

“He will never go to a ‘normal’ school.”

By: Michael Kranzler

When I was in early elementary school, an educational therapist offered that grim assessment to my parents. I had just been diagnosed with extremely severe ADHD, helping us bridge the gap between my high aptitude and low performance. Every week, I would swear to my mom that I had turned in all my assignments for the week, but then she would come into my classroom, open up my desk, and find them crumpled up in the corners. Sure, I *meant* to turn them in, but somehow I consistently forgot.

Fortunately, my parents left me in the dark about what the therapist had said about me, not even telling me about it until I got into college.

I think about that a lot these days, in my first month as an attorney. My ADHD was so severe that psychologists at Yale flew me out to be a case study as a child, yet here I am, working long hours as a first year associate in a small law firm with a towering workload. And actually enjoying it! Who thought that would be possible? What changed to turn that little kid who was constantly getting into trouble into a licensed attorney?

Honestly, not very much. I’m still that same kid deep down. I’m still easily distracted, and can get extremely hyperactive, especially when excited. My normal speaking pace is so fast that it takes every fiber of my being to slow myself down in court. Even still, judges often tell me to slow down.

What changed wasn’t me; what changed was developing self-awareness. We all have our strengths and our weaknesses. I just so happen to have some weaknesses that stem from my ADHD. I can make careless errors from working too fast, even today. But now, what used to be my final draft is just the first of many drafts. I print it out, review, revise, and print it out again. I’m not ashamed of the fact that I can work too fast for my own good; I just use that knowledge now to reframe my approach.

I’m still bouncing off the walls with energy before my colleagues have even had their coffee. But I’ve learned to channel that energy, to take advantage of that

knowledge to make myself even more productive while others are just starting to think about the beginning of their day.

ADHD doesn't have to be a detriment. It doesn't even have to be something I tell people about. But it is a part of me, just as it is a part of many of you reading this. Own it. Embrace it. Learn to take advantage of it. For every barrier it creates in your daily routine, it also gives you strength. Discover that strength, and use it to your advantage.

ADHD doesn't define me as a person or as an attorney, but it forces me to adapt. And I couldn't be more grateful for that.