

What Is ADHD?



Many mentors have experienced, at one time or another, a mentee who just couldn't sit still, had endless energy, and lacked the ability to focus. While these behaviors are sometimes associated with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), the disorder itself is much more complex and requires careful consideration. To help mentors better understand ADHD, March's Mentor Training offered insight into this often hidden disability, sharing proven techniques to assist in making mentoring successful with an ADHD child.

Research shows that ADHD is a neuro-biological disorder, the result of an imbalance of neurotransmitters in the brain. ADHD is often genetic, with over half of the diagnosed cases having been inherited from a parent. According to new statistics from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, up to 11 percent of children aged 4-17 have been diagnosed with ADHD at some point in their lives; however some people may not be diagnosed with the disorder until adulthood. Boys are nearly three times more likely to have been diagnosed. While any child may exhibit symptoms of ADHD at one time or another, a child diagnosed with the disorder shows evidence of symptoms consistently over a period of time. The process of evaluating and diagnosing ADHD is thorough and complex. It involves information gathered from teachers, caregivers, the child and the child's pediatrician.

A child with ADHD not only struggles with hyperactivity, impulsivity and perceived inattention, there can be additional impairments that may not be as obvious. These may include difficulty processing information, regulating emotions and persistent struggles with executive function. The ADHD child struggles with organization, planning, prioritizing, paying attention or remembering details. ADHD children who are undiagnosed are often misjudged and labeled oppositional, lacking social skills or below average intelligence.

No treatments have been found to cure this disorder, but many treatments exist which can effectively assist with its management. ADHD medicines are available, however it takes some time for a doctor to find the best medication, dosage and schedule for someone with ADHD. Side effects of the medication are often a deterrent for children, creating a struggle between child and adult to maintain dosage.

Dr. Russell Barkley, a leading specialist in ADHD stresses that helping a child with ADHD requires consideration, compassion and added support from the school, family and community. Just as we build access ramps for the physically disabled, we must build accommodations for children with ADHD so that they can function successfully. Caregivers and teachers must make accommodations such as, creating more structure for the child, encouraging routines, clearly stating expectations, and giving immediate consequences for behavior.

How can a mentor of a child with ADHD help in his/her success? Linda Classen, M.Ed., LPC, has compiled list of **ten strategies to make mentoring effective for kids with ADD/ADHD**, drawing from years of experience working with ADHD children, their parents, teachers, and schools. [To view this list, click here.](#)

A special thanks to Linda Classen for presenting to our Seedling Mentors.

The following resources were used to write this article:

<http://www.russellbarkley.org/factsheets/adhd-facts.pdf>

<http://www.helpguide.org/articles/add-adhd/attention-deficit-disorder-adhd-and-school.htm>

www.additudemag.com/adhd/article/688.html

www.webmd.com/add-adhd/childhood-adhd/adhd-children?page+3

<http://add.about.com/od/adhdthebasics/f/How-Do-You-Tell-The-Difference-Between-An-Energetic-Child-And-One-With-Adhd.htm>

Executive Function is a set of skills children develop as they grow and learn. These skills are helpful for success in daily life. To learn more about Executive Function visit: <http://www.search-institute.org/downloadable/exec-function-feb-2015.pdf>