

ADHD Across the Lifespan

e

Dr. David J. Carey
www.davidjcarey.com

Myths and Realities of Adult ADHD



Myth One

- ADHD is a lack of willpower. People with ADHD focus on what they want. They don't apply themselves.

Myth Two

- Everyone has the symptoms of ADHD. If you are smart enough you can overcome them.

Myth Three

- You can't have ADHD and have another condition. It's one or the other.

Myth Four

- You have to be diagnosed with ADHD as a child in order to really have it as an adult.

The Truth

□ ADHD is:

- Neurobiological
- 5% of population
- Life-long
- Chronic impairment
 - Occupational
 - Relationships
 - Family
 - Community

Adult ADHD symptoms

1. Extreme concentration difficulty (A)
2. Extreme organisational skills difficulty (B)
 - A. *“zoning out” of conversations, finishing tasks, several tasks going at once but unfinished, forgetful, distracted*
 - B. *Keeping home chores organised, work duties uncompleted, procrastination, difficulty estimating time needed for tasks, losing things*

ADHD Symptoms (cont.)

- Hyperactivity-differs from childhood condition
- Different in adults:
 - Restless
 - Fidgety
 - Easily bored
 - Irritated
 - Mood swings
 - Can't sit and relax, nervous energy

ADHD Symptoms (cont.)

□ Impulsivity:

Difficulty controlling impulses

- Making sudden decisions on a whim
- Impulse buying/shopping
- Trouble listening to others

Difficulty relating to others

following conversations

interrupting

saying things you regret later

responding to questions before they are fully asked

Adult ADHD

Prevalence is unknown

Diagnostic criteria not suitable for adults

Presence of co-morbid disorders complicates diagnosis

Sub-Types of Adult ADHD

1. Normal functioning despite childhood ADHD

2. Significant problems with ADHD

work

interpersonal relations

anxiety

emotional lability

self-esteem

3. Serious antisocial/psychiatric problems

One Major Problematic Factor

- Adults with ADHD, undiagnosed have lived their entire life with ADHD.
- For them it is “normal”
- They have no reason to believe there is anything wrong with them
- But at the same time they suffer and are confused

Effects of Adult ADHD

□ *If left untreated:*

□ **Health:**

□ binge eating, compulsive eating, cycle of drug/alcohol abuse, forgetting medications, keeping medical appointments

Effects of Adult ADHD

□ **Work and Finances**

- Concentrating, completing tasks, listening, relating to others, managing finances, struggling to pay bills, losing important paperwork, missing deadlines, indebtedness due to impulsive spending

Effects of Adult ADHD

□ Relationships

- Wondering why others are “nagging” you to tidy up, get things done, or “take care of business”, hurt loved ones by being short-tempered, cross, irritable, blurting out hurtful things, impatience with the children, quick to flare up, not getting along with supervisors at work, quitting jobs impulsively

Effects of Adult ADHD

Education, Learning and Training

- Underachievement
- Low exam results
- Gap in knowledge
- Academic failure
- Early school leaving
- Embarrassment
- Bullying

Effects of Adult ADHD

☐ **Misc. Effects**

- ☐ Increased road traffic citations/accidents in adolescents
- ☐ Increased road traffic citations/accidents in adults
 - Teens 4x more likely to have an accident
- ☐ Increased incidence of industrial accidents

Psychological Effects

- Low self-esteem
- Low self-confidence
- Diminished sense of self-efficacy
- Sense of shame and guilt
- Task avoidance
- Social withdrawal

Co-Morbidity in Adult ADHD

- Depression
- Substance abuse
- Underemployment
- Anxiety disorders
- Bi-polar disorder
- Specific learning disabilities (dyslexia)
- Epilepsy

