

EPILEPSY AND CHILDREN

Inclusive education

It is universally recognized that the main objectives of the education system is to provide quality education for all children. This is to enable them attain full potential and be able to meaningfully contribute to, and participate in society throughout their life.

Inclusive education is a vision of schools that are underpinned by the following beliefs:

- All people can learn
- People might learn in different ways and at different rates but can learn from each other and alongside one another
- We all have strengths and weaknesses and at different rates but can learn from each other and alongside one another
- We all have strengths and weaknesses and experience barriers to effective learning at times
- Children with diabetes have all the rights to attend a school close to his/her home, in the company of his or her friends/siblings
- This would create a more tolerant and caring society
- Many children are disabled due to the inflexible system in which they are forced to live and learn and not by their own difference and difficulties

WHY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION?

Until now, children with physical and intellectual disabilities have been placed in separate specialist schools. Whilst such schools do offer highly qualified teachers and specialized programmes, children tend to become segregated from their neighborhood, peers and from the opportunity to interact within the mainstream society. In areas where there are no special schools, children with disabilities have often remained at home and are further deprived of education and opportunities for social interaction and stimulation

WHAT IS NEEDED TO MAKE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION WORK?

- A full commitment to the philosophy of inclusion
- A culture of caring and respect towards everybody in the school
- Creative and flexible teachers
- A team of special needs advisers who can support individual schools and teachers where needed
- Parents who participate and who are actively involved
- A flexible curriculum that meets the needs of children
- Assessments that focus on the strengths and specific needs of children with epilepsy, instead of their deficiencies.

How school administrative should handle children with epilepsy

- Accept the child
- Foster a culture of acceptance in the classroom
- First aid training for classmates
- Improve the child's self image
- Help with the development of confidence
- Concentrate on what the child can do

By: ESAU Programmes Department

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Do not

- Rush in to help unless the child obviously needs it
- Restrict the activities of the rest of the class because of the child with epilepsy
- Treat the child with epilepsy differently from other children
- Allow the child to think of him/herself as an invalid or use epilepsy as an excuse to avoid difficult situations
- Be afraid to involve colleagues, parents and medical professionals in your classroom management

Tips for parents

- Meet with the class teacher as soon as your child is placed at the school
- Explain the condition to the teacher and be willing to train other pupils and staff about epilepsy
- Focus on the handling of a seizure, triggers and types of seizures. Also stress that epilepsy is not contagious
- State your expectations and your contributions
- Provide information with regard to the medication your child is taking and obtain the teachers commitment to administer medication when needed
- Ask that your child be treated exactly the same as his/her peers

Myths regarding epilepsy and education

Many people wrongly believe that

- Having an ordinary seizure kills brain cells
- Children with epilepsy have intellectual disabilities
- Children with epilepsy need to attend special schools

EPILEPSY AND THE IMPACT ON BEHAVIORAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

It is important to note that psychological and social problems are often more significant than the condition itself. This is mainly due to ignorance, fear, and stigmatization on the part of onlookers that cause greater distress than the condition itself.

Epilepsy in the classroom

School administrators need to have knowledge about the following in epilepsy management

- Epilepsy and what it is
- Seizure management
- Recording time, duration and types of seizures
- Factors that trigger seizures
- Medication of the child takes and be on the look out for side effects

Epilepsy Tips for teachers

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- Accept the child for what he/she is
- Foster a culture that you and all the children in the class/school receive adequate training regarding epilepsy and epilepsy management
- Encourage participation in activities that improve the Childs self image
- Support the child and help him/her to develop confidence to deal with different situations
- Concentrate on what the child can do rather what he cant do

DONTs

- Rush in to help unless the child obviously needs it
- Restrict the activities of the rest of the class with epilepsy
- Treat the child with epilepsy differently from other children
- Allow the child to think a himself/herself as an invalid or use epilepsy as an excuse to avoid difficult situations e.g. did not do his/her homework
- Be afraid to involve colleagues, parents and medical professionals in your classroom management.

Epilepsy management for a child & the family

- Important to develop positive attitude to epilepsy and child's future
- Communicate fears and knowledge to spouse and all children in the family
- Its important for family members to be supportive
- The child should not be treated as an invalid but as a normal child
- Help the child integrate in social activities
- Don't make the child a center of attraction
- Don't blame children's epilepsy for family difficulties

Parenting

Many people with epilepsy successfully care for and bring up their children irrespective of the level of seizures control

As with any parent, some may need in their parentage role, but this is assessed on an individual basis

Useful hints on parenting the child with epilepsy

- Ensure that your child receives a comprehensive medical assessment by a qualified medical professional
- Always emphasize your child abilities, concentrate on what child can do rather than what he cant do
- It is your duty to learn as much as possible about the condition
- Be open and honest about the condition, both with yourself and with your child
- Emphasize any activity that will improve your child's self acceptance, self worth and self confidence
- Ensure that your child does not climb trees etc , does not swim without adult supervision

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- Educate family and friends –epilepsy is only an “illness “ when viewed through the eyes of the uninformed
- Equip your child with the correct information about seizures so that they can respond with confidence when questioned
- Always ensure that medication is administered and taken regularly
- Assure your child that proper care is administered to them while they are in seizure. This will allay unnecessary fears
- Provide a set routine with plenty of rest, three balanced meals per day and regular exercise. A regular routine helps to limit the seizures
- When explaining seizures, use words that your child will understand. This will remove some of the mystery surrounding epilepsy
- Always remember that there are 365 days in a year. If your child has one seizure per week, that leaves 313 days for your child to like full life.
- Don't talk about your child behind closed doors or as if they are not present
- Don't use or encourage the use of negative words such as ‘epileptic’, ‘suffer’, ‘attacks’ and fits
- Don't over protect your child. Over protection will stifle and smother the Childs initiatives

Testimonies of students living with epilepsy and coping with education

Isma (Masaka District)

He started getting attacks when he was in primary seven and he dropped out of school. His parents visited some witch doctors but failed. In 2005 he started medication and he is improving.

James 16 years. Masaka District.

He got his first seizure when he was in Senior One at St Mugagga SSS he used to get seizures every day but after getting medication there is a positive improvement and now the seizures have reduced and now he is back in school.

Juliet S.3 Kindu SSS. Masaka District

She started getting attacks in 2004 while in school. She used to get seizures every day which failed her to go to school. Her parents spent most of the time and money dealing with witch Doctors. In 2006 she started attending epilepsy clinics in Masaka and she has registered an improvement.

“Living with epilepsy should not prevent you from going to school”.

Parents, epilepsy is a manageable condition.

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