

The Facts on Attention Deficit Disorder

Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) affects millions of young people and adults and manifests itself in several ways. Many famous and successful people have dealt with ADD including actor Dustin Hoffman, comedian Bill Cosby, former basketball star Magic Johnson, and physicist Albert Einstein. This month's column briefly examines the nature of ADD, its impact on school and work, and resources that can help individuals with ADD.

Definition & Common Symptoms

ADD is a neurological condition that affects learning & behavior. It is estimated that 5 to 10 percent of the general population have ADD, which typically begins in childhood. Primary ADD symptoms in adolescents and adults can include:

- Attention and concentration deficits
- Impulsivity
- Procrastination
- Distractibility
- Hyperactivity
- Forgetfulness
- Temper outbursts
- Sleep disorders

Secondary symptoms can include:

- Reduced self confidence and self esteem
- Emotional reactivity and depression

Impacts at School

ADD can easily extend into the academic arena and affect learning and school behavior. The ADD student may also struggle with related learning issues, such as time management and organization, which can influence grades. Motivation can fluctuate. Homework and other assignments may be overlooked, once again leaving the student academically vulnerable. The student may demonstrate a performance pattern that strikes parents and educators as inconsistent and under-achieving. Along with academic concerns, other issues can come into play including:

- Peer acceptance: Students often want to avoid being perceived as different from their peers and may reject intervention and possible use of prescribed medications that could reduce ADD symptoms.
- Asserting autonomy: Adolescents are at a life stage where it is important for them to establish increasing independence, thus rejecting special help such as tutoring that could positively affect the situation.

Impacts at Work

If unchecked, ADD may continue on into the workplace and adversely impact work performance. While employees with ADD often bring considerable energy and production to the work environment, they may nevertheless do so at some cost. Disorganization, distractibility, and lack of discipline with regard to work responsibilities can become problems. These issues can then lead to work reprimands or even termination. Supervisors may complain about the ADD employee's poor planning or inattention to detail. Some view industrial accidents perhaps as being caused by ADD and impaired vigilance.

Resources

Resources exist for diagnosing and treating ADD. Psychologists are particularly qualified to conduct such evaluations. The Kentucky Psychological Association can provide further information. The Jefferson County Public School system also can direct you to available resources. Jewish Family & Vocational Service (JFVS) is also equipped to perform psycho-educational screenings for ADD. With a clear ADD diagnosis, other resources can be tapped to help one constructively manage and accommodate.

Special Program

JFVS will conduct an educational forum led by nationally recognized ADD expert, Dr. Edward Hallowell, on Sunday, February 11, from noon to 5pm at Keneseth Israel Synagogue, 2531 Taylorsville Road.

Dr. Hallowell has authored several books on ADD, such as *Driven to Distraction* and *Delivered from Distraction*, and has appeared on national TV broadcasts, including *60 Minutes*, *20/20*, and *Oprah*.

General public and educators admission is \$15 pre-registration and \$25 at the door. For mental health professionals needing Continuing Education Credits, the charge is \$60 pre-registration and \$75 at the door. For additional information, contact JFVS at (502) 452 – 6341 or register on-line at www.jfvs.com.

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