

The Parent's Notebook

HELP! MY KID'S DRIVING ME CRAZY!

Does your child have trouble sitting still? Is he constantly on the go, as if there was a motor inside that cannot be turned off? Is it hard for her to focus attention on one thing at a time? Does she have a problem playing quietly? Is he accident prone, have difficulty waiting his turn, or frequently interrupt? Does your child have trouble getting things done in school, or do teachers complain about a short span of attention, distractibility, or disorganization? Do you feel overwhelmed, frustrated, or as if you're going "crazy" trying to parent your child.

If the answer is "yes" to several of these questions, your child may have Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADD/ADHD). ADD/ADHD is a psychological/developmental disorder that is characterized by more than average levels of inattentiveness and/or hyperactivity, often accompanied by impulsiveness. Such children tend to be overly active, have trouble paying attention, and do things without thinking about the consequences.



Although ADD/ADHD symptoms usually show up before the age of seven, they may not become troublesome until the child enters school. Parents will often feel frustrated, helpless, and may doubt themselves and their competence as parents when trying to parent these children because nothing seems to work effectively for very long. Parents and teachers often misinterpret the child's behavior and think the child is being intentionally difficult, rebellious, or lazy. If you suspect your child may have ADD/ADHD, consider the following:

- Have your child evaluated by a professional who is knowledgeable in the assessment of ADD/ADHD and other childhood disorders.
- Ideally, assessment should include some form of testing of the child's intelligence and academic achievement, as well as a thorough assessment of the child's emotional life and a complete accounting of developmental and family history. It is common for problems of hyperactivity or distractibility to exist in extended or immediate family members of children who have ADD/ADHD. Your child may also be having other difficulties, such as anxiety, learning problems, or depression for which a thorough assessment is needed to clarify the diagnosis.
- Once a diagnosis of ADD/ADHD is made, parents have several treatment options to consider, including appropriate medications prescribed by a pediatrician or psychiatrist and therapy to educate the child and teach self-control techniques. Parent consultation to assist in managing behavior at home and educational modifications in the classroom are important to a comprehensive treatment of this disorder.

ADD/ADHD is a bonafide disorder, but must be properly assessed, diagnosed, and treated. It is not necessary for your child to unnecessarily experience frustration and failure, and he/she doesn't have to drive you crazy. Many individuals with this disorder have, with proper treatment, grown up to have successful careers and family lives.

Dr. Jim Viola, Ph.D., L.P.C. is in private practice and has worked for more than twenty years with children, adolescents, couples, and families. He is an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Collin County Community College. For more information about parenting, counseling, and testing services offered by Dr. Viola, please contact him at the location listed below:

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