



Case Study: Tourette Syndrome

Paulo is nine years old and attends his local mainstream primary school. He is of average ability. At the age of eight years Paulo was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome (TS). This came as a relief to his family and school as he has had a history of vocal and motor tics which have caused concern to all concerned. However, since that time Paulo has been very worried that his motor tics will get worse as he gets older and that vocal tics will turn into swearing out loud as he has heard about people with TS who do this. Paulo would like to talk to somebody about TS on his own but does not know how to sort this out as his mum gets very upset if he talks to her about the clinic or anything to do with TS. Paulo's difficulty in understanding and coming to terms with his condition means that he has fallen behind in his schoolwork. His reading and writing has not kept pace with his peers as motor tics of his arms and neck mean that he cannot concentrate for long and Paulo becomes tired with the effort of attempting to suppress and control his movements so that he does not appear different. There are times when Paulo just sits in class appearing very distracted until an adult goes to talk to him. Consequently Paulo frequently appears listless and withdrawn in school. As Paulo becomes stressed his vocal tics become more pronounced and this means that he does not want to read aloud in class or join in classroom discussions. Paulo finds the fact that he constantly makes cough like noises unpleasant and very embarrassing and often tries to cover up the fact by exaggerating the cough. Paulo often asks to leave the classroom on the pretence of wanting to go to the toilet. Paulo does not like going to assembly and usually asks to be allowed to stay behind by himself in the classroom. He is also worried about taking tests in schools as the quiet working conditions make him feel extremely self-conscious. He is very anxious about going to secondary school and having to get to know a lot of new teachers. He is worried that when the teachers tell the class to be quiet he will start to make loud noises and this will annoy his teachers and he will be in detention and worse, so will the rest of the class and then they will be angry with him. Consequently Paulo likes to sit by himself in class and whenever possible likes to use the class computer because he finds this relaxing as it is positioned in a corner of the class and the sounds from the computer mask his vocal tics.

Paulo has not developed many friendships with his peers because he is reluctant to approach others and is nervous to join in playground banter. His peers do not understand Paulo's condition and although they do not appear to notice his tics they do notice that he seems unfriendly and very tired in school. He enjoys playing football and at such times he appears as an exuberant and enthusiastic boy.



Activity: Tourette Syndrome

Identify the triggers for concern that occur in this case study:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

List the actions that could be taken to address each difficulty in order to reduce the negative impact of Tourette Syndrome on Paulo’s development:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

