cannot handle because of immune system or chronic gastrointestinal issues or just because you're eating too much processed foods? You can find all of these things out and you can deal with this in the home. You have to become your child's expert!

The conventional professionals can't change the underlying factors as well as you can in your home situation, but first you have to find out about these factors and you have to deal with the brain imbalances that we see in a significant number of children with ADHD and autism spectrum disorders. We know that the right brain often is not functioning as well as the left brain and that these imbalances actually can explain a lot of the problems that these children are experiencing.

If you deal with nutrition, the immune system, the development of the nervous system of the brain, and if you look at the imbalances in brain function and get some guidance, you can start dealing with all of these things within the home.

Every child has a unique combination of the factors that can influence how they develop and in what way. Maybe there is a genetic predisposition; if so, how do these factors influence this predisposition?

In terms of psychological factors, how do you deal with your child in the home? How much stress does your child experience in his or her environment? Is there too much going on? How are you yourself doing, and how can that influence the child?

If you look at all these factors, you can start changing ADHD and autism – not just for the moment, but for life. You may not get rid of the diagnosis in most children (although you can with some), but you can start changing the quality of life and maximize your child's potential by influencing physical activities, imbalances in brain function, developmental issues, immune system issues, gastrointestinal issues and psychological issues.

When you start looking at all of these factors and go outside of what we have been doing so far conventionally, you can do so much more and you can start changing their lives for the future.

### **Television and Computer Use for Children with ADHD and / or Autism**

Television and computer use is probably something you have thought about. It has become an issue and it is one I certainly see with my own children. Watching television, spending time on the computer, using smart phones and gaming are part of their lives. However, they are not necessarily positive parts of their lives.

I think we have all seen that children with ADHD/autism are really engaged with and often love computers, television and gaming, on average more than the typical child. However, when they are engaged in electronics and you try to take them away from it, you will run into big problems. Of course, there are exceptions; but, on average, this is the case.

Most children love it, but these children love it even more. Why is that? That's because their left brain is in better shape. They use the left side of the brain much more easily than the right part of the brain. They want that stimulation and it is within their comfort zone. When they engage in games, they do what they are naturally capable of doing – they use their linear-thinking left brain. Using the computer, playing games and watching television are linear activities. In other words, one thing happens after the other. There is a structure to it and that's what they strive for.

So, you may think, OK, that's great, at least this is something that they like, that they are good at, it is OK.

No, it is not OK! Absolutely not! This may be confrontational,

but watching television, using the computer, gaming and smart phones are absolutely the last thing that is good for your child because it makes the imbalances in brain function greater than they already and that's why your children have emotional upsets when you try to take them away from the situation.

Can they not watch television; use the computer, play games at all? Of course they can. This is part of our society, it's part of our life. It's not realistic to think that they should not do it. However, you need to put absolute limits to the amount of time they spend and set rules that everyone in the household adheres to, including you. If you are using the computer and phone or gaming the whole day, your child will copy you. You need to set an example. I know this is not comfortable (it is not comfortable for me, either), but in order to address the underlying problems that these children have, you should not allow them to spend too much time with the computer, television, smart phone or gaming.

The rule of thumb is one-and-a-half to two hours per day, maximum. The other times they need to be physically active. This should all be in balance. They should use the big muscles that stimulate the right brain. They should spatially orient themselves, and they should engage in physical activity that develops their movement system because developing the movement system develops the brain. When it is necessary that they spend more time on the computer because their school requires it, compensate with more time being outside and physically active.

So, watching television and using the computer is not good for a child with ADHD or autism because it makes the imbalances worse. Also, it is a known fact that if you watch television too long, you shut off your brain. That applies to both children and adults. It's the reason that when you're tired and sit in front of the television you fall asleep. Watching meaningless television shuts off your brain. Don't do it!

Instead, actively engage with the environment or watch stimulating programs that grow your brain – but only do it for so long every day.

I know this is a little bit uncomfortable, but, it will really help your child – and yourself.

