

Tourette's Syndrome

DESCRIPTION AND FACTS:

Tourette's Syndrome is a neurological disorder characterized by tics, which are involuntary, rapid, sudden movements that occur repeatedly in the same way. Tics are experienced as irresistible and, like the urge to sneeze, must eventually be performed. Typically, tics increase as a result of tension or stress and decrease with relaxation or concentration on an absorbing task. Tics usually begin to occur between the ages of 2-16. These tics may come and go, and symptoms of Tourette's Syndrome may change over time.

Many students with Tourette's Syndrome may also have some kind of learning problem. Refer to the information about Learning Disabilities which follows.

POSSIBLE BARRIERS:

- Involuntary blinking of eyes
- Head jerking
- Flailing of arms
- Throat clearing
- Peculiar noises (grunting, barking, snorting)
- Vocalization of obscene words
- Various "tics"
- Ritualistic behaviors

INTERACTION WITH AN INDIVIDUAL WITH TOURETTE'S SYNDROME:

1. Be understanding and supportive
2. Be aware that the individual's "tics" are involuntary.

TEACHING A STUDENT WITH TOURETTE'S SYNDROME:

1. **Alternative test-taking procedures** should be discussed with the student.
2. May discuss **giving permission to the student to leave the classroom** when tics become overwhelming.
3. The **less stress** the student with Tourette's Syndrome feels, the less frequent the symptoms will be in general.
4. If a behavior is just **poor behavior** and not a result of Tourette's Syndrome, it **should not be tolerated**.
5. Encourage the student to **control what he or she can whenever possible**, and try to substitute what is socially acceptable for what is not.
6. Remember that the student's movements and noises are occurring involuntarily so try **not to react with anger or annoyance**.