

HAIR CUT IDEAS

Compiled by Linda Cammaroto

The following are ideas sent in by OT's across the country. They are ideas many mothers and OT's have found helpful when cutting your little one's hair, especially if they have tactile defensive behavior.

HOW TO TOLERATE A HAIRCUT

1. -First visit the barber or stylist yourself. Select a stylist that is gentle, understanding and yet effective with children.
2. You may find that you can prepare your child by desensitizing him/her over time using the following schedule:
 - Drive by the shop
 - Stop in and talk at the shop
 - Stop in and let the barber comb or brush child's hair
 - Have stylist give a Partial haircut (trim bangs)
 - Next time have stylist give a Full haircut (omit the buzzer if possible)
 - At home, Family engages in sensory stim
 - Use different style brushes at home
 - Increase the frequency of brushing
 - At home, provide roughhousing with lots of scalp stim. (give and take)
 - Last resort:
 - Have a stylist come to the house
 - Have someone (possibly family member) implement the cutting. (Note: I cut my children's hair when they were little. I am still cutting my husband's hair though my kids now prefer a stylist. Some fellows never grow up ☺)
 - Forget fashion, opt for function
 - Once the parents decide what is the most viable option they must proceed with unity. Oppositional behavior children must have very set structure and not be given opportunities for "power plays", which they love to win. Everyone is teaching compliance.
3. For the child with sensory defensive issues (the noise from the clippers and/or scissors so close to his ears may be causing his distress more so than the tactile input), try having him listen to a favorite cassette on a Walkman (provides distraction). With the headpiece part of the headphones under his chin, it will not interfere with the cutting and it may allow him to tolerate haircuts without a major scene.

4. Chewing gum may also be helpful.
5. Setting a timer with analog countdown may help, so that the child can see how much longer his haircut would be.
6. Another idea might be to take some Polaroid's of different sides of his head (right side, left side, top, front, back and use them as a schedule board, so that as each head view was finished with cutting/buzzing, he could remove the picture and then see what part was to be done next and how many more parts had to be trimmed until he was all done.
7. Some parents who have had success using spin-pops (those vibrational, twirling lollipop holders) with a lollipop while getting the child's haircut. Some have even used just a lollipop with success.
8. Try implementing the behavior mod. principals that your child's teacher uses with the child in class. Some teachers will accompany the parents if necessary.
9. <http://www.cdl.unc.edu/occupationaltherapy/Tips/Haircuts.htm> Catherine Alguire, MLA, OTR/L and Heather Parsons, OTS have a wonderful handout for parents on her website called, Haircuts: Tips for the Sensitive Child. This is part of the website at the Center for Development and Learning.

Good Luck!