



ADD: Attention Disorder with and without Hyperactivity

Attention Deficit Disorder, commonly known as ADD, is a highly treatable neurobehavioral syndrome associated with subtle chemical and/or electrical variances of the brain during development. These physiological changes can have significant behavioral and learning effects throughout the life span. There is considerable evidence that most individuals with Attention Deficit Disorder are born with this condition, signifying a hereditary basis. ADD can also develop following injury or illness affecting brain development, although ADD is not related to brain damage. ADD is not due to faulty parenting, faulty teaching, or a character weakness. Most individuals with ADD have average to superior intelligence and are creative individuals.

To use the diagnosis Attention Deficit Disorder, attention span (i.e., focusing, sustaining, and switching attention) must be affected. Distractibility and fidgetiness are common. These symptoms can be present with or without hyperactivity. For example, a child can have a short attention span running and climbing excessively, or a child could have a short attention span and not display excessive activity, sometimes staring episodes can be evidenced. Many people with Attention Deficit Disorder also have learning disorders affecting academic school performance, or social learning difficulty. Knowing how to read people's faces or voice tones is just as important as knowing how to read books. In addition, Attention Deficit Disorder can also affect speech/language and/or coordination. Many people with ADD experience mood swings or heightened frustration, especially with too much going on at one time or with difficult tasks. Individuals with ADD often say that they feel stressed or that they have difficulty controlling feelings such as anxiety, anger, sadness or relating with others.

Understanding Attention Deficit Disorder as a syndrome, just as a cold is a syndrome, for example, helps to understand that not everyone has the same symptoms or the same number or degree of symptoms. This syndrome can exist throughout development with symptoms changing in kind, quality and frequency at different stages of development. ADD is not directly age or weight related. Rather, it is directly related to chemical/electrical variances in the brain during development and environmental influences. The ADD symptom complex can extend into adulthood. Many adults with ADD experience co-existing conditions affecting mood due to the behavioral effects of a chronic course of inattentiveness, stress and impulsivity.

It is exactly because of this strong relationship between physical and emotional development that Attention Deficit Disorder should be diagnosed as soon as possible. Early diagnosis and treatment can bring excellent results. Adolescents and adults also respond very well to treatment, especially as the learning, social and emotional effects are also addressed. All age groups can highly benefit from diagnosis and treatment of Attention Deficit Disorder. An interdisciplinary team addressing the medical, environmental wellness, behavioral, educational and social/vocational effects of this syndrome can be most beneficial. Treatment can positively affect quality of life, brightness, creativity and esteem. Attention Deficit Disorder does not have to be a disorder for life.

Attention Deficit Disorder does not define a person. It is only one part of a person's life, and while important to treat, the ultimate focus is working together so as to assess and treat the whole person, not the disorder. Quality of life and self-esteem are important to everyone and paramount for a happy and healthy life.