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I have long been suspicious of the practice of putting children on drugs to control their behavior. It sounds to me like too many parents and teachers are unable/unwilling to deal with normal variations in childhood behavior by giving the child the attention he needs. So the child acts out. As more care givers abdicate their responsibility to children, and as less effective methods of discipline are more heavily promoted, more children exhibit behavior problems. Hence, our epidemic of ADD/ADHD children.

I have recently had the opportunity to speak with the wife of Peter R. Breggin, M.D., the author of *Talking Back To Ritalin*. She graciously arranged to have two of her husband's several book titles forwarded to me. He has done extensive research into the ADD/ADHD phenomenon and has confirmed that ADD is less attributable to *attention deficit disorder* and more a phenomenon of *adult discipline disorder*.

One of the most significant findings Breggin reports is that there is no physiological basis for ADD/ADHD. "A syndrome, then, is a group of symptoms that have a meaningful relationship to each other and presumably to an underlying cause, such as the ingestion of monosodium glutamate [the Chinese Restaurant Syndrome]. The point made by many critics is that ADHD does not represent a rationally related group of symptoms, nor does it reflect an underlying disorder. In other words, it is not a valid syndrome."

The myth of Ritalin is that it calms the children down, their behavior becomes more subdued. The fact is that children on Ritalin "endure the typical suppressive behavioral effects" of the drug. Specifically, Ritalin acts on the part of the brain that involves the exertion of will and the initiation of spontaneous movement. This causes a drug-induced dysfunction that dampens overall energy as well as will power, initiative, and spontaneity.

Spontaneous behavior includes exploration and curiosity; the drive to investigate, explore and to be free. With these drives dampened, children no longer chafe as much at being forced to endure tedious lessons and rote exercises. This is seen as a positive effect of the drug by teachers and parents who cannot deal with the educational needs of the curious, bright, and intellectually demanding child. They prefer the Ritalin-induced zombie-like ability to over-focus on boring, repetitive, uninspiring classroom materials. This can also be an asset at home, where the parent is too busy or preoccupied to give the child the attention he needs. A Ritalin-programmed robot is much less demanding of parental attention.

Meanwhile, the child's drug-soaked, developing brain is having fits with effects of the drug. The nerves, in an attempt to compensate for the increased neurotransmitter activity caused by the stimulant, begin a process of self-destruction in an effort to blunt the overstimulation. Studies have proven that children who have been on Ritalin have smaller brains than children who haven't. It has been suggested that the findings of 'cortical atrophy' (shrinkage of the cortex - critical to higher brain functions, including intelligence) may be a long-term adverse effect of this treatment.

If that wasn't bad enough, Ritalin, as one of the top ten abused drugs, is the latest craze for those seeking a 'high.' Why not? It's very easy to obtain. And it acts on the brain the same way cocaine does, but it lasts longer in the brain than cocaine. It is also addictive; The DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) has reported that "addiction produced by methylphenidate [Ritalin] abuse is neither benign nor rare in occurrence and is more accurately described as producing severe dependence."

We are producing a generation of drug addicts. When children are given a pill to solve a problem, they don't develop the internal mechanisms needed to resolve the problems themselves. This will hamper their ability to deal appropriately with issues in their adult lives. As an example, let's look at the recent shootings by school children. Mrs. Breggin, co-author of many of Dr. Breggin's books informed me that the children who committed these shootings were on Ritalin.

Sometimes the zombies get psychotic. This is a natural side effect of the long-term use of stimulants.

Children don't need drugs, they need the love and attention of their parents. They need an intellectually stimulating environment in school. They need consistent, fair and firm discipline as well as a system of rewards. But then, this really does require more effort than many are willing to devote. It's just too bad, because the only one who really suffers is the child.