

The Impact of ADHD upon Marriage - Gender Research
By Kathleen G. Nadeau

Men report more negative feelings than women about marriage to a spouse with ADHD.

Dr. Arthur Robin and Eleanor Payson have recently published preliminary results of their research into the impact of ADHD upon the marital relationships. They created the "Marital Impact Checklist" consisting of 34 statements of potentially problematic behaviours that might be exhibited by a spouse with ADHD. Some examples of items include:

- Doesn't respond when spoken to
- Poor task completion
- Pays bills late
- Poor time management
- Can't get things done unless there's an absolute deadline
- Leaves a mess
- Doesn't remember being told things
- Takes out frustrations on spouse

Their research involved couples where either the wife, husband had ADHD. Each ADHD partner was asked to rate his or her own behaviour in three ways:

1. Does this behaviour occur in your marriage?
2. If this behaviour does occur, how unimportant, unloved, ignored does it makes the non-ADHD spouse feel?
3. If this behaviour occurs, how negatively does it impact the marriage on a scale from 1-5?

Dr. Robbins and Ms. Payson studied 80 couples - because many were recruited through *ADDvance Magazine*, in over half of the couples (56%) the wife was the spouse with ADHD.

When sex comparisons were made, some interesting results were reported. There were no significant differences in *self-ratings* between male and female ADHD spouses, however there were large differences in *spouse ratings* by the non-ADHD spouse, with husbands of ADHD wives reporting a much greater negative impact than wives of ADHD husbands. Robins and Payson interpret this finding to suggest that "sex role issues contribute far more to the level of

dissatisfaction in a marriage when the female partner has ADHD than when the male partner has ADHD." In other words, non-ADHD husbands were much less tolerant of their wives' ADHD patterns in comparison to wives of ADHD husbands. The researchers commented that their findings seem to support Sari Solden's writings about women with ADHD in which she suggests that ADHD impedes women, much more than men, in fulfilling their sex role expectations in modern Western society.

For the full article, readers may refer to:

Robbins, A. & Payson, E. The Impact of ADHD on Marriage. *ADHD Report*, Volume 10, #3, 9-11, 14.