Focus Beneath the Surface

a parent guide to focus, homework, and the GAS pedal

Bright kid. Hard days.

“He’s so smart, but homework takes three hours.” “Her teacher says she can’t sit still.” “We’ve been told it might be ADHD.” If any of that sounds familiar, you are not alone, and you are not doing anything wrong.

A lot of kids who struggle to focus are not choosing to tune out. Their brain is working hard against a nervous system that is stuck in high gear. This guide explains that layer in plain language, and gives you simple ways to help at home.

01

Focus is a nervous system skill

Think of your child’s nervous system like a car with a gas pedal and a brake. A healthy system moves between them all day: gas to get going, brake to settle, digest, learn, and sleep.

GAS	BRAKE
Fight-or-flight.	Rest-and-digest.
Alert, wired, scanning the room.	Calm, focused, ready to learn.

Sitting still, listening, and finishing a worksheet all happen on the **BRAKE**. When a child’s foot is stuck on the **GAS**, their brain is busy watching for danger. It is not thinking about spelling words. That is not a willpower problem. It is a wiring and regulation problem, and regulation can change.

02

What a foot on the gas can look like at school and home

Focus & learning	Can't sit through a lesson or dinner. Homework battles. Forgets instructions halfway through. Works twice as hard to keep up.
Body & movement	Always moving, fidgeting, or chewing on things. Clumsy, or crashes into everything. Seeks big, rough play.
Emotions	Holds it together at school, then melts down at home. Big reactions to small things. Quick to frustration.
Sleep	Exhausted but wired at bedtime. Takes a long time to fall asleep. Restless or wakes often.
Gut & eating	Tummy aches, constipation, or very picky eating. Digestion lives on the BRAKE too.

Every item here can have other causes, and some need medical attention of their own. Please keep your pediatrician in the loop. What we add is one more question: **how is this child's nervous system regulating?**

03

How a foot gets stuck

We group the stressors that load a young nervous system into what we call the Three T's:

Traumas
PHYSICAL

A hard birth, falls, sports, long hours sitting.

Thoughts
EMOTIONAL

School pressure, family stress, big changes, worry.

Toxins
CHEMICAL

Diet, environmental exposures, repeated rounds of medication.

Often it is several stacked up early: a stressful pregnancy, a hard birth, colic, reflux, ear infections, then the demands of school. We call that the **Perfect Storm**. None of this is anyone's fault. Stress simply adds up, and a young system can get tuned to stay on alert.

04

Seven ways to help focus at home

These are not a treatment. They lower the load on a system that is already working hard, and they help the brake engage.

1. **Move before you sit**
   Ten minutes of jumping, climbing, or a walk before homework gives the body what it needs so the brain can settle.
2. **Use short work blocks**
   Fifteen minutes of focus, then a two-minute movement break. Use a timer so the end is visible.
3. **Start with protein**
   A breakfast with protein and healthy fat keeps energy steadier than a sugary start.
4. **Give a calm landing**
   After school, offer a snack and 20 quiet minutes before questions or homework.
5. **Try heavy work**
   Carrying groceries, pushing a laundry basket, or wall push-ups can be calming for a busy body.
6. **Get outside early**
   Morning daylight and real play help set the body's rhythm for better sleep at night.
7. **Protect sleep**
   Consistent bedtime, dim lights, and screens away at least an hour before bed.

05

What we actually do

We don't diagnose or treat ADHD.

We measure how your child's nervous system is regulating. Then we use gentle, specific adjustments to help it shift out of GAS and into BRAKE.

How we measure. An INSiGHT scan is painless and quick. It looks at nervous system patterns along the spine (neurothermal), muscle tension (sEMG), and how flexibly the body shifts between GAS and BRAKE (HRV).

Alongside your child's team. We work with your pediatrician, teachers, OT, tutor, and therapist, not instead of them. Please do not change or stop any medication without talking to the doctor who prescribed it.

06

Is your child’s foot stuck on the gas?

Does your child…

- ○ Struggle to focus, sit through class or meals, or finish homework
- ○ Seem to “hold it together” at school, then fall apart at home
- ○ Fidget, move, or chew on things constantly
- ○ Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- ○ Have big reactions to small frustrations
- ○ Get overwhelmed by noise, crowds, or busy places
- ○ Have tummy aches, constipation, or very picky eating
- ○ Have a history of a hard birth, colic, reflux, or lots of ear infections

If you checked more than a few, a scan can show you what is happening underneath.

> *“You will keep in perfect peace those whose minds are steadfast, because they trust in you.” Isaiah 26:3*

Your child isn’t broken. Let’s find out what’s underneath.

The next step is a New Patient Experience: about an hour with one of our doctors, a full neurological exam, and INSiGHT scans. Kids are always welcome.

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This guide is for education only. It is not medical advice and does not diagnose, treat, or cure any condition, including ADHD. Chiropractic care at our practice focuses on nervous system function. Please talk with your child’s pediatrician or prescribing doctor about any symptom, diagnosis, or medication.