

Final Exam Season is Almost Here – Time to Get Ready!

So why is it so hard to concentrate?

Final exam period is a stressful time, and to get through it successfully students will need to focus and concentrate. These few remaining weeks are the last chance they will have to catch up on older reading assignments, hand in term papers and buckle-down before the fateful exam days. While this can be straightforward for some, for others, staying focused on the task at hand, organizing and prioritizing can be a constant struggle – suddenly, time has zipped by and they find themselves on the night before the exam, with 600 pages of material still left unread.

Help!

This inability to regulate focus, by either under focusing or over focusing, might be a result of the medical condition Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD is a real and often misunderstood condition that affects students of any age, including in university. ADHD may present with or without hyperactivity. The symptoms, which impair attention regulation, can seriously impact all aspects of a student's life, especially when it comes to learning. Medical experts agree that while many students are disorganized and prone to procrastination, those with ADHD have a much harder time regulating their attention or their priorities.

University students with undiagnosed ADHD may soon realize that while they were able to cope in elementary or high school, this next level of education can be overwhelming, and the additional strain on their attention and executive functioning may make it impossible to succeed at the post-secondary level. Sadly, these students and their professors often wrongly conclude that they are not capable of learning the material or successfully completing the program. These students may then drop out, or change to another program where they will continue to struggle due to the underlying condition going undiagnosed.

Are you worried that you or someone you care about has ADHD?

It is undeniable that a stigma still exists with regard to ADHD among university students, but this should not be a barrier to academic success and future career. If you are worried you might have symptoms of ADHD, it is important to get a thorough medical assessment, so if required, a variety of appropriate treatment options, strategies and accommodations can be discussed.

Ten Questions to Ask Yourself

1. When I study I am easily distracted; my mind wanders and I miss big chunks of conversations
2. While reading I can't keep on track - I skip around or go right to the end
3. I am a master at procrastination
4. I have difficulty planning / prioritizing class projects
5. I am forgetful; appointments, assignments, bills – I am always late
6. I find it hard to wait my turn; in class during group work, when talking with a friend
7. I am in constant motion; fidgeting, finger drumming, leg shaking
8. I am impulsive; I say whatever comes to mind, without weighing the consequences
9. My mood changes frequently; I have a quick temper
10. I have trouble keeping friends and/or maintaining relationships.

These behaviours can sometimes be the symptoms of ADHD. If you recognize yourself in most of many of the situations listed above, you may want to speak with a doctor about ADHD in adults.

Please note that the above questionnaire does not constitute a diagnostic tool and that only a certified, medical doctor can confirm a diagnosis.

(English CADDAC only)

The Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada (CADDAC) is a national, not-for-profit organization providing leadership in education and advocacy for ADHD organizations and individuals with ADHD across Canada. CADDAC's mandate is to take a national leadership role in networking all organizations, professionals, patients, caregivers and other stakeholders involved in ADHD related issues, and to then support those people through education and advocacy.

If you would like more information on ADHD, visit www.caddac.ca

