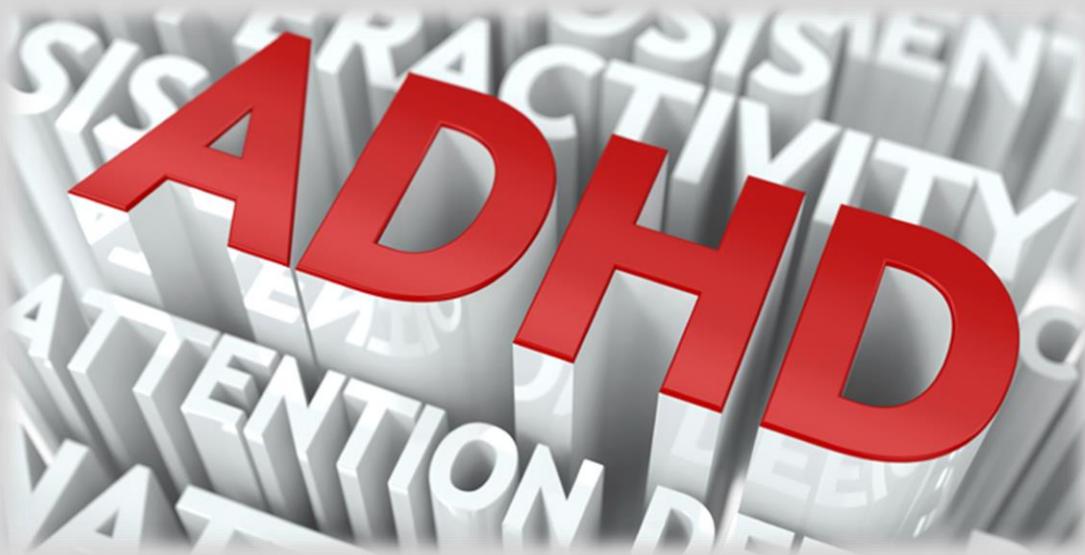


ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER



Towards Understanding a Person Living With ADHD

ADHD is a behavioural disorder, not an illness or a sign of low intelligence.

Youngsters with ADHD have to cope with:

- Inattention - having difficulty concentrating, forgetting instructions, moving from one task to another without completing anything
- Impulsivity - talking over the top of others, having a 'short fuse', being accident prone
- Over activity - constant restlessness and fidgeting.

Symptoms of ADHD

There are two groups of symptoms in ADHD: inattentive symptoms and hyperactive-impulsive symptoms.

Inattentive symptoms:

- Not paying attention to details, or careless mistakes in schoolwork
- Difficulty remaining focussed in class, conversations or reading
- Avoiding tasks that take continuous mental effort (like homework)
- Not following through on instructions, a tendency to start but not finish tasks.
- Being easily distracted or daydreaming
- Losing things
- Not seeming to listen when spoken to
- Being forgetful with everyday tasks, chores, homework and appointments

Hyperactive - Impulsive symptoms

- Fidgeting and squirming
- Running or climbing in situations where it is inappropriate
- Non-stop talking

- Interrupting conversations, games or activities or using people's possessions without permission
- Blurting out an answer before a question has been finished
- Difficulty waiting their turn
- Leaving their seat were sitting is expected
- Being constantly in motion, as if "driven by a motor"
- Struggling to play or do tasks quietly

Some youngsters show mainly inattentive symptoms and others mainly hyperactive-impulsive symptoms, but many have features of both groups.

ADHD and Emotions

Youngsters with ADHD experience the same emotions as their peers. What is different with youngsters that are coping with ADHD is that there emotions are more frequent, intense, last longer and interfere with their everyday life.

Some youngsters with ADHD might be unable to contain themselves when they are angry or stressed out, while others might struggle to get excited to do something when they are feeling bored.

Trouble with Emotions

- Quick to get frustrated with minor annoyances
- Worry too much or too long about even small things
- Have trouble calming down when annoyed or angry
- Feel wounded or take offence at even gentle criticism
- Feel excessive urgency to get something they want immediately.

Why the Trouble with Emotions

Youngsters with ADHD take longer to gain the ability to calm their emotions down and get perspective. They are therefore more likely to get wrapped up in their own emotions.

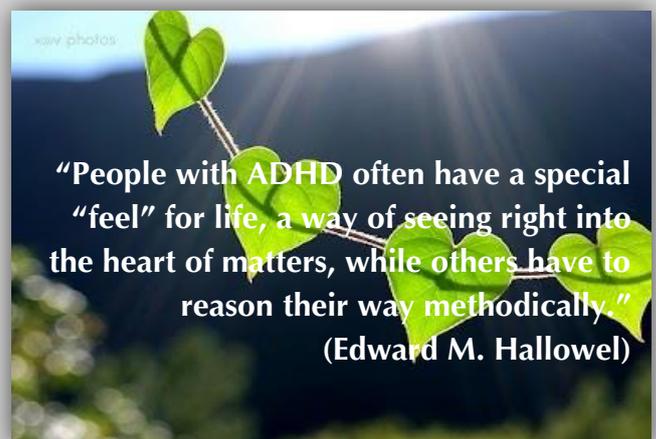
Therefore they may:

- Be overwhelmed with discouragement, frustration or anger
- Be too fearful to begin tasks
- Give up too quickly on whatever they are doing
- Be reluctant to get started on something they ought to be doing
- Avoid interacting with others.

Common Conditions that often Co-exist with ADHD

It seems that having ADHD makes it more likely that a youngster will also have other challenges.

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (and Conduct Disorder)
- Learning and communication differences
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Depression
- Enuresis
- Drug abuse
- Bipolar Disorder
- Sleep Problems
- Tourette's Disorder
- Pervasive Development Disorder
- Many forms of physical illness (such as asthma)
- Accidental injury
- Anxiety



What an Anxious Child with ADHD May Look Like

Some youngsters with ADHD and Anxiety may draw attention to themselves while others will try not to be noticed.

Some behaviour displayed by youngsters that need to cope with ADHD and anxiety:

- Clowns around too much in class
- Seems irritable or argumentative
- Withdraws from people, perhaps by retreating to the bedroom or bathroom
- Plays video games or watches TV nonstop
- Lies about schoolwork or other responsibilities not met

ADHD and Lying

Youngsters living with ADHD usually lie about everyday things like chores and work. They don't lie to be defiant. They lie because they have trouble coping with challenges. They lie because they have weaknesses in their executive functions. Executive function is a set of mental skills that helps you:

- Manage time
- Pay attention
- Switch focus
- Plan and organize
- Remember details
- Avoid saying or doing the wrong thing
- Do things based on your experience
- Multitask

Philippians 4:13 "I am able to face anything through him who gives me strength." (REB)

Youngsters and Executive Function

Warning signs that a youngster may be having problems with executive function include trouble in:

- Planning projects
- Estimating how much time a project will take to complete
- Telling stories (verbally or in writing)
- Memorizing
- Starting activities and tasks
- Remembering

Diagnosing ADHD

No single test can diagnose ADHD. Assessments done by a doctor, psychologist or psychiatrist involves putting together lots of pieces of information to make a diagnosis.

References

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