



Tourette Association of America

Awareness. Research. Support.

Understanding Tourette Syndrome And Its Effects On Learning

Tourette Association Education In-Service



A Teacher's Perspective

I've come to the conclusion that I am the decisive element in the classroom. It's my personal approach that creates the climate. It's my daily mood that makes the weather.

As a teacher, I possess a tremendous power to make a child's life miserable or joyous. I can be a tool of torture or an instrument of inspiration. I can humiliate or honor, hurt or heal.

In all situations, it is my response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated and a child humanized or de-humanized.

– Haim Ginott



Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, you will be able to do the following:

1. List the characteristics of TS.
2. Identify the most common disorders and difficulties associated with TS.
3. Discuss the impact of these disorders on classroom performance.
4. Identify classroom strategies and techniques for working with children with TS.



Tourette Syndrome (TS)



- Neurodevelopmental disorder
- Genetic
- Not rare
- Motor and vocal tics (involuntary movements and sounds)
- Due to the nature of TS, symptoms will vary from person to person



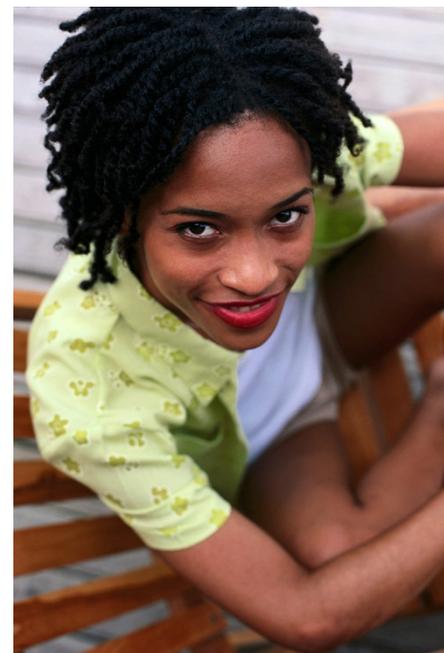
How Common are TS and Tic Disorders

- TS is classified as one of several neurodevelopmental conditions referred to as tic disorders.
- 1 in every 160 school-aged children (0.6%) in the United States has Tourette Syndrome.
- 1 in every 100 school-aged children (1%) in the United States has Tourette Syndrome or another tic disorder.
- Tic disorders occur more frequently in boys than girls.



Motor Tics

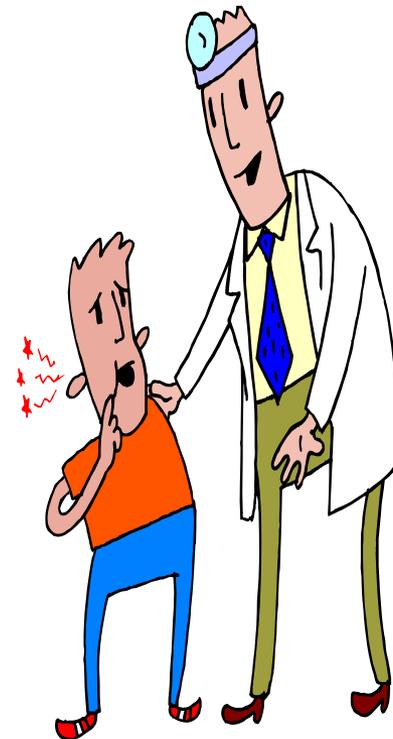
- Simple Motor Tics
 - Eye blinking, grimacing, nose twitching, leg movements, shoulder shrugs, arm and head jerks, etc.
- Complex Motor Tics
 - Hopping, clapping, throwing, touching (self, others, objects)
 - Holding funny expressions, sticking out the tongue, kissing, pinching, tearing paper or books, etc.





Vocal Tics

- Simple Vocal Tics
 - Whistling, coughing, sniffing, screeching, animal noises, grunting, throat clearing, etc.
- Complex Vocal Tics
 - Phrases which may or may not be meaningful
 - Coprolalia (racial slurs, inappropriate language), repeating words/phrases
- Differences in speech patterns
 - Unusual rhythms, tone accents, intensity of speech, immature voice





The Nature of Tics

- Naturally wax and wane
- Change in appearance and frequency
- Change in severity and intensity
 - May or may not worsen during adolescence
- Can sometimes be suppressed for short periods of time
- May vary significantly from one student to another





