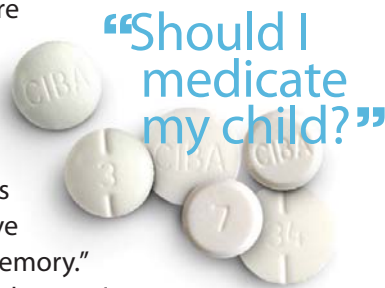


# PROFESSIONALS ANSWER PARENTS' TOUGH QUESTIONS



**Our doctor diagnosed my son as ADHD and prescribed medication to control behavior. My heart breaks at the thought. Do I really have to drug my child?**

Probably not. In a society where a large percentage of students significantly under-perform, seemingly easy solutions are a temptation. "Should I medicate my child?" is a question on the minds of parents nationwide and is most often asked by parents of children tagged ADD/ADHD. There is a growing field of cognitive brain training researchers investigating alternatives to drugs for ADHD. In almost every case, learning skills testing reveals that these children have "cognitive deficits, specifically in working memory." Weak cognitive skills often mean they can't pay attention long enough for good academic performance.



Researchers have explored methods to train the brain and impact weak learning skills. In one case, a number of ADHD students underwent 5 weeks of specific skills training and afterwards, 60% no longer fit the label. These results point to the possibility of overcoming lifelong learning hindrances in an extremely short period of time with the right mental skills training. Why wouldn't everyone do it? The investment in cognitive skills training is "not easy for a time-crunched society and far more laborious than popping a pill." Although maybe not as easy as taking a pill, the benefits of overcoming skill weakness and building advanced learning ability are worth the short-term effort.

Response compiled from Gunjan Sinha, an award winning freelance science and medical journalist. She has written well over 100 feature and news stories, appeared on Dateline NBC, CNN, and been featured on several national radio stations. Specific citations are derived from *Training the Brain: Cognitive Therapy as an Alternative to ADHD Drugs*. Scientific American. July 2005.

**I've been told that I should accept my daughter's limited ability in school. Am I wrong to want more for her than constant learning struggles for the rest of her life?**

No, not at all. That sort of advice is designed to protect your feelings...not help your daughter succeed. As an educational psychologist in private practice and the public school system for the past 14 years, I have completed over a thousand psycho-educational evaluations and intelligence tests on struggling

learners from preschool to adult. I encountered numerous families who surrendered to the notion that their child would always struggle to learn, read, or do math. They all but gave up on the dream of their son or daughter attending college. These kids needed hope based on a system that would diagnose and effectively treat the core cause of learning difficulties. Cognitive skills testing and training offers this hope. Any student's ability to learn can be enhanced, regardless of where they are today. Intervention through appropriate cognitive skills testing and training dramatically improves basic processing speed and memory skills in ways once thought impossible. This opens up promise for struggling students to literally change the course of their lives.

**Dr. Russell Griffiths**, a Licensed Educational Psychologist, was awarded the Outstanding School Psychologist of Orange County by his peers in 2004/2005. He worked as the school psychologist for the Orange County Department of Education for 6 years, and also with Probation and Social Service students. He is a recipient of the prestigious Crystal Bell Award by the Orange County Department of Education for outstanding service to the community. Dr. Griffiths taught at the School of Psychology and School Counseling at Alliant International University in Irvine, and is now pursuing his own practice.

