

Practical Parenting

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WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADD: Part I

(Note: Viewers interested in this topic should also view the two videos
WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADD, Part 2 and
WHAT EVERY TEACHER SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ADD)

PROGRAM SUMMARY

This program presents important facts about the definition, characteristics, and history of the condition known as ADD and ADHD. Viewers are offered several tips about what to look for if ADD/ADHD is suspected. Even more importantly, parents and teachers are presented with a few key steps to take to understand and assist children with ADD/ADHD.

MAJOR MESSAGE

Persons with ADD exhibit an observable set of disabling symptoms that impact their ability to handle schooling effectively. The symptoms are usually present before age 7. The symptoms are comprised of several undesirable behaviors, most of which interfere with the child's ability to work at various normal activities steadily, consistently, and regularly. The condition is termed a **"syndrome" (not a "disease")**.

ADD usually affects the child's behavior at home, school, and elsewhere, though on occasion some element of the situations that the child encounters in various settings results in behavior being either much better than usual, or much worse. Diagnosing this disability is very difficult, but a team of trained adults familiar with the symptoms who observe the child over a reasonable period of time can ascertain, with reasonable conviction, whether or not the child has the **syndrome**. **Absolute** proof of the condition can only be determined through highly sophisticated tests by highly trained medical personnel. Only in exceptional situations would such costly and daunting tests be viewed as options in diagnosing ADD in youngsters.

Sometimes, by age 12 or somewhat later, some ADD children show much improvement in all or many of the symptoms that were present initially.

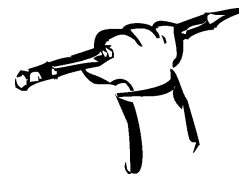
Often, ADD children are gifted in many ways, especially in artistic and creative abilities.

Many individuals, even those who improve very little before the end of their school days, go on to make fairly-effective accommodations to adult life.

KEY POINTS

- "ADD/ADHD" is not something newly discovered in the last couple of decades, though the **terms** "ADD/ADHD" evolved only around the 1970's - 80's.
- Even before the 1900's, a few physicians in France and elsewhere were detailing the ADD behaviors as "a unique **'cluster'** of behaviors that **some** children exhibited."
- Before 1970 or 80, such a cluster of behaviors might be termed a "brain dysfunction" or a "brain deficit;" some attributed the behaviors to "brain injury." Sometimes teachers called certain of the behaviors "day dreaming."
- The condition is presently viewed as a "syndrome," which means a **cluster** of **symptoms** (in this case, the "symptoms" are "behaviors" that the person displays frequently).
- Most of the symptoms that characterize ADD are disruptive to consistent, steady listening and to doing assigned tasks, and staying "on target" (or "staying focused").
- By 1992, through studies of the brain with evolving technologies, it was determined that ADD related to decreased blood flow in the cortex (front of the brain) and possible limits in the amount of dopamine flowing to neurotransmitters: these findings were confirmed through the use of "MRI's" (magnetic resonance imaging) and other clinical tests.

The school child with ADD is neither "uninterested" nor "unmotivated": the child merely is in need of constant, repeated **stimulus** to get and stay interested and motivated enough to continue pursuing an assigned task. It's exceptionally easy for this child to lose focus, or become distracted.



TURN OVER →

BEFORE VIEWING

This program contains a list of **fourteen** behaviors that are often seen in children with ADD. The list will appear on the screen. As the items are read, try to jot down at least half of them.

REFLECTIONS

Think about the characteristics of ADD. Have you known anyone who has one or more of these characteristics? Talk with a friend or a group about anyone you've known who has some of these characteristics. After some discussion, try to answer this question: "Of the persons mentioned, did some probably have 'ADD'? Which one(s), (if any)?"



Parents and teachers should suspect that a child has ADD if as many as eight of the following behaviors are often observed and have been present before the age of 7:

- (1) Excessively fidgets or squirms, moving hands, feet, or both.
- (2) Difficulty remaining in seat, especially in a structured setting.
- (3) Easily distracted.
- (4) Difficulty being patient while in line, or waiting a turn for games or activities.
- (5) Difficulty listening to or following instructions.
- (6) Blurts out answers to questions frequently.
- (7) Unable to sustain attention in homework, play, or activities.
- (8) Shifts from one uncompleted activity to another.
- (9) Difficulty in playing quietly.
- (10) Often talks excessively.
- (11) Often interrupts others.
- (12) Doesn't appear to listen to what is being said.
- (13) Often loses things, especially items needed for school tasks, such as pencils, notebooks, etc.
- (14) Often engages in unsafe activities without regard to the consequences.

If ADD is suspected, the parent or teacher should contact a knowledgeable person - a pediatrician, a school counselor, a Special Education teacher or specialist. Before doing so, a parent or teacher would do well to keep a **daily log** of the child's **behaviors** over a few days or weeks; the **items should describe exactly what the occasion was and what the child did.**

Remember that ADD children suffer a lot because their life is filled with too many negative reactions to their behavior - either at home, at school, or at both places. Yet many have surprising insights and some wonderful capabilities.

If ADD is diagnosed, both parents and teachers should learn and use techniques that assist the child to adjust to learning, developing, and living as successfully as possible. With sufficient and suitable help, an ADD child can bloom, as does a house-plant when "Vigoro" is added!

ADD

