



UNDERSTANDING ADHD

What Is Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)?

- A developmental disorder that occurs in 3-5% of children and adults.
- Onset of this disorder usually occurs between 3 and 6 years of age, but it certainly can develop later on in adolescence and adulthood.
- For individuals diagnosed with ADHD in childhood, 50 to 70% of them will manifest some of these symptoms in adulthood and impair their functioning in some way.
- Typically, the hyperactivity/impulsivity component is generally less apparent in adulthood.
- 30-40% of individuals with ADHD are at-risk for developing other mental health disorders, such as anxiety, defiance, antisocial behavior, learning disabilities, mood disorders, and substance abuse.

Individuals With ADHD Frequently Exhibit:

- Deficits in behavioral inhibition and sustained attention. They also can be restless, impulsive, hyperactive, easily distracted, and need frequent reminders.
- Struggles to delay gratification, such as waiting their turn in a game or stopping and thinking before acting.
- Preferences for immediate, smaller rewards compared to larger, more long-term ones.
- Difficulties inhibiting their emotions and reactions to events (e.g., not being able to internalize their feelings).
- Less social maturity (up to 3 years younger), are easily frustrated, and can be quick tempered.
- Excessive gross motor activity, such as running or climbing, especially for younger children when asked to perform a mundane task.
- Lack of persistence, become easily bored, and appear to be unmotivated when performing tedious or boring tasks.
- A need for constant reminders to complete the task assigned to them, including routine tasks.
- Hyper-focus on engaging and stimulating activities.
- Poor self-talk. In other words, they do not internalize their thoughts to guide their behavior.
- Other executive functioning deficits such as difficulty planning ahead, managing one's time, self-monitoring behaviors, initiating and completing tasks, and holding information in one's mind for later use.
- Difficulties on tasks related to reading comprehension.
- Difficulties with problem-solving and flexibility. These individuals may give up on obtaining a goal if an obstacle arises and they are unsure how to solve it. They may be less flexible in their problem-solving approach or respond on impulse. For children, this can be evident in areas of speech and writing, as they may struggle to quickly assemble their ideas in an organized fashion.
- Variable work performance. There are times when the individual may be able to complete a task in a timely manner and other times when they zone out and fail to complete what was assigned to them.

How Is ADHD Diagnosed?

- A comprehensive psychological/psychoeducational evaluation can help diagnose ADHD.
- A consultation with your pediatrician, psychologist, and/or medical professional



TIPS AND TRICKS FOR MANAGING ADHD

Treatments Include:

- Stimulant medication
- Behavior modification
- Social skills training

Tips That Work Well For Individuals With ADHD:

- 1-to-1 or smaller settings.
- Doing something that is enjoyable and engaging.
- Earning an immediate reward for appropriate behavior.
- Provide brief, clear instructions and avoid lecturing.
- Give more immediate and frequent positive and negative feedback.
- Use incentives before punishment.
- Break large tasks into smaller projects.
- Use a to-do checklist. Do not rely on memory alone.
- Plan and structure his/her time so it can be used effectively.
- Be accountable to others for task completion.
- Allow him/her to use a nonintrusive tactile object to fidget with during times when he/she is expected to sit still.
- Focus on one task at a time rather than "multi-tasking"
- Learn new material earlier in the day. Know when you work best.
- Take brief, scheduled breaks.
- Use a timer as a reminder of when to stop working and to make sure you are focused on the task at hand.
- Plan ahead and warn of upcoming transitions. Allow time for transitions.
- Maintain SIMPLE organizational plans. Keep it simple!

Books:

- *Your Defiant Child: 8 steps to better behavior* by Russell Barkley
- *The ADD/ADHD Checklist: An Easy Reference for Parents & Teachers* by Sandra Rief.
- *Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete Authoritative Guide for Parents* by Russell A. Barkley.
- *Delivered from Distraction: Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder* by Edward M. Hallowell and John J. Ratey.
- *Married to Distraction* by Ed Hallowell
- *You Mean I'm Not Lazy, Stupid or Crazy?! A Self-Help Book for Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder* by Kate Kelly and Peggy Ramundo.
- *ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life* by Judith Kolberg and Kathleen Nadeau.

Websites:

- National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH) – www.nimh.nih.gov
- ADDitude Magazine – www.additudemag.com/adhd
- LD Online – www.ldonline.org
- National Research Center on ADHD – www.help4adhd.org
- Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) – www.chadd.org

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