

A Look at ADD and ADHD

Hallowell and Ratey, authors of an excellent text entitled *Driven to Distraction*, list twenty symptoms that are often evident in a person with ADD or ADHD. The manifestations of these symptoms will differ in each individual with some being more pronounced than others. They are:

1. A sense of underachievement, of not meeting one's goals (regardless of how much one has accomplished) that often creates anxiety and sense of failure for the individual.
2. Difficulty getting organized, particularly with situations that involve multi-tasking.
3. Chronic procrastination or trouble getting started with even small projects or tasks.
4. Many projects going simultaneously; trouble with follow-through on any of them individually.
5. Tendency to say what comes to mind without necessarily considering the timing or appropriateness of the remark.
6. An ongoing search for high stimulation.
7. A tendency to be easily bored with a short attention span.
8. Easy distractibility, trouble focusing attention, tendency to tune out or drift away in the middle of a page or a conversation, often coupled with an ability to focus at times.
9. Often creative, intuitive and highly intelligent. Individuals can exhibit innovation.
10. Trouble going through established channels, following proper procedure.
11. Impatient; low tolerance for frustration or failure.

12. Impulsive, either verbally or in action, as in impulsive spending of money, changing plans, enacting new schemes or career plans, and the like.
13. Tendency to worry needlessly, endlessly; tendency to scan the horizon looking for something to worry about alternating with inattention to or disregard for actual dangers.
14. Sense of impending doom, insecurity, alternating with high risk-taking.
15. Depression, especially when disengaged from a project.
16. Restlessness.
17. Tendency toward addictive behavior.
18. Chronic problems with self-esteem.
19. Inaccurate self-observation.
20. Family history of ADD, manic-depressive illness, depression, substance abuse, or other disorders of impulse control or mood.

Causes of ADD and ADHD

ADHD is believed to be inherited. Russell Barkley of the University of Massachusetts Medical Center estimates that 40 percent of ADHD kids have a parent with similar symptoms, and 35 percent have an affected sibling. If one identical twin is affected, the chances are between 80 and 92 percent that his or her sibling will be also. ADHD is two to three times as likely to be diagnosed in boys as girls.

The actual cause of ADD is unknown, but it is probably associated with subtle differences in brain structure, its neural pathways, its chemistry, its blood supply, or its electrical system. As of this writing, some interesting hypotheses are emerging, although definitive conclusions can't yet be drawn. Regardless of the cause, ADD or ADHD can be disruptive in the life of the individual. Child and adolescents particularly report not only difficulty dealing with daily activities, but sensing a deep frustration that only serves to exasperate the already difficult symptoms.

Impact on the Child or Adolescent

ADD and ADHD can have a significant impact on the life of the child. Most often the child finds their behaviors and actions difficult to control. Many children report difficulties as the day moves on and the energy utilized to control their behaviors diminishes. Children will also frequently indicate that behaviors become more problematic when they are hungry. Often providing a child snacks to eat throughout the day can diminish some behaviors.

Many children report personal duress, confusion and discouragement over their behaviors. They often recognize the problematic nature of their behaviors, their inability to control their behaviors and the impact of their behaviors of their environment. Many children carry a sense of guilt over their inability to control these behaviors, feeling that they are somehow inadequate, stupid or retarded. Often self-esteem becomes an issue.

What You Can Do

ADD and ADHD can be managed. Seek a qualified therapist who can assist you and your child in building effective coping skills. Develop structure within the home and school environment to assist the child in better managing behaviors. Explore issues such as adequate sleep, nutrition, structured study and play times as well as regular exercise. If the symptoms are significant, consider the possibility of medications to assist the child in further managing their behaviors.

Recommended Reading:

Dr. Edward M. Hallowell and Dr. John J. Ratey, *Driven to Distraction* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995)

This information is presented for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for informed medical advice or training. Do not use this information to diagnose or treat a mental health problem without consulting a qualified health or mental health care provider.

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We have been helping people find solutions since 1988.*

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF YOU WOULD BENEFIT FROM COUNSELING?

These conditions or situations are widely experienced and may indicate the need for professional counseling:

- Depression, discouragement
- Lack of motivation, apathy
- Anger, bitterness, resentment
- General dissatisfaction with life or relationships
- Difficulties in handling life events
- Marriage and family conflicts
- Sexual dysfunction
- Difficulties in decision making
- Physical ailments for which no medical cause can be found, such as headaches and lower back pain. (Medical consultation may be required in conjunction with therapy.)
- Difficulty in building and maintaining satisfying relationships
- Job stress, inability to keep jobs
- Inability to deal with a child's misbehavior or school problems
- Compulsive behaviors (eating disorders, spending, sexual issues)
- Issues related to low self-esteem or lack of self-worth
- Excessive dependence upon the approval or validation of others

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ADHD



*Facts on Understanding
And Dealing
With
ADHD*

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