



Tourette's Disorder (motor tic + vocal tic) Recommendations for teachers

- 1) Recognize that tics are involuntary movements and sounds that wax and wane and can change unpredictably. In many cases, students with Tourette's disorder will attempt to suppress their tics to avoid negative attention from others. While the tics may appear to be within the students' control and are being done purposefully, they are not.
- 2) Reduce Stress/ Anxiety. Stress typically increases symptoms. Therefore, noting what factors increase stress and implementing appropriate accommodations or special education services will frequently reduce symptoms.
- 3) Identify the skills deficits that may contribute to increased stress/ symptoms, as well as the strategies and supports to address the skills deficits.
- 4) Provide positive feedback and encouragement on an on-going basis to help build positive self-concept.
- 5) Provide for extracurricular activities, such as artwork, sports or gross motor play activities. These activities can also provide more opportunities to create friendships and work on social skills, which can be challenging for students with Tourette's disorder.
- 6) Ignore the symptoms that can be ignored. This demonstrates acceptance and normalizes Tourette's disorder and other related symptoms. Modeling acceptance can reduce both bullying and stress and may help the student with Tourette's disorder to focus his/ her energy on academics rather than tic suppression.
- 7) Allow a place for time-out when symptoms become severe. If possible, allow the student to monitor his/her own need for removal from class.
- 8) Consider whether accommodations are needed for handwriting issues. Handwriting issues are among the most common difficulties for children with Tourette's disorder. Accommodations can include the use of a computer, tablet, a scribe, or having notes provided.
- 8) Be aware of co-occurring conditions, such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) or Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), which are very common for students with Tourette's disorder. The characteristics of these conditions are often more problematic and harder to manage than the tics themselves.
- 9) Be creative with interventions. Teaching life-long strategies and providing supports, accommodations, and modifications are typically more effective than relying on consequences.
- 10) Involve the student with Tourette's disorder in developing plans and strategies for managing symptoms that can be difficult or impossible to ignore.
- 11) Promote communication with parents or caregivers. Be sure to share the student's achievements and strengths, not just the weaknesses.
- 12) Make testing accommodations. Eliminate stress-provoking situations such as timed tests. Provide alternatives to machine-scored answer sheets. Provide separate area for testing to allow student to express tics without fear of disruption.



References:

- Lisa Linnell-Olsen. (2019). *How to help kids with Tourette Syndrome at school*. [Online]. Retrieved on Jan. 24, 2020, from <https://www.verywellfamily.com>
- Tourette Association of America. (2016). *10 Things teachers can do for students with Tourette Syndrome*. Retrieved on Jan. 24, 2020, from <https://tourette.org/blogs/resources-support/10-things-teachers-can-students-tourette-syndrome/>
- Tourette Association of America. (2020). Classroom strategies and techniques for tic symptoms. [Online]. Retrieved on Jan. 24, 2020, from <https://tourette.org/resources/overview/tools-for-educators/classroom-strategies-techniques/>