

Become a Winner

By Lisa Booth

Has life just dealt you the ADHD card?

You can bet when Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD /ADD) seems to show up for the first time in adulthood, you experience a flood of different emotions and disbelief. You may seek professional help to overcome the crisis or transition that precipitated this event. The investigation determines the underlying cause is ADHD. It's a bit like peeling away the layers of an onion. Layer by layer it becomes more apparent that the impact