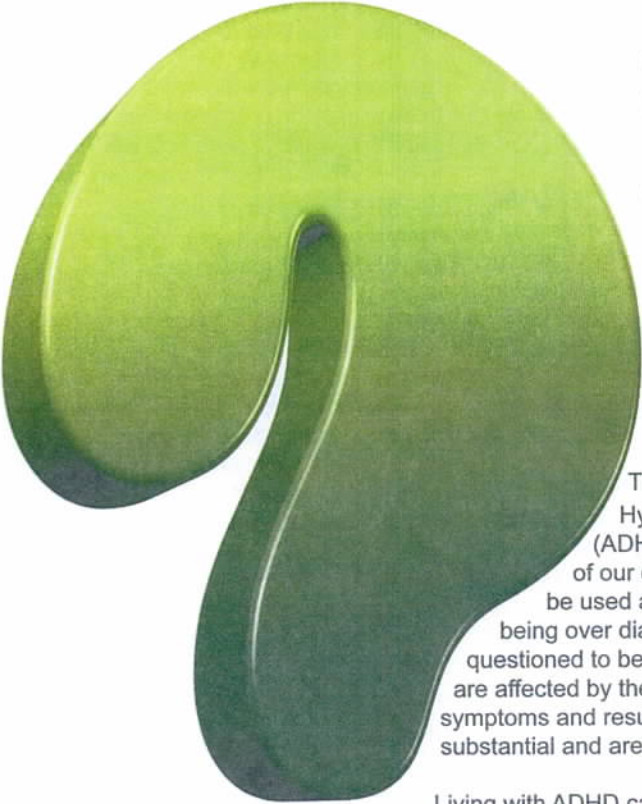


It's JUST ADD/ADED... Really?

It's JUST?

The Lifelong Struggles if Not Managed in Childhood

By Dr. Anthony Tanona



The term Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has become a part of our collective jargon. It can be used as slang, is perceived as being over diagnosed, and at times questioned to be real. For those who are affected by the disorder, however, the symptoms and resulting impact can be substantial and are very real.

Living with ADHD can affect an individual's time management, productivity, organizational skills, and ability to prioritize. It can have a profound impact on marriages, jobs, and social relationships. Adults with ADHD are more likely to be unemployed, have problems keeping friends, and have trouble saving money and paying bills.

In work and academic settings, individuals with ADHD may struggle to organize complex projects and papers, have difficulty completing tasks and tests in a timely manner, strain to concentrate on what others are saying, and have difficulty consolidating thoughts during presentations or conversations.

In the home environment and social situations, people with ADHD may forget important dates or events, struggle to implement and maintain daily structure, display a poor ability to prioritize, miss important aspects of conversations or forget important details, or make financial mistakes. Difficulties with focus and impulsivity can also impact motor vehicle safety.

In addition to some of the more immediate

and symptom-based difficulties associated with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, untreated or unmanaged ADHD in childhood can cause significant ancillary problems.

Feelings of failure, poor school/work performance, or difficulty managing social relationships can lead to depression. Lowered self-esteem, impulsivity, or feelings of failure can trigger the use of substances to cope with perceived inadequacies. Frequent worry about missed deadlines, lack of employment, or a strained relationship can cause worry and anxiety. Additionally, frequent parental and/or caregiver rejection due to hyperactive and impulsive behavior can lead to oppositional and conduct-type difficulties, and eventually antisocial type behaviors in adulthood.

Many adults are unaware of the reasons for their difficulties and several conditions can co-occur with ADHD such as depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety disorder, learning disabilities, and substance abuse. Many of these share key symptoms, however, and it is important to obtain a proper diagnosis to inform and guide treatment. For example, a core component of Major Depressive Disorder and Generalized Anxiety Disorder involves poor concentration, people diagnosed with Bipolar Disorder may act impulsively, and an individual with a Learning Disorder may struggle to focus on a difficult subject.

Though a diagnosis can have stigmatizing effects, it can also create understanding and treatment options. What are the alternatives to dealing with vague and misunderstood characteristics feeling a constant barrage of

The cost of ADD/ADHD treatment per year is between
\$12,000- \$17,500
Data by CDC, 2005

Just as in other neurological disorders, early intervention is key to success and treatment cost reduction

work, academic and social difficulties? Being properly diagnosed can be the first step in beginning to address these struggles and move forward. It can provide a sense of relief, an understanding of what is going on, and an opportunity to begin to treat your condition and move forward.

Although no "cure" has been found for ADHD, some treatment and coping options to consider can include:

- Educating yourself on the disorder, ways can impact you, and treatment options
- Attending support groups, ie: Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)
- Introducing occupational therapy as a part of the weekly routine to address sensory needs, fine motor skills and promote attention through movement activities
- Consulting with a speech/language pathologist if picky eating or food aversions exist
- Implementing the special diet(s) used for autism spectrum disorders
- Consulting with a dietician and specialized diet coach to design and implement a dietary regimen
- Consulting with a DAN! (Defeat Autism Now) practitioner to request detailed

bio-chemistry medical screening. Implement a bio-medical / nutrient therapy based on results. A typical pediatrician will not be able to assess the bio-medical approach

- Meeting with a psychiatrist to determine if medication management could be beneficial
- Scheduling an appointment with a therapist or life coach to create strategies
- Maintaining a schedule throughout the day to improve adherence to routines
- Utilizing a planner, organizer / scheduler
- Learning and implementing relaxation techniques such as progressive muscle relaxation, deep breathing, yoga, or listening to music
- Exercising for at least 30 minutes or participating in an active sport daily

ADD/ADHD is a serious condition that warrants proper diagnosis and treatment. Without the appropriate 'attention' it can result in a multitude of difficulties and can potentially lead to the development of other disorders.

It's Not JUST ADD, ADHD. It's real and with the multiple interventions available through the means of technology and therapy, individuals with ADHD can lead highly productive and fulfilling lives. Countless

successful celebrities, athletes, business leaders, politicians, and everyday Joes have been diagnosed with ADHD. To name a few, Michael Phelps, winner of 16 Olympic Medals, Ty Pennington from the TV show, "Extreme Makeover, Home Edition", and Woody Harrelson from the TV show "Cheers" all revealed that they have been diagnosed with ADHD. In addition, Thomas Edison reportedly had a hard time concentrating during school and was home schooled by his mother.

Being diagnosed with ADHD does not have to be stigmatizing; instead it can be the answer to numerous questions and a base from which to launch into a realm of treatment and enhancement options.

Dr. Anthony W. Tanona is a Licensed Psychologist and an Executive Director of Delta Psychological Group in Aventura, Florida. He specializes in the assessment and treatment of children, adolescents, and adults, specifically those with ADHD and other behavioral disorders, Learning Disabilities, depression, and anxiety. He completes Psychological Evaluations to test for ADHD, Learning Difficulties, and gifted placement. Dr. Tanona can be contacted at (305) 933-5733 or at DrTanona@yahoo.com.



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