

Life Spent Out of Focus

According to Dr Paul Wender (Utah) the following are the main traits display by adults with attention deficits. Everyone with a formal diagnosis of the problem has the first two and at least two of the others.

RESTLESSNESS:

- Inability to relax or settle down into a focused activity, like reading.

DISTRACTIBILITY:

- Inability to keep the mind on a conversation or task, forgetfulness, with the mind somewhere else.

MOOD SWINGS:

- Shifting from depression (feeling down, bored, discontented) to mild elation and excitement.

DISORGANISATION:

- Inability to finish tasks at work, home or school, switching from task to task.

HOT TEMPER:

- Short fuse and explosive outbursts, being easily provoked and constantly irritable; hampers relationships with spouse, family, bosses and friends.

IMPULSIVITY:

- Making decisions with little reflection or too little information; recklessness; abruptly beginning and ending relationships.

LOW TOLERANCE OF STRESS:

- Being easily hassled; overreacting to ordinary stress so that daily life seems a constant crisis.

Treatment

There are a number of goals in the treatment of ADHD in adults. The first, and perhaps most important aspect of a treatment plan is education. Adults with ADHD must become expert in their disorder if they are to develop the compensatory strategies necessary for them to adapt to many life situations that arise from their disability.

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Following education, the second component of a comprehensive treatment program is therapy. Various types of therapy should be available depending on the needs of a particular individual. Therapy, which is more educational in nature, should be available to family members and even close friends of the ADHD adult. The goal of this approach is to help ADHD adults maintain a support network by sensitising those individuals with whom the ADHD individual interacts the most.

Understanding that the person with ADHD does not intentionally or after mature consideration willfully lose things, overact emotionally or make impulsive decisions reduces a significant amount of the conflict often characteristic of these relationships. Individual therapy can be helpful when emotional problems arise as a secondary reaction to ADHD.

Marriage and family therapy may be necessary when the ADHD individual's relationship with his or her spouse and/or children has been seriously disrupted by his or her behaviour. Because of a strong genetic factor, many ADHD adults have children who are also ADHD. For some, parenting these children elicits their worst and best characteristics. They can be very playful, fun loving, spontaneous parents; however, they can also discipline inconsistently over over-react to minor disruptions and fail to establish a household which provides the necessary structure and organisation necessary for child rearing.

Family therapy can help the ADHD parent gain insight regarding the Impact his or her behaviour is having on his or her children as well as his or her spouse. Many ADHD adults require assistance with educational and vocational planning. This frequently involves helping them to achieve a realistic perspective on educational and career choices. Post secondary education intervention can require consulting with schools, recommending academic accommodations and preparing the ADHD student to become his/her own self-advocate.

Treatment of the ADHD adult can also involve medication. The medications that are used with adults are the same medications that are used with children. The most common types include stimulant medications, such as Ritalin, Dexamphetamine, and Cylert as well as anti-depressants such as Tofranil, Norpramine and Wellbutrin. It has been shown that 60-80% of ADHD adults benefit from these medications. Some will need it for a period of time to help them perform more efficiently in school or at work. Others will need to use medication on a long-term basis in order to function more competently in all aspects of their life. When using medication, it is important to understand the specific behaviours being targeted for change. Reducing impulsivity and increasing attention and/or organisation are the type of behaviour which can be improved with medication. Other difficulties that coexist with ADHD, such as depression and anxiety, can also be ADHD addressed with other medications.