

Coping with ADHD

By Patrick Johnson, Educational Services Development Specialist, Working Solutions. © 2000 Working Solutions All rights reserved. Last reviewed: December 2003.

Attention-deficit and attention-deficit hyperactivity disorders affect individuals for life. The success in life attained by people with these disorders is not determined by the fact that they have the condition, but rather by how they cope with the condition. Therefore, it is critical that children are diagnosed and taught coping skills as early as possible.

Studies have found that through proper medication and behavioral treatment, about 95% of those affected by ADD/ADHD can lead fairly normal lives. This statistic is reason for hope, as is the fact that the ADD/ADHD Online Newsletter says that Alexander Graham Bell, Albert Einstein, Nelson Rockefeller and President John F. Kennedy are among the successful people who are believed to have successfully coped with ADD/ADHD. Coping is possible with work.

Education and ADD/ADHD -

It is believed that many children who grow up with ADD/ADHD have a low self-image. This is due to the fact that while these children are usually very bright, they typically have a difficult time in school. Some may know the story of how Albert Einstein failed a high school math class, but later became one of the world's leading scientists. Finding a school that is academically and socially supportive of individuals with ADD/ADHD (and their families) is key to enabling learning.

Smaller classrooms, one-on-one teaching and the use of special tools or teaching methods are some of the ways schools are starting to assist children affected by ADD/ADHD. Under federal legislation, students with ADD/ADHD can be labeled "health impaired," enabling their schools to obtain increased specialized education funding. Students affected by ADD/ADHD do best with smaller increments of work in more frequently rotated subjects. This helps keep their attention, and enables them to do about the same amount of work as their peers.

A major challenge for educators of students with ADD/ADHD is the behavior of those with the disorders. These students, often possessing surplus energy and a narrow focus, can see the educational system as unfair. They're unable to pay attention to a subject like math for 30 minutes, so they act out. This reaction can lead to discipline if the teacher is unaware of the student's disorder. Fidgeting, squirming, tapping, doodling, humming, and chewing are all common behaviors in students affected by ADD/ADHD, and if teachers are unwilling or unable to properly accommodate these, trouble can ensue.

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Unthreatening and properly supervised environments are the best educational settings for ADD/ADHD. Smaller classrooms and social skill focus groups provide bridges by which children with ADD/ADHD can learn successful social interaction skills. Another way educational systems are better helping these students is by first focusing on their strengths and then seeking to address their deficiencies.

Transitioning to Adulthood -

By the time they reach adolescence, many children affected by ADD/ADHD put in place their own unique ways of viewing and dealing with the world in order to cope with their condition. Many times, these perspectives can eventually transform these children into adolescents or teens who are either domineering or who have low self-esteem. Learning how to live with their condition positively, through an understanding of their illness and proper decision-making, can help them develop into successful adults.

Dealing with Authority -

Because of their childhood difficulties with teachers, principals and other community members, many people with ADD/ADHD have problems with authority figures in general. As a result, many of them find greater contentedness by going their own way—being their own bosses carries less risk of failure than does being supervised. One exception to this rule is entry into the military. People with these disorders often do very well in a military setting, where rules are clear and it's difficult to be "fired."

Working to Their Strengths -

Situations or tasks that are physically or mentally stimulating are natural strengths for the person with ADD/ADHD. Abilities in the areas of painting, drawing, sports and physical labor can be developed into well paying and respected jobs. In fact, numerous people with ADD/ADHD have gone on to be very successful writers, athletes and politicians.

Setting Their Own Schedule -

People who face ADD/ADHD maximize productivity when they set their own work schedules. Working in a piecemeal fashion is usually more acceptable to them than working the standard 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Inability to follow a work schedule is often a challenge for people with attention disorders, and these individuals can face scrutiny from coworkers for inability to stick to a schedule. When persons with ADD/ADHD have the freedom to set their own schedule, they strengthen their confidence and self-discipline.

Dealing with Impulsiveness -

Most individuals with ADD/ADHD frequently go against their better judgment and act on their impulses. Oftentimes this results in the individual running from challenging environments or situations. This can sometimes be a valuable coping tool, but more frequently is counterproductive. An individual with ADD/ADHD who constantly flees difficult situations can strain family relationships, impair friendships and threaten their employment stability. Assisting these individuals in building support systems and teaching them to take short time-outs are ways to help them cope with their feelings of anxiety or inadequacy, and face difficult situations.

Conclusion

Living successfully with ADD/ADHD is challenging but possible. If unchecked, ADD/ADHD can be a disability, but if the person with the disorder learns to understand and cope with their condition, and they have support from loved ones in doing so, they can make considerable contributions to society. With roughly one in every 20 students dealing with ADD/ADHD, becoming able to identify and contend with this condition is paramount for parents and educators alike.

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