

SO THIS IS WHAT IT'S LIKE...

By Cindy Goldrich, Ed. M., ACAC

I had an interesting “Aha” moment this past month. As an avid road biker, I often ride with a group on Sunday mornings. Our riding is for exercise and friendship, not competition. On any given week, I may ride near the front, middle or back of the group, depending on my energy level and mood. Typically, during the course of our two-hour ride, the group will separate briefly as some people ride faster or slower. To make sure we do not leave anyone behind, the lead riders will occasionally wait at a light or a corner, giving a chance for everyone in the group to catch up.

This particular week I was struggling. Okay... so I had let a few weeks go by without exercise and I was feeling it, big time. I was constantly in the back of the pack and doing my best to keep up. As the morning went on, it became more and more challenging for me to reach the lead group. As I approached them patiently waiting at the light, enjoying their energy bars and sips of water, I craved a moment to stop, breathe and refuel. But each time I approached, ready to enjoy the two minutes respite, the light changed and off they went. And I knew if I waited too long before pedaling again I would lose sight of them and with that a sense of where they were and how I would need to pace myself to catch up.

Then it hit me: This must be what it feels like for some kids in school. Struggling hard to do their work, with one eye on the clock and one eye on the other children who are, one by one, turning in their assignments and moving on to the next activity. Sometimes that next activity is getting started on a homework assignment; sometimes it's continuing work on a class project. Perhaps it's getting to enjoy free playtime on the computer or building with some friends. And just as this child finishes, the teacher calls everyone together to teach a new lesson. No time to catch his breath, catch up on other work or socialize with other children. Constant work, constant pressure, and a constant reminder that somehow they just can't keep up with the others.

Please read my next article that addresses how we can support kids who struggle during the school day. My hope, as always, is to educate and raise awareness that children with ADHD are terrific kids who are often trying as hard as they can within the context of their daily challenges... and sometimes they need a little extra empathy, support, modifications and accommodations.