"I Have Tourette's, But Tourette's Doesn't Have Me"

click box above to view video clip

*The Full Length DVD for This HBO Documentary is Available
on the Tourette Association's Website*





Environmental Factors May Impact TS Symptoms

- Stress
- Anxiety
- Excitement
- Fatigue
- Holidays
- Illness
- Vacations
- Hunger
- Life & School Transitions





IDEA 2004 & Federal Regulations 300.8(c)(9)



“We believe that Tourette Syndrome is commonly misunderstood to be a behavioral or emotional condition, rather than a neurological condition. Therefore including Tourette Syndrome in the definition of *other health impairment* may help correct the misperception of Tourette Syndrome as a behavioral or conduct disorder and prevent the misdiagnosis of their needs.”

Due to the advocacy efforts of the Tourette Association, TS is now included in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) under the definition of Other Health Impairment (OHI).



Possible Classroom Strategies to Meet Student Needs

Simple changes within the classroom environment can meet the student's needs, while supporting and enhancing learning, for example:

- Building schedule around student's most productive times of the day
- Providing designated seating and testing locations
- Allowing the student to leave class early to avoid crowded hallways that may trigger stress, anxiety, or overstimulation





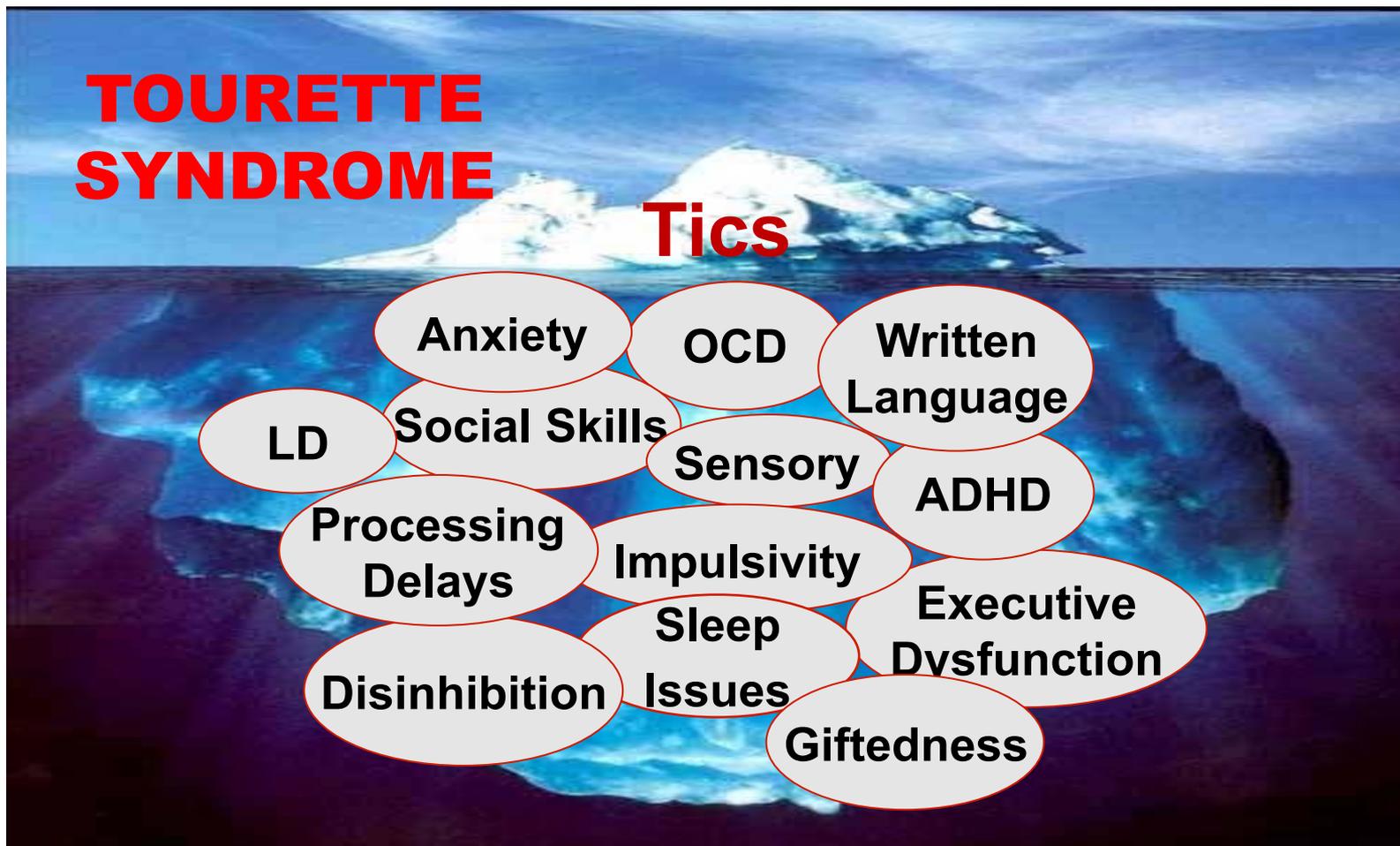
Possible Classroom Strategies (continued)

