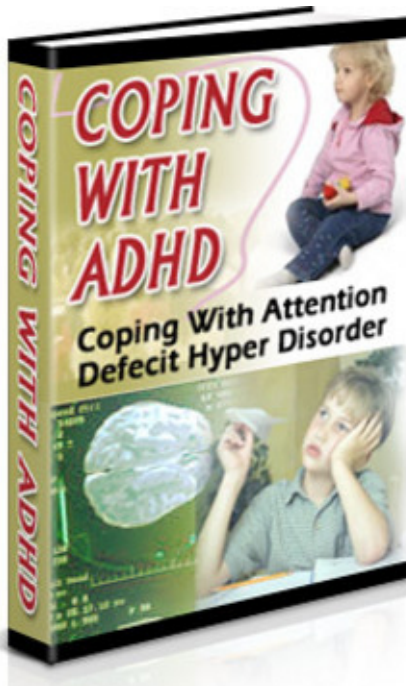


Coping with ADHD

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INTRODUCTION

As recently as twenty years ago, the term Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder was virtually unheard of. It's not that the malady wasn't around; it's just that the label hadn't been coined back then.

In the 1980's, ADHD kids were the problem ones in school. They couldn't pay attention in class, they were constantly disorganized, and recess was a time of joy for them. They were always being yelled at and reprimanded and felt frustrated 95 percent of the time they spent at school.

This author was in grade school in the 1970's. Having been diagnosed as a gifted child, school came easy to me. Unfortunately, so did boredom. That lack of activity manifested itself into a type of hyperactivity that these days would probably have been labeled as ADHD.

But in the past decade, the amount of ADHD diagnoses has skyrocketed. It seems like every single classroom has

at least one child on medication for ADHD. Adults are even being diagnosed with Adult ADHD.

ADHD has gone from an obscure medical footnote to a household word in record time. Unfortunately, this disorder is largely misunderstood yet it is the most prevalent chronic health condition among school age children.

Many parents who have children diagnosed with ADHD feel like failures as parents. They perceive their children as being less than perfect which can cause amazingly strong feelings of helplessness and hopelessness. Misconceptions and preconceptions go along with this misinformation. Even though the disorder is constantly in the forefront of health and educational issues, a true understanding of what ADHD is and how to treat it fails to sink in with the average person.

The causes of ADHD are not readily known and cannot be pigeonholed into a neat little container just as the behavior of an ADHD child cannot be labeled easily. All children are different – all children with ADHD are different.

They react differently to situations, modifications, and medications.

The bottom line is that ADHD does exist and it can wreak havoc on families, parents, educators, and others when it is left untreated. ADHD is frustrating, stressful, and can make even the most stoic person flustered.

What are even scarier are the social implications that accompany a disorder like this. Consider the following:

- 21 percent of teens with ADHD skip school repeatedly.

- 35 percent eventually drop out of school.

- ADD/ADHD children are much more likely to experiment with drugs and alcohol.

- ADD/ADHD children are more likely to get into accidents.

- When ADD/ADHD kids don't do well in school, their self-esteem drops and they are less likely to succeed as adults.

The good news is that there are many coping strategies out there to help you deal with an ADHD child. Medication helps, but you must modify other things such as

environment, schedule, and attitude in order to effectively deal with ADHD.

This book will examine more closely those coping strategies. We'll give you advice on how to maintain peace in your family and suggestions you can make to allow your child to help themselves.

If you are an adult with ADHD, you're in luck as well. We'll examine this part of the disorder. We'll identify certain behaviors that you can change and help you figure out ways to minimize this disorder in your life so you can live more normally than ever before!

ADHD is here and it's here to stay. The diagnosis isn't a horrifying nightmare. It's a step towards a better life for you, your child, and everyone around you!

WHAT EXACTLY IS ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER?

ADHD, or ADD as it is often referred, is thought to be a neurological disorder that has been present from childhood and manifests itself through a variety of behaviors. These include hyperactivity, forgetfulness, poor impulse control, and distractibility.

ADHD is thought to be a chronic syndrome – that is, one that cannot be cured, although it can be minimized and controlled. It is thought that this disorder affects between 3 and 5 percent of the United States population in children and adults.

Much controversy surrounds the diagnosis of ADHD. This includes the thought of whether a diagnosis of ADHD denotes a disability in the traditional sense or just describes the neurological property of the brain.

There are some medical personnel who believe that the condition isn't biological but psychological in origin. The

debate over how to treat ADHD is a constant source of discussion and debate in medical circles. Some advocate medication while others support behavior modification in order to minimize the symptoms.

No clear-cut solution has presented itself, however, and the generally preferred mode of treatment is medication. This can be disturbing for many people – especially when speaking of medicating small children. In fact, ADHD is often being diagnosed in children as young as 3 or 4. This causes opponents of the medication to become especially vocal.

But we'll address that controversy a little later on in the book.

What we want to address most in this section is how to recognize the symptoms of ADHD and how to tell whether or not you or your child is just high-strung or if they truly suffer from this disorder.

One mother says the following about her child:

"I could wallpaper my bathroom with all the accident reports I received from Johnny's preschool. From the time Johnny was very little, he always had a creative mind, was very energetic, very on-the-go and accident-prone. With him being my first, I just thought this was normal.

We met with the principal of Johnny's school four times within his first month of attendance. I began to suspect that something might actually be wrong with my son. Then his teacher suggested that he be tested for ADHD.

