



From TDSB Psychological Services to Your Family



## WELCOME TO THIS MONTH'S NEWSLETTER, FOCUSED ON ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

### DID YOU KNOW?

by Dr. Megan Smith, C.Psych.

ADHD is not a behaviour disorder!  
ADHD is a "neurodevelopmental disorder."  
That means that it is caused by differences  
in the brain and how it develops.  
The parts of the brain affected by ADHD  
can make it hard for many children  
with ADHD to control their attention,  
thoughts, feelings, and actions,  
no matter how hard they try!

Cartoons used with permission from the artist,  
Dani Donovan @danidonovan - Check out her work!

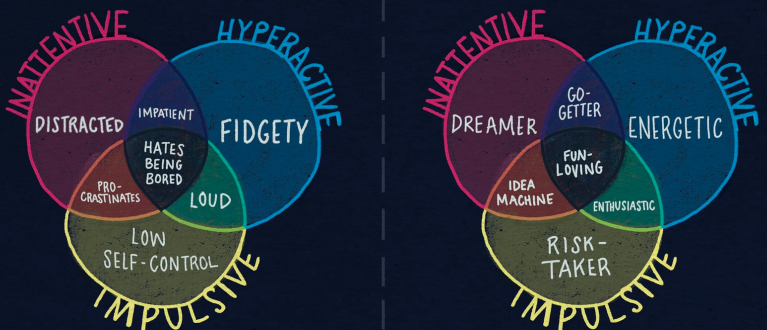


People with ADHD **can** pay attention.  
The real problem is that they cannot **control** it.  
When students with ADHD are interested in  
something, their brain releases chemicals that  
"turn on" the part of the brain that keeps them  
focused. Without those chemicals,  
their brain is easily distracted.

This means people with ADHD:

- Have trouble **staying focused** on things they do not find interesting.
- Have trouble **not** focusing on things they find interesting. This can help them become experts in areas of interest!

### TWO SIDES, SAME COIN





COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

# WHO HAS ADHD?

~~EXTROVERTED~~ ~~YOUNG~~  
CAN BE INTROVERTED ANY AGE

~~BOY~~ WHO ~~FIDGETS A LOT~~,  
ANY GENDER MIGHT NOT BE HYPERACTIVE

~~STRUGGLES~~ IN SCHOOL,  
MAY EXCEL

AND ~~CAN'T PAY~~ ATTENTION  
HAS DIFFICULTY REGULATING

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adhd.com

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People with ADHD who are impulsive often:

- **don't know** that they are about to say or do something **until after** they've done it
- can't **stop** themselves from doing things they know they shouldn't do

Many people with ADHD struggle with:

**Time management**

**Organization**

**Motivation**

**Getting started**

**Finishing things**

**Noticing important details**

**Finding and fixing mistakes**



## DID YOU KNOW? (CONT'D)

by Dr. Megan Smith, C.Psych.



Children with ADHD need **EXTRA SUPPORT** in these areas for years longer than others. Without this help, they have a higher risk of failing or dropping out of school. But, with support and lots of practice, **THEY CAN LEARN** the skills and strategies they need to be successful.

Many students with ADHD have **SENSORY** issues. They may react strongly to things in their environment (such as other people, sound, movement, light, clutter). They may need more of certain sensory information (like movement, or heavy work) to feel calm. They often benefit when they get help to make sure their sensory needs are met. Your school support team can help.

People with ADHD have a lot of **STRENGTHS!** They are often very creative, curious, funny, sensitive, and brave. You will find lots of people with ADHD in jobs that need these strengths, such as emergency services, acting, and sports. Some famous people with ADHD say that ADHD has helped them do well in their jobs and learn to overcome challenges.

## JUST SOME OF THE SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WITH ADHD....



Simone Biles (athlete)



Bill Gates (entrepreneur)



Solange Knowles (musician)

Emma Watson (actor)



Howie Mandel (comedian)

Scott Kelly (astronaut)



OUR ARTICLES, TIPS, AND SUGGESTIONS DO NOT CONSTITUTE TREATMENT ADVICE.

IF YOU OR A FAMILY MEMBER IS IN CRISIS, PLEASE CONTACT **KIDS HELP PHONE: 1-800-668-6868** OR THE DISTRESS CENTRE: 416-408-4357

# WHAT I WANT YOU TO KNOW ABOUT "THAT KID"

by Tanya Fudyk, M.Sc., C. Psych. Assoc.



I am not only a part of the Psychology team at the TDSB, but I am also a parent of a child with learning/ behaviour differences. My child has diagnoses of Autism Spectrum Disorder and ADHD. This is what I would like other parents and his peers to know about kids like him.

