



## Awareness Exercise for Teachers: Tics

As you read the paragraph in the box below, frequently jerk your head back hard and fast. Try to do the head jerk in bursts -- like two or three rapid and jerks. Wait a few seconds, and do another hard, fast head jerk, or another burst. Do it frequently throughout your effort to read the paragraph. If you have a physical condition that prevents you from jerking your head back hard, do the exercise the same way but instead of jerking your head back hard and fast, roll your eyes severely to one side. Do the eye roll "tic" in bursts, and do it frequently.

OK, begin:

Children with Tourette's Syndrome follow the same normal curve model for intelligence as the general population. In fact, some parents think that children who have Tourette's Syndrome may be more intellectually or creatively gifted than the general population. Can the same process that disinhibits motor activity also disinhibit creativity? It's an interesting question.

How did you do? Did you experience interference in trying to read? Did you get dizzy or nauseous at all? Did you feel frustrated? If you were a child or teen who was trying to read in class or at home, might you get fatigued or irritable after a while of trying to read? Would you give up? Remember that you were only asked to read a few sentences. How much do you ask your students to read, and how often are they engaged in reading activities? If you were taking a test, how do you think you'd feel?

Tics of the eyes, head, and neck are the most common tics. Make accommodations for tics that interfere with learning or performance. When parents were surveyed, they reported that eye and head/neck tics frequently interfered with reading and eye and shoulder/arm/hand tics frequently interfered with math and written work. They also reported that children with vocal tics might be reluctant to read aloud, ask questions, or participate in class discussions.

Remember that the tics you see in class are only the tip of the iceberg. You do not see the tics that student is suppressing or how much mental and emotional energy the student may be expending trying to suppress the tics.

Remember, too, that asking the student to stop ticcing or comments that might lead them to try to suppress their tics is like someone asking you to stop breathing. Could you do it for more than a few minutes?

Feel free to share this exercise with your colleagues. The more you know, the better for your students!