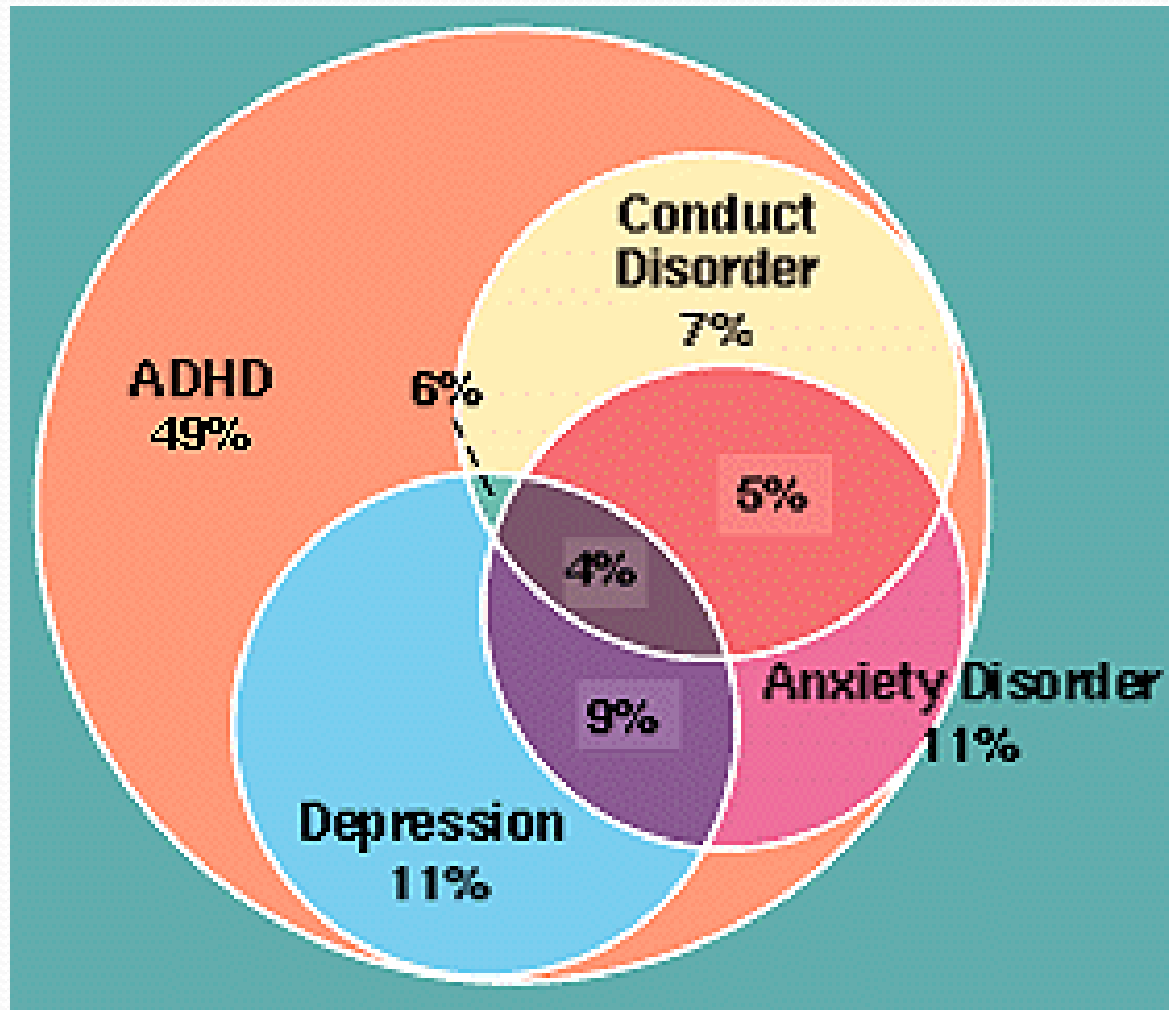


Illustration from Joseph Biederman and Stephen Faraone, Harvard Mahoney Neuroscience Institute Letter, Winter 1996 Volume 5 Number 1



ADHD in adults is not a benign condition

- It can ruin relationships
- It can devastate educational attainment
- It can destroy job opportunities
- It can lead to serious mental health problems
- It can lead to a life of chronic strife and unhappiness



Other problems often occur

What can precipitate additional problems?



