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The ADD Child: Challenging Parents, Teachers and Friends

By Jeanne Bauer

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The ADD child exhibits a series of behaviors that are common in most children. Most children misbehave, act silly and day dream. So what, then, is the difference? The child with Attention Deficit Disorder exhibits these behaviors in a constant and extreme manner, often interfering with their academic, social and family interactions.

Here are the variety of ways that a child may exhibit ADD behaviors:

Inattention: The most visible and well-known behavior of a child with attention deficit issues is an inability to maintain attention and focus over an extended period of time. This behavior shows up in a variety of situations, such as forgetting or confusing instructions that were just given, being inattentive when involved in a conversation, growing bored of activities within moments, appearing to be in a daze or day dream, and being unable to complete tasks.

Hyperattention: Paradoxically, the same ADD child who cannot stay focused enough to finish many common tasks will have no problem whatsoever in focusing on a video game or TV show for hours. This ability to hyper-focus on chosen activities is very common in the child with Attention Deficit Disorder. This behavior is possible only because the child pursues the desirable activity through a heightened level of excitement which is a controlled form of hyperactivity.

Distractibility: An ADD child can be easily distracted from most activities by any form of stimulus in the environment (movement, color, sound), as well as by their own scattered, fast-moving thoughts. This results in half-finished or poorly completed tasks, constant minor non-compliances with known rules, zig-zagging from one activity to another, and the inability for the child to do well in group situations (such as school) where compliance with the rules is important.

Impulsivity: An ADD child will often blurt out information in inappropriate ways and make poor decisions relative to their actions. This child may risk his or her own safety without a second thought, running into

the street, climbing to the top of a tree or rock formation, or jumping or diving into a pool without checking the depth. The child with ADD acts on impulse rather than through logic or problem-solving. Impulsivity in many ADD children can also be characterized by impatience or temperamental (often oppositional) behavior since the ADD child often feels a driving need for something (anything!) to happen immediately.

Hyperactivity: Of all the characteristics of an ADD child, the behavior that is most difficult for those around the child to accept is the presence of hyperactivity. The child with hyperactivity is always in motion — touching, searching, pushing, jumping, running, tapping, and squabbling with friends and siblings. The hyperactive ADD child seems to need a high level of stimulation at all times in order to feel OK. Hyperactivity will also be seen in the form of a child who talks incessantly, clowns around all of the time, and finds every other form of trouble that a parent can name.

Insatiability: The ADD child has an insatiable need for attention to be brought onto himself. While all children thrive on adult attention, focus and concern, the child with ADD can never seem to get enough. They act out, talk incessantly, joke around, monopolize conversations, demand the teacher's constant involvement, show off to friends, and badger incessantly until they get their way.

Clumsiness and Poor Coordination: Many ADD children exhibit problems with fine motor control. This can be seen in poor handwriting and in difficulty performing other routine tasks such as buttoning buttons or tying shoelaces. When combined with the child's inability to plan or organize a flow of activities, the resulting outcome (written paper, self-dressing, etc.) may appear chaotic and disorganized. Many ADD children also exhibit gross motor control clumsiness due to poor motor planning cognitive skills or other co-existing weaknesses in areas such as balance, depth-perception or eye-hand coordination.

Disorganization: The ADD child is a study in disorganization! Whether it is the state of the child's room, the organization of a term paper, the set up of the child's school supplies and workspace, grooming, dressing and hygiene skills, or any other aspect of the child's life, the most probable outcome will be a disorganized mess. This results from the ADD child's impulsivity (jumping at any solution), distractibility (stopping in the middle of any activity), hyperactivity (pulling out and tearing apart everything in sight), and inattention (they lose interest anyway!).

Mood Swings: With an ADD child, everything is always at extremes, and their range of emotions is no different. In some cases, they can be extremely domineering and controlling as they seek to gain attention for themselves. In other cases, they can be unreachable, and no amount of discipline or parental intervention seems to have an effect. When an child with ADD is "stuck" in the emotions of the moment, there seems to be no way for reasonable discussions to bypass the emotional whirlwind in progress. ADD children can be described as oppositional, stubborn, overly-dramatic, flighty, ecstatically happy or excessively sensitive, just to name a few of the extremes experienced by ADD children.

Poor Social Skills: Based on all of the issues discussed so far, it's not surprising that ADD children don't fare well with peer relationships. They speak and act impulsively, show off and dominate conversations

or class time, clown around at inappropriate times, miss subtle social cues, may be physically clumsy and awkward, and often irritate and annoy their peers in a thousand daily ways.

As a result of the symptoms and behaviors just described, the ADD child encounters all too many difficulties in their young lives. True ADD should not be considered a "phase" that will be outgrown. Rather, parents and educators should seek all of the education and knowledge they can find to help these kids flourish and succeed throughout the elementary school years.

Jeanne Bauer is the author of the ADD to C3 Kids E-Booklets, providing a fast, natural and healthy approach to ADD/ADHD. Find more information at

and

How ADD Affects Families

By Sarah K. Jenkins

Typically, there is a lot of blame and frustration associated with Attention Deficit Disorder. Depending on how long the problem has gone before being diagnosed, there may be serious mental and emotional scars as family members and the child dealt with issues associated with ADD. This disorder is not only difficult for parents, but also the child with ADD and other siblings in the family.

The obvious victim of ADD is the child it affects. Being accustomed to negativity, these children usually suffer from very low self-esteem. Although they want to behave well, they have impulsive actions that typically result in constant punishment. Parents and teachers of an ADD child often are not aware or do not accept that the child suffers from a disorder and they are not always acting on a conscience level. The child, after being reprimanded and not being able to control their actions, is left feeling as though they will never be adequate or meet everyone else's expectations.

The parents of an ADD child suffer from incredible frustration and doubt of their parenting skills. Often ridiculed by teachers, family members, and other acquaintances, they are often viewed as being the cause of their child's behavior, as though lack of discipline is the root cause of their child's actions. Attention Deficit Disorder sometimes places a strain on the parents' marital relationship as well, as parents blame each other for being overly lenient or harsh in their rearing habits. This can lead to many arguments and disagreements that prove to be difficult on spouses.

An often forgotten casualty of Attention Deficit Disorder is the siblings of a child with ADD. Often not apparent, siblings in this situation often experience similar frustration and anxiety as the parents and child with ADD. Jealousy sometimes plays a factor in their feelings as their sibling requires so much more attention, even if it is negative in nature. Also, these children often get the brunt of their sibling's impulsive actions, including aggressive behavior typical of ADD. These children may also find themselves being categorized in school and other social environments because of their sibling's behavior, which can also have a negative connotation.

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In addition to immediate family, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins may also be affected when a child has ADD. Depending on the closeness of the family, behavior outbursts and discipline issues may be a factor dealt with on various levels. In extreme cases, ADD may actually cause some familial relationships to be severed.

Sarah is an acclaimed writer on medical matters, and has written extensively on the subjects of Attention Deficit Disorder, Bird Flu and Cohn's Disease. For more of her articles, go to

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