

**Question: My 5 year old son is wild. I know a lot of parents whose children are on medications for ADHD, but I don't want to give my son medication if I don't have to. Are there other solutions?**

**Answer:** When we deal with our children, we probably search for as many alternatives as possible, so that we can make the best decision for their welfare. When you think about it, that's also how we should treat ourselves! Yes, there are alternatives for your son, and some of them may be much better than medicating him.

Television, radio, and print media inundate us with advertisements for all kinds of medications. It almost appears as if we are being told to diagnose and prescribe for ourselves. Some of the commercials actually tell us to ask our doctors about specific medications! When we hear this kind of advertising every day, we may be left with the impression that medications address all of our health needs. But when we think about it, we know intuitively that this is not the case.

First of all, remember that five year old children ARE wild. We say that children express an "exuberance of Yang," meaning that they almost literally have energy overflowing from their bodies. So the first question to ask should be whether your child is more wild than the average boy; or is it possible that you are simply over tired, over worked, and over stressed, so that he SEEMS more wild than the average child. Your solution may be that you need a vacation, or at least some rest.

The second question to address should probably be diet. Walking down the aisle of the grocery store, I am astounded to see offerings aimed specifically at children, like chocolate chip waffles, packaged in bright cartons with cartoon characters. Guess what? If your child eats waffles, with chocolate, AND probably maple syrup, and maybe some juice...he or she is going to act pretty wild. That much sugar would put most full-grown adults into an agitated state. Is he getting chocolate milk for lunch in kindergarten? Does he get dessert? Is he eating a lot of potatoes or starchy foods? Like most of us, his mental, emotional, and physical well-being will benefit from a diet rich in fruits and vegetables, protein (whether from meat or other sources), and limited in sugars.

Next, let's consider his level of physical activity. Is he playing a lot of computer games, or watching a lot of television? At his age, he should be getting LOTS of exercise. Sedentary activities are only appropriate in limited quantities. Healthy levels of physical activity will benefit his mental, emotional, and physical health.

For most parents, this is a harder prescription than simply giving your child a pill. It requires more time, more effort, more supervision. It asks parents to resist the pressure of their peers, the pressure of their children's peers, and the pressures of pop culture. But of course, our children are worth it. Wouldn't it be great if we decided to treat ourselves that well, too?