

Top Ten Things Teachers Should Know About Tourette Syndrome



- 1) Tourette Syndrome is a neurobiological disorder caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain. To have a diagnosis of TS, you must have multiple motor tics, at least one vocal tic, waxing and waning of symptoms, symptoms that last at least a year, and childhood onset of symptoms between the ages of two and eighteen.
- 2) You may believe you know all there is to know about TS, but you probably know only one-tenth of what you actually need to know. The key to demystifying TS and solving the majority of classroom problems is accurate information.
- 3) The only consistent thing about TS is inconsistency. No two children with TS are alike, and no child with TS will exhibit the same symptoms and have the same difficulties.
- 4) The worst things an educator can do are to ask the child to stop ticcing and to constantly question which movements or vocalizations are tics and which are not.
- 5) TS is almost always accompanied by other neurological disorders, including ADHD, OCD, anxiety, depression, and learning disorders.
- 6) A major component of TS is a symptom known as *dysinhibition*, or difficulty in consistently inhibiting thoughts and/or actions. Inappropriate statements or behaviors very frequency result from the student's inability to consistently apply "mental breaks."
- 7) Working with TS can be very challenging. Your most important and valuable attribute will become your creativity and your ability to think "outside the box."
- 8) Listen to the child's parents. They know their child better than anyone else and can be an invaluable resource. Don't assume that they are just making excuses for their child.
- 9) Children with neurological disorders respond much better to positive, proactive interventions than negative consequences.
- 10) Kids with TS are kids first.



Connors, Susan. (2011). *The Tourette Syndrome & OCD Checklist: A Practical Reference for Parents and Teachers*. San Francisco, California. Jossey-Bass.

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