At first, I thought 'Oh my, there's something wrong with my baby. Why us? Why him?'"

This is a common reaction for most parents. No one wants to have their child be stricken with some type of disorder. What these parents need to realize is that the suggestion and then possible diagnosis isn't a death sentence in any way. It's a step toward taking responsibility for your child's health or your health if you are an adult facing this.

While diagnosis of the disorder is complicated by the fact that there is no precise test to identify it, ADHD is defined by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) as a brain condition that makes it difficult for children to control their behavior.

Though the disorder can manifest itself in different ways, we've told you that children with ADHD tend to be inattentive, hyperactive and impulsive. Many children also experience trouble in school, difficulty in relationships with family members and their peers, academic underachievement and low self-esteem.

So, how do you recognize ADHD? The symptoms fall into two quite broad categories.

The first category is inattention. Symptoms include:

1. Failing to pay close attention to details or making careless mistakes when doing schoolwork or other activities
2. Trouble keeping attention focused during play or tasks
3. Appearing not to listen when spoken to

4. Failing to follow instructions or finish tasks
5. Avoiding tasks that require a high amount of mental effort and organization such as school projects
6. Frequently losing items required to facilitate tasks or activities such as school supplies
7. Excessive distractibility
8. Forgetfulness
9. Procrastination or inability to begin an activity

The second is Hyperactivity-Impulsive Behavior.

Symptoms include:

1. Fidgeting with hands or feet
2. Squirming in a seat
3. Leaving a seat often even at inappropriate times
4. Running or climbing at inappropriate times
5. Difficulty during quiet play
6. Frequently feeling restless
7. Excessive talking
8. Answering a question before the speaker has finished or interrupting the activities of others at inappropriate times.
9. Failing to wait for one's turn

A positive diagnosis is usually made if the person exhibits six or more of the above-named symptoms for at least three months. Symptoms must appear consistently in varied environments (home, school, etc.) and interfere with normal functioning.

People who are inattentive find it difficult to focus on a particular task and get bored quickly. While they may display effortless concentration doing things they enjoy, making a deliberate and conscious effort to organize and complete a task or to learn something new is difficult. Hyperactive people seem to bounce off the walls with energy and just cannot sit still. Impulsive people don't think before they act or speak. They have difficulty waiting for things to take their natural course. Everything must happen right away.

There have been times in all our lives when we have been overly impulsive, inattentive or hyperactive. But that does not mean that we are afflicted with ADHD. These behaviors are symptomatic of ADHD if they appear early in life, before the age of 7. However, the age of onset can vary

and symptoms may even appear in early adolescence. They must be excessive, long-term and pervasive. They must occur more often than in other people of the same age group. The behaviors must cause a real handicap in at least two areas of the person's life such as school, home, work, or social interactions.

Boys are at least three times as likely as girls to develop the disorder. Some doctors feel that testing needs to be gender specific because the symptoms present themselves differently in boys versus girls which would account for the vast difference in numbers.

As a result of the disorder, children with ADHD often engage in disruptive activities and antisocial behavior that alienates their peers and other people around them. In addition, their academic performance tends to suffer because of their inattention and easy distractibility. Parents of children with ADHD experience high stress levels that are linked to their extreme frustration in attempting to discipline their children. This can lead to problems in the marriage and in the worst case, even

divorce.

Unfortunately, ADHD is not a disorder that disappears with time. ADHD persists into adulthood. However, the good news is that there are ways in which one can alleviate the symptoms.

We will cover coping strategies later on in this book, but it must be noted that ADHD won't just go away. The good news about ADHD is that recent years have seen an increase in the overall understanding of what the disorder looks like. We know that not every child with ADHD is hyperactive, and not every child who is inattentive has ADHD. This is great news and the good news just keeps on coming.

When you have a child who is diagnosed with ADHD or you, as an adult have been told that you have Adult ADHD, keep in mind that you are in the company of some pretty famous people who have, or still do, struggle with this disorder.

Consider the following list:

Alexander Graham Bell – Inventor of the telephone

Hans Christian Andersen – Author

Beethoven – Composer

Harry Belafonte – Actor, Composer

Terry Bradshaw – Retired NFL Quarterback and Sports

Commentator

George Burns – Actor

Admiral Richard Byrd – Navy Aviator

Andrew Carnegie – Industrialist and Philanthropist

Lewis Carroll – Author Alice in Wonderland

Prince Charles – Future King of England

Cher – Actress/Singer

Winston Churchill – Statesman

Bill Cosby – Actor

Leonardo Da Vinci – Sculptor and Artist

Thomas Edison – Inventor

Albert Einstein – Inventor

Dwight D. Eisenhower – Former President of the United

States

Benjamin Franklin – Politician, Inventor

Michael Jordan – Basketball Player

Abraham Lincoln – Former President of the United States

Stephen Spielberg – Director, Film Maker

The list literally goes on and on and on. These people achieved notoriety for their achievements despite their shortcomings. They suffered from ADHD and overcame the diagnosis to become not only rich and famous, but remembered and revered for their creativity and leadership. This could be you or your child. Don't give up. Don't blame yourself. Take control and take charge. ADHD can be controlled and sufferers can live normal, productive lives. Some of you might be wondering what exactly the cause of ADHD is. The answer, unfortunately, isn't as cut and dried as you might want it to be.

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