Precipitation Factors in Problem Development

Acute life stresses

Illness or injury

Child abuse

Bullying

Births or bereavements

Lifecycle transitions

Changing schools

Loss of peer friendships

Separation or divorce

Parental unemployment

Moving house

Financial difficulties

Influences on Problem Development

Biological Factors

genetic

prenatal

perinatal

early insults, injuries/illnesses

Psychological Factors

low intelligence

difficulty temperament

low self-esteem

external locus of control

Influences on Problem Development: Contextual Predisposing Factors

Parent-child Factors in Early Life

- attachment problems
- lack of intellectual stimulation
- permissive parenting
- neglectful parenting
- inconsistent parental discipline

Exposure to Family Problems in Early Life

- parental psychological problems
- parental alcohol/substance abuse
- marital discord/violence
- family disorganisation
- deviant siblings



Influences on Problem Development-Contextual Predisposing (cont.)

Stresses in Early Life

bereavements

separations

child abuse

social disadvantage

institutional upbringing



Factors That Maintain a Problem



Personal Maintaining Factors in Adult ADHD

Biological Factors

dysregulation of various biological systems

Psychological Factors

low self-efficacy

dysfunctional attributional style

negative cognitive distortions

immature defence mechanisms

dysfunctional coping strategies

Contextual Maintaining Factors in Adult ADHD

Social Network Factors

poor social support network

high family stress

unsuitable educational placement

deviant peer-group membership

social disadvantage

high crime rate

few employment opportunities

media violence

Contextual Maintaining Factors in Adult ADHD (cont.)

Treatment System Factors

- family deny problem
- family ambivalent about resolving problem
- family never coped with problem before
- lack of co-ordination among providers

Family System Factors

- inadvertent reinforcement of problem
- insecure parent-child attachment
- coercive interaction/authoritarian parenting
- over involved interaction/permissive parenting
- disengaged interaction/neglectful parenting
- inconsistent discipline
- confused communication patterns
- triangulation
- chaotic family organisation
- father/mother absence

Contextual Maintaining Factors in Adult ADHD (cont.)

Parental Factors

- parents with similar problem
- parental psychological problems/criminality
- inaccurate expectations about child development
- insecure internal working models for relationships
- low parental self-esteem
- parental external locus of control
- low parental self-efficacy
- depressive/negative attributional style
- cognitive distortions
- immature defence mechanisms
- dysfunctional coping styles



Factors That Protect Against Problem Development

Personal Protective Factors in Adult ADHD

Biological Factors

- good physical health
- proper nutrition
- ample exercise

Psychological Factors

- high IQ
- easy temperament
- high self-esteem
- internal locus of control#
- high self-efficacy
- optimistic attributional style
- mature defence mechanisms
- functional coping strategies

Contextual protective Factors in Adult ADHD Problem Development

Treatment System Factors

family accepts problem

family committed to resolving problem

family coped successfully with problem previously

family acceptance of formulation and treatment plans

good co-ordination among treatment professionals

Family System Factors

secure parent-child attachment

authoritative parenting

clear family communication

flexible family organisation

father involvement

high marital satisfaction

Contextual Protective Factors in Adult ADHD (cont.)

Parental Factors

- good parental adjustment
- accurate expectations about child development
- parental internal locus of control
- high parental self-efficacy
- high parental self-esteem
- secure internal working models for relationships
- optimistic attributional style
- mature defence mechanisms
- functional coping strategies

Social Network Factors

- good social support network
- low family stress
- positive educational placement
- peer support
- high socio-economic status

Can ADHD be Positive?

A high energy level / hyperactivity

Being able to hyperfocus / unable to change focus

Orientated to action / impatient

Persistent / stubborn, obsessive

Daring / drawn to high risk

Entertaining / class clown

ADHD and Creativity

Cramond, B. 1995 writes that profound creativity is characterised by the following traits:

- Inattention
- Daydreaming
- Inability to complete projects
- Hyperactivity
- Mood Swings
- Hypersensitivity to Stimulation
- Difficult Temperament
- Sensation Seeking
- Enthusiasm and Playfulness
- Deficient Social Skills

The Coincidence of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder and Creativity

Bonnie Cramond, Ph.D., The University of Georgia, March 1995
<http://www.borntoexplore.org/adhd.htm>

The Good News

- It is a highly treatable and manageable condition

- Help is readily available in Ireland
private vs. public

- www.hadd.ie

- www.davidjcarey.com

THE
Essential Guide
TO
Special Education
IN
Ireland



Dr. David J. Carey