- Consider accommodations for accomplishing written work
 - Typing notes/assignments on computer
 - Copy of prepared notes/use of a scribe
 - Oral reports, shortened assignments
- Extended time for tests may be necessary
- TS educational in-service for the entire school
 - Tourette Association's Youth Ambassador Program
- Please visit the Education Strategies and Education Advocacy pages on the Tourette Association website at www.tourette.org





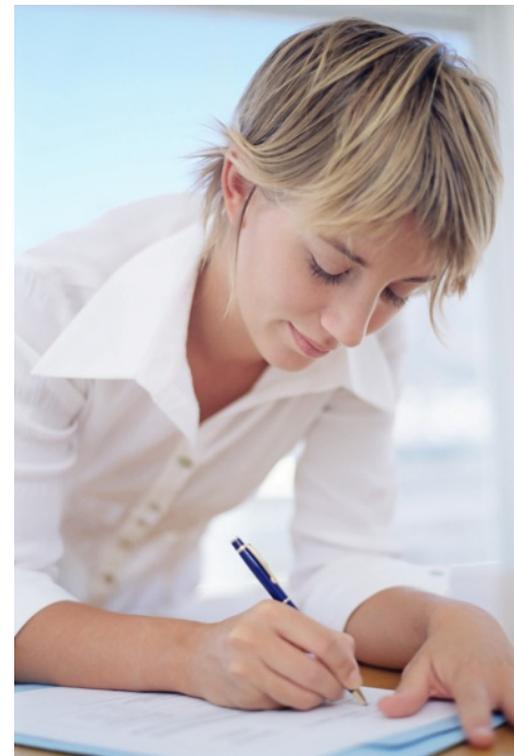
Possible Related Issues





Handwriting Issues (Dysgraphia)

- Characteristics may include:
 - Slow and laborious writing
 - Hand and finger cramping
 - Messy writing, inconsistent lettering, spacing, spelling, punctuation
 - Difficulty copying from board and books
 - Difficulty transferring thoughts to paper
 - Erasing repeatedly
- Often addressed with use of computers, tablets or e-readers





How Does Having TS Really Impact Classroom Performance And Learning?

Writing Exercise

I pledge Allegiance to the Flag
of the United States of
America,
and to the Republic
for which it stands,
one Nation under God,
indivisible, with
liberty and justice for all.





Obsessive-Compulsive Behaviors and TS

- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) includes obsessive thoughts and compulsions which may impact school performance
- Symptoms can be similar to tics:
 - they can wax & wane
 - they can be worsened by stress, excitement, and fatigue
- Symptoms are often disruptive to the student but may not be visible to others
- Can result in isolation





Strategies for Treating OCD and TS

- Classroom strategies helpful for students with OCD may include:
 - Close communication between teachers, parents, and student
 - Assistive technologies
 - Separate location for testing
 - Extra time for assignments





Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and TS

- A large number of students with TS also have ADHD
- Common characteristics:
 - Hyperactivity
 - Inattention
 - Distractibility
 - Social immaturity
 - Impulsivity
 - Short-term memory difficulties
 - Executive dysfunction





Executive Dysfunction and TS

- Executive Dysfunction is often associated with TS
- Difficulties may include:
 - Managing time
 - Forming goals
 - Organizing materials and activities
 - Starting/completing tasks
 - Breaking down long assignments and projects
 - Sequencing information
 - Dealing with the unexpected
 - Transitioning





Supports for Executive Dysfunction

- Who Can Help?
 - Special Education, Consulting/Resource
 - Teachers
 - Speech-Language Pathologists
 - Counselors
- Possible Strategies
 - Using a planner (paper or electronic)
 - Checklists
 - Set of textbooks at home
 - Individualized strategies per individual needs
 - Meet with designated person daily to help for reinforcement of strategies