ASD and ADHD are both neuro-developmental disorders (research has shown there can be differences in these kids' brains) and they occur on a continuum. Your own child may come home with stories about kids who "misbehave" and/or "are weird." While we may not know what another child's diagnosis is (or if there is one), it is important to recognize that behaviours mean something. They could be saying that their work is too hard, the classroom is loud, or they need a break. There are so many things they could be trying to communicate. Also, many kids with learning differences have challenges with impulsivity. Research has shown that these kids are sometimes 2 to 3 years behind in their ability to control their behaviour, which can look like "inappropriate" behaviour in school.

As a parent of this type of kid, I can tell you that everyday life is unpredictable. I never know how my child's days are going to go – he may tell me that he played with plasticine all day, or that a child hit him at recess, or that he sat by himself at lunch for two days. There are so many things I worry about.

**What can we do? One of the greatest things we can do is check our judgment at the door and try to model acceptance and understanding for our children.**

**HERE ARE SOME IDEAS OF WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT AND INCLUDE CHILDREN WITH LEARNING DIFFERENCES IN YOUR CHILD'S CLASS:**

**Have a conversation at home with your children** about how some kids are different kinds of learners and their brains may work in a unique way, but this does not mean that they don't have feelings or that they are "bad". It means they need different things and are trying to tell us something with their behaviour.

Discuss how some kids may have much more difficulty controlling themselves than other children. **Encourage your child to befriend a child with differences** by inviting them to play at recess or trying to help them with their work. Kids with learning differences may not have a lot of playdates or be invited to parties. They do notice and feel left out.

Some parents of children with learning differences may feel isolated, as their children might not participate in the same extracurricular activities and they may not have those connections. **Make efforts to include these parents in the community.**



# SMART BUT SCATTERED: EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONS AND ADHD

by Berenice Saracoglu, M.A., C. Psych.

The role of **executive functions (EF)** is the same as that of a conductor within an orchestra who coordinates the different musicians. Without the conductor the music would not flow smoothly or sound as good!

EFs take us from 'start to finish', helping us to initiate and complete tasks. We especially rely on them in a new situation or when significant mental effort is needed. EFs are mental skills that play an important role in both academic and social functioning.

Students with ADHD may have trouble showing what they know. This is often linked to poorly-developed EFs. They may have difficulties in some or many of the following areas:

- \* Starting tasks \* Staying focused \*
- \* Shifting between tasks \*
- \* Goal-setting \* Organization \* Self-control \*
- \* Working memory \* Cognitive flexibility \*

We can literally 'grow our brains' and develop EFs through modelling, direct teaching, games (involving turn-taking and working memory), and doing activities that require planning (e.g., cooking or building something). These skills can be taught directly and developed with practice!

## Tips for Parents to Promote EFs:

Engage your children to reflect on their skills and strategies. Use questions such as *"What worked well last time? What did you find challenging? What would you like to improve?"*

Find out how to help. Use questions such as *"How can I help you get started?"*

Collaborate to make a homework plan. Use questions such as *"Where should you work? When will you start? How long will you work before taking a break?"*



# ASK THE PSYCHOLOGIST

by Dr. Laura Sloan, C. Psych.

*My young teen with ADHD has asked for a "stability ball" (a giant exercise ball). She said that sitting on it will help her focus during on-line learning and get her "energy out". What should I do?*



It's wonderful that your daughter wants to take a role in managing her ADHD. Start by noticing this! For example, you could say: *"I think it's great that you want to find things to help yourself."* You can then invite her to do some of the research to find out of this is a worthy investment. Here are some tips:

## Do some research!

Teens have experience with online research, but they may need help to find credible source materials. Click [HERE](#) for a really good resource that can help your teen with understanding research studies.

## Look for good summaries!

Many caregivers are really busy right now and may benefit from well-established resources that can summarize the ADHD literature. Click [HERE](#) for a good summary article to help understand evidence-based interventions for ADHD.

## Ask a professional!

Ask your family doctor, psychologist, or other ADHD specialist for assistance in deciding what can help your daughter.

## Note!

*There are programs, accommodations, technology, and medications that can help people with ADHD. However, special devices and equipment, such as stability balls and weighted vests, have not been found to help as much with ADHD symptoms. This conclusion may change with more research.*

## RESOURCES

- [Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada \(CADDAC\)](#)
- [Children and Adults with ADHD \(CHADD\)](#)
- [Taking Charge of ADHD: The Complete Authoritative Guide for Parents, 4th Ed.](#)
- [Activities Guide for Parents: Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children & Teens](#)



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## DID YOU NOTICE?



We try to follow what the research says to enhance the readability of our newsletter!

- Uncluttered layout
- Font size 12+ and simple typeface
- Positive language
- Colours to distinguish information