

# How to Build Better Focus

In this guide, here you will learn about sustained and reward-driven attention, why it's important to balance these two types of attention, and tips and tricks to find a balance between tech and brain-healthy activities. Lastly, you'll learn the attention span expectations you should have for your child's age. And don't worry; the kids won't even know it. Practice sustained attention all year round to set your child up for success in the classroom.



## What's The Difference?

**Sustained attention** requires you to maintain relevant information or directed concentration over a period of time. We use sustained attention for studying, memorizing academic information, paying attention in a sports game, classroom setting, note-taking, driving, and even chores.

**Reward-driven attention** is when we involuntarily shift our attention to something we find more valuable. Reward-driven attention activities can teach the brain that it needs a stimulus or an instant gratification reward to keep attention on a task. Think technology--scrolling on social media or playing video games.

## Is It You Against Them?

What you want - help with the yard work, daily chores, hours spent outside, and a reading list. What they want - free time spent in front of the TV, sleeping in, and playing video games.

It doesn't have to be you vs. them all the time.

With a bit of planning and structure, you can create a healthy balance and, at the same time, help your child naturally build sustained attention skills to impact their school year positively.

## Here Are Some *great* Ideas

### Make A Plan

Create a weekly calendar for yourself and the kids. Set some reasonable expectations for you and them. Your plan should include a healthy balance between sustained attention activities and reward-driven activities.



For example, if you allow 1 hour of video games, schedule a 15-30 min break outside playing.

### Make It Fun



We risk a fight whenever we pull our kids away from their personal to-do lists or ask them to do something they would rather not do. Making activities like reading, art projects, or writing stories fun and engaging for the whole family creates positive memories that draw their attention and desire from the simple reward-driven fun they seek.

### Make It Stick

Create daily opportunities for your child that require sustained attention - without a reward. It doesn't have to be every day or all day. Think incremental steps. A little each day to start and then aim for a little more.



# Help Build *sustained* Attention with These Easy Starter Ideas



## Daily Goals

Aim for 15 minutes of sustained attention activities for every 1 hour of tech per day.



## Pick a theme

For the week or month - think about what your child enjoys. Perhaps sports, the ocean, animals, food, or space. The possibilities are endless.



## Library

With your theme in mind, pick up some books to help you learn. Find books with more than just information, but also activities.

## Then Throughout The Week...

- Read with them
- Do crafts
- Cook together
- Create imaginative games
- Plan some fun field trips
- Do a puzzle
- Play outside
- Helping around the house
- Create a scavenger hunt
- Talk to a friend or family member
- Household projects
- Move your body: walk, run, exercise, sports

*remember!*

### Sustained attention activities:

1. Have no immediate gratification
2. Can be lots of fun
3. Are age-appropriate

## Use *mindfulness* to Help Build Sustained Attention

Mindfulness — a simple technique that emphasizes paying attention to the present moment in an accepting, nonjudgmental manner — has emerged as a useful practice to learn as early as childhood. Research says mindfulness training has been shown to improve attention, working memory, self-regulation abilities, and much more.

New to mindfulness? Try this popular exercise known as S.T.O.P.

**S**top. Take a momentary pause, no matter what you're doing.

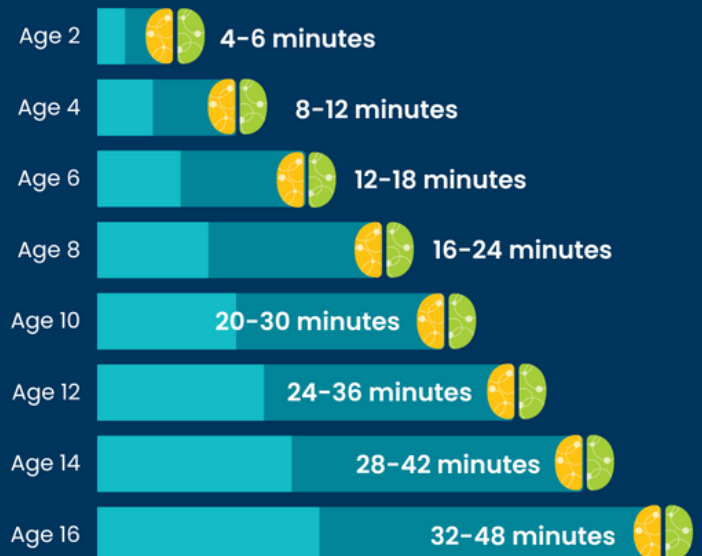
**T**ake a breath. Feel the sensation of your own breathing, helping to bring you back to the present moment.