Processing

- Processing issues cause difficulties with:
 - Following directions, whether simple or complicated
 - Processing abstract information, such as math word problems
 - Following conversations in noisy environments
 - Responding quickly
 - Remembering information, such as directions or lists
 - Differentiating between similar sounds or words





What to Do For Processing Difficulties

- Provide extra time for response
- Subtly provide extra cueing and prompting
- Provide directions and examples both audibly and visually
- Keep directions brief
- Allow preferential seating
- Encourage the student to ask for clarification





Sensory Processing Issues

- Can affect any of the senses and cause great anxiety for many children with TS
- Common indicators are:
 - Overreacting to sounds and/or sudden touch
 - Inability to tolerate the texture of certain foods
 - Sensitivity to certain smells, textures and/or sensations
 - Sensitivity to bright or fluorescent lights
 - Experiencing “sensory tics” e.g. picking at scabs, biting nails, scratching or hitting self
 - Difficulty in highly stimulating environments such as the school bus, cafeteria, gym, hallways, etc.
 - Need for increased sensory input, e.g. running into things purposefully, frequent hugs, painful actions





What Can Be Done for Sensory Issues

- Evaluation by occupational therapist trained in sensory processing issues
- Develop a plan, explained and followed by all adults who have contact with the child
- Possible environmental modifications:
 - Leave class 3-4 minutes early to avoid crowded hallways
 - Avoid loud, chaotic environments
 - Find alternate place to eat lunch
 - Use a headset to avoid auditory overload distractions
 - Be creative





Parent-Teacher Relationship

Develop a communication plan that promotes:

- Regular communication between school and family
- Respect for the student, teacher, caregiver, and other team members





Kids with TS Are Regular People Like You & Me

- Kids with TS are kids first
- Support interests/talents
- There is no cure at this time, but there are a variety of management strategies available





Summary

Today, we talked about:

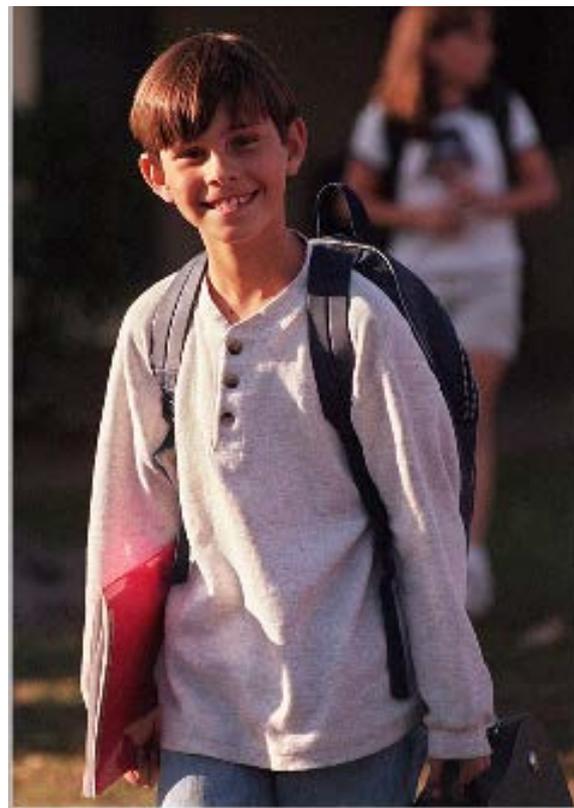
- What is Tourette Syndrome?
- The co-occurring conditions and how they can impact learning.
- Potential strategies for managing symptoms of TS and related difficulties.



The Bottom Line

I **want** to learn
and do well in
school!

Will you help me?





About the Tourette Association of America www.Tourette.org

Education

- Briefings
- Professional Development
- Advocacy
- Publications
- DVDs
- Conferences
- Public policy

Research

- Grants
- Medical and Scientific Advisory Boards
- Genetics
- Clinical trials
- Neuroimaging
- Treatments

Service

- Information
- Referral
- Fundraising
- Local Chapters and Support Groups
- Newsletters for children, teens, and families



The Tourette Association is dedicated to making life better for all people affected by Tourette and Tic Disorders



Contact Tourette Association for More Information and Resources

Tourette Association of America

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Fax: (718) 279-9596

Email: support@tourette.org

www.tourette.org

Please take a moment to give us feedback on this
Program: www.surveymonkey.com/s/TSeducation