



Six Ways to Support Learners with Tourette's Syndrome (TS)

By Lisa Rudge



1. Recognise that tics are involuntary, unwanted and unpredictable, and can change in type and frequency. Whilst tics may sometimes appear to be purposeful, and contextual, this is not the case. Students with TS may try to hold in or suppress their tics to avoid negative attention from others, however, this may cause them more issues with concentration, fatigue and anxiety.
2. Stress and anxiety typically increase symptoms. Therefore, identifying the source of stress, anxiety or excitement and implementing appropriate strategies and accommodations to manage this will, in turn, help to reduce tics.
3. With the help of the child or young person and their family, identify any known triggers that may increase tics or contribute to stress. This will help to identify strategies to support the child / young person and help manage these triggers.
4. Demonstrate acceptance, inclusion and normalise tics by ignoring them wherever possible. Acceptance and inclusion will, in turn, reduce the likelihood of bullying from peers, reduces stress and anxiety and builds confidence and self esteem. Involve the child or young person in developing plans and strategies for managing symptoms that may be difficult or impossible to ignore.
5. Handwriting difficulties are common in those with TS. Accommodations may include the use of a computer or tablet, providing structured worksheets, and providing notes / recordings.
6. Approximately 85% of those with TS will have co-occurring conditions, such as OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), ASD (Autistic Spectrum Conditions) and SPD (Sensory Processing Difficulties). These conditions can often be more challenging and more difficult to manage than the tics themselves. Explore how these conditions may be impacting the child or young person's learning.