

THE TRUTH ABOUT ADHD

By Marleen Claassen

ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) is considered to be one of the most common neurobehavioural disorders of childhood - an incurable mental disease. It is defined as symptoms of hyperactivity, impulsivity, and inattention beyond what is usual for a developmental age and affects most aspects of a child's daily functioning.

Many parents are concerned that their children might have attention and concentration difficulties but are not sure what to do and may also experience various challenges in raising their children.



DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE ADHD?

The following signs and symptoms *may* indicate the presence of ADHD:

Symptoms of inattention:	Symptoms of hyperactivity:	Symptoms of impulsiveness:
Children with inattention generally have difficulties in the following areas:	Hyperactive children are restless, have excessive energy levels and constantly need to move. They need lots of excitement and action to keep from becoming bored. They are described as appearing to be driven by a motor, so that they continue to wiggle even when at rest:	Children diagnosed with ADHD may also behave impulsively (having difficulty inhibiting the urge to act or speak) and often seem unable to contain themselves. There are 3 main signs doctors look for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Listening, even when being directly addressed;○ Continuing to pay attention to activities involving either work or play;○ Paying attention to details and avoiding careless mistakes;○ Remembering, being easily distracted;○ Organizing activities and tasks;○ Completing tasks, chores, and assignments;	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Squirming and fidgeting even when seated;○ Getting up when expected to remain seated;○ Running excessively and climbing in inappropriate situations;○ Difficulty playing quietly;○ Being always on the go;○ Talking excessively.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Blurting answers before the teacher or parent has finished asking the questions;○ Not waiting his/her turn;○ Interrupting conversations or intruding into other's activities.

A PROFESSIONAL DIAGNOSIS IS NEEDED

Many parents might suspect ADHD in their children, but it is of utmost importance that diagnosis and treatment be handled by professionals. The first place to look for help is your paediatrician, primary care doctor or family physician who is familiar with your child's family and medical history. When he feels he is unable to make a definitive diagnosis, he will refer to the most popular source for diagnosis – an educational psychologist. Psychologists specialize in psychological testing and treatment.

Treating ADHD in children

Treatment for ADHD may involve medication, behavioural/psychological interventions, or educational interventions, alone or in combination. Decisions regarding the choice of therapy should involve the child and his or her parents, who, in conjunction with the treating clinician, must weigh the risks and benefits to determine their preferred management strategy.



WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO HELP?

Parents can help to shape the behaviour of a child who has ADHD by:

- Sustaining a daily schedule
- Keeping distractions to a minimum
- Limiting choices
- Providing definite and logical places for the child to keep his clothes, schoolwork, and toys
- Using charts and checklists to help the child stay "on task"
- Setting small, reachable goals
- Rewarding positive behaviour
- Getting more exercise and eating a healthier diet.
- Finding activities in which the child can be successful (e.g., hobbies, sports)
- Using calm discipline (e.g., time out, distraction, removing the child from the situation).

IS THERE AN UPSIDE?

It has been said that people with ADHD have, on average, 20% higher IQs than the rest of the population. This is due mainly to the amazing problem solving capability of people with ADHD wired brains. Generally IQ tests are designed to prefer lateral thinking ability over linear thinking (as it is a greater sign of high intelligence). Albert Einstein was primarily a lateral thinker (a problem solving approach where you attempt many different angles in order to find a solution) as was Thomas Edison and Leonardo Da Vinci. These type of thinkers think "outside the box" and discover many new ways of framing problems rather than staying stuck.


People who are highly capable lateral thinkers are great solution finders; inventors, entrepreneurs, pioneers, explorers and artists. Their temperaments tend to be creative, energetic, impulsive and

"distractible." Those are the qualities that facilitate great lateral thinking ability.

The positive aspects of ADHD can be easily overlooked since ADHD is called a disorder. But children with ADHD are often:

- Highly Intelligent
- Inquisitive
- Vigorous
- Spontaneous
- Imaginative
- Adventurous &
- Contagiously enthusiastic!

Having ADHD does not have to predispose your child to an existence of trouble and misery! Rather discover the genius behind the ADHD! The key to success is learning how to channel all that creative energy and know how to use the secret strengths coming with ADHD. ADHD is complex but if you're battling, remember the following scripture:

'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbour as yourself.' – Matt 22:37-39. 

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