

Immediate and dramatic response

When my son received his first half-tablet, the first thing he did was to get a rather complex jigsaw puzzle out of his toy closet. It was a puzzle that he had never been able to complete and that had particularly frustrated him. It had always angered him that his sister could do it without difficulty. He worked at it for a whole hour, methodically fitting each piece or discarding it without evidence of temper or frustrations. His concentration was deep, his patience unusual (for him) the ordinary distractions that always had interfered with his completing a task did not appear to disturb him. The change was extremely noticeable. It surprised me because never before had he been able to devote more than ten minutes to one activity. The repeated failure that he experienced every day had taken a toll on his self-esteem. We were both elated by the boost he got from his new success with the puzzle. Shortly after he finished the puzzle we held our first sensible two-way conversation. At five years old his interest in the sounds of words had seemed to distract him almost to the point of his ignoring their meaning.

Excessive perseveration after treatment with d-amphetamine

Such increased attentiveness may be dose-responsive and may reach excessive proportions. For example, one very hyperactive and distractible 9-year-old who, before drug treatment, could be neither induced nor terrified into studying for more than 15 minutes at a time, proved unusually responsive to medication. A few weeks after having been started on a small dose of d-amphetamine she unfortunately misheard her teacher, and thought that the class assignment was to write the Roman numerals from one to one thousand, rather than those from one to one hundred. Five hours after supper her flabbergasted parents discovered her in her room patiently plodding away. Such pathological perseverance is rare but striking.