



ADHD, Now what? Step 2: Understanding ADHD



ADHD IS AWESOME: CULTIVATING THE ASSETS OF ADHD

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Before doing anything else, it is critical that you understand ADHD and how it affects your child. With knowledge, you can better help your child.

Rather than go through all the tricky medical pieces, my aim in this issue is to help you understand the key pieces of ADHD. Obviously there is a lot to know, but this will cover important basics critical for parents and teachers to understand.

Three Types

There are three types of ADHD: those that are most just hyperactive (e.g., move constantly, talk nonstop, have trouble sitting at meals); those just have difficulties with attention (e.g., seem like they don't listen, are bored easily, has trouble finishing things) and avoiding distraction; and those

who are both hyperactive and inattentive.

They CAN Pay Attention...

...when they are interested. The name "Attention Deficit" confuses many parents because they say that their child can easily spend hours playing video games or doing anything they love.



So yes, the name is misleading because it's not really an attention deficit. They can attend, but perhaps not to the things we want or need them to be paying attention too. That's where the difficulties lie.

Developmental Delay

ADHD delays the development of the front part of the brain; the area that controls pretty much everything kids are expected to do day in and day out.

Remembering rules, thinking about their behaviours, controlling their emotions, remembering where they put their school agenda, thinking about what they want to write, keeping their room clean, listening to the teacher, how to play nice with others, and finding the motivation to do homework.

Kids with ADHD not only have difficulties with these activities; they also often seem much younger than other kids their age. Many parents tell me their younger child can get ready on their own in the morning, whereas their child with ADHD can't. They also lose their cool easier and seem socially

immature. Makes sense; that part of their brain is not working the same and they need to work harder to control themselves than other kids their age.

Rest assured: ADHD has nothing to do with bad parenting. And, it has nothing to do with your child being lazy either.

Lifelong

ADHD is considered a lifelong condition: Most kids with ADHD also have ADHD as adults. Hyperactive behaviours tend to diminish with age, but they will likely still have difficulties with attention, organization, and time management (and even impulsivity).

Disorder of Performance

ADHD should be thought of as a disorder of performance. These *know* they shouldn't yell, kick, or slam the doors. They *know* they should do their chores and homework before they watch TV. And yes, they do *know* all the things they need to do to get ready for school in the morning. Knowing what to do is all taken care of in the back part of the brain.

The problem is ADHD affects the *front* part of the brain; the part of the brain that takes care of the *doing*. Being able to *do* what they know they need to do when they need to actually do it.

Clash of Time Zones

The other thing the front part of the brain does is help keep track of time. Kids with ADHD have a real hard time knowing how long 5 minutes is because they live in the

NOW. The only other time they are aware of is *NOT NOW*.



So, when you tell them they have 5 minutes to finish getting ready before they have to catch the bus, well, that's *NOT NOW*, so they keep doing what they are doing. And not what they should be doing. But, when that 5 minutes is up and you yell at your child in exasperation, she gets to it. Because now it's *NOW* and time to get ready.

Difficulty Controlling Themselves



Kids with ADHD have difficulty controlling their emotions and behaviours over long periods of time. Even if you tell them if they are good all day at school they get to go to their favourite place in the whole world at the end of the day, they have difficulties keeping it together that long.

The problem is that, oftentimes, something else happens in the moment, whether it is the chance to push Billy's head in the fountain when he is drinking, blurting out the answer or class, or pushing a kid who took the ball he was

playing with, that make kids temporarily forget their goal to behave. As soon as they act, it's too late to take it back.

Kids with ADHD are drawn to immediate impulses and rewards in the *NOW*, temporarily forgetting about the future reward. This makes it difficult for kids to maintain accountability for their actions on their own; and to learn from their mistakes (which is really frustrating for parents!).

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More than just ADHD!

Most kids with ADHD also have underlying difficulties, which you must be aware of. Common related conditions include learning disabilities, social communication difficulties, behavior issues, and difficulties regulating their emotions. Understanding your child's needs in all areas is critical to ensure he or she gets the appropriate support.

ADHD is AWESOME!!!

Above all, it is important for you to remember that ADHD is a great asset when managed properly. While it may seem hard in the early years, ADHD can be an essential ingredient to your child's lifelong success. Great energy, great loyalty, great ideas... there's lots of greatness to come. We just need to allow these kids to shine!

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Feel free to contact Caroline if you have any questions related to this article, or other related issues!

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Making Happy Happen

One Family at a Time