

## The fidget toy debate

Fidget toys have become a recognized tool for helping individuals with ADHD, anxiety, and sensory processing difficulties. They provide a way to channel excess energy, improve focus, and regulate emotions. However, they can also become distractions, particularly in classrooms or workplaces. Finding the right balance is key.

### The Benefits of Fidget Toys

For individuals with ADHD, movement is essential for maintaining focus and processing information. Suppressing this need can lead to tension, frustration, and even the development of functional tics. Fidget toys offer an outlet for movement that supports learning and concentration. Key benefits include:

- Improved Focus and Attention – Small, repetitive movements help regulate attention, making it easier to concentrate.
- Reduced Anxiety and Stress – Items like stress balls or putty provide a calming effect and emotional regulation.
- Enhanced Self-Regulation – Fidgeting prevents disruptive behaviors like foot tapping or excessive talking.
- Encourages Movement Without Disrupting Others – Allows small, controlled actions without requiring the person to leave their seat.

### The Downsides of Fidget Toys

Despite their benefits, fidget toys can sometimes be disruptive. Key concerns include:

- Potential Distraction – Some users focus more on the toy than their task.
- Noise Issues – Clicky fidget cubes, poppers, or spinners can be distracting to others.
- Risk of Overuse – Some individuals may become overly reliant on them.
- Not Always Allowed – Schools and workplaces may have policies against certain fidget toys.

### Less Distracting Alternatives

For those who need movement without creating distractions, consider:

- Chair Bands – Elastic bands on chair legs allow quiet foot bouncing.
- Tactile Discs or Velcro – Textured surfaces under desks provide subtle sensory input.
- Putty or Stress Balls – Quiet, tactile options for hand engagement.



## N&T Quick Reads

- Weighted Lap Pads or Fidget Rings – Subtle tools for grounding and movement.

You can find links to recommended products here:

<https://www.nurtureandthrive.co.uk/recommended-products>

## The Dangers of Suppressing Movement in ADHD

Telling children to “sit still” or “stop fidgeting” can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and even functional tics. Restricting movement may also make learning more difficult. Instead of suppressing movement, it’s important to find ways to support it in a controlled manner.

## Finding the Right Balance

Choosing the right fidget tool and setting clear expectations is crucial. Quiet, subtle options like chair bands and stress balls provide effective movement without disruption. Movement is a fundamental need for people with ADHD, and suppressing it can have unintended consequences. Rather than eliminating movement, we should find creative ways to support it.