**O**bserve. Acknowledge what is happening, inside you or out. Just note it.

**P**roceed. After briefly checking in with the present moment, continue with whatever it was you were doing.

## Average Attention Span Expectations for your Child's Age

The reasonable attention span to expect of a child is two to three minutes per year of their age. This is the typical amount of time a child can maintain focus on a given task.

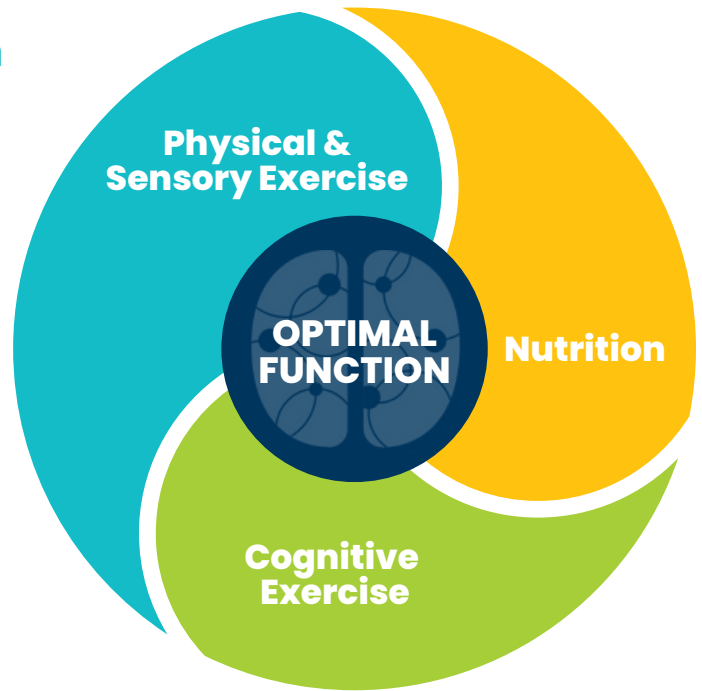


Source: Compiled from multiple sources by Helen F. Neville; Studydog; Pbs.org

## When Coping Strategies and Skill Building Strategies are not Enough

If you've tried various strategies to help your child build these important executive functioning skills, but still find your child needs excess help to stay organized and keep up with daily tasks, you may want to consider supporting their brain development with a program like Brain Balance.

The Brain Balance program is uniquely designed to strengthen connections between areas of the brain and improve the foundation of development. The program is an integrative, whole-body approach that incorporates cognitive exercise, physical, and sensory exercise, and nutrition methods and combines them into one optimized approach.



**A growing body of evidence shows the Brain Balance Program positively impacts the following key areas of brain health for children and adolescents:<sup>1</sup>**



**Emotionality**



**Academic Motivation**



**Behavior**



**Reading & Writing**



**Social Skills**

In separate, independent studies, parents, clinicians, and teachers have all reported a decrease in hyperactive behaviors, a decrease in disruptive behaviors, and an improvement in attention abilities in children and adolescents after completion of the Brain Balance Program.<sup>1</sup>



**Parents**



**Clinicians**



**Teachers**

**There is hope and a better way forward. Contact our support team to get started.**



<sup>1</sup><https://www.brainbalancecenters.com/brain-balance-program-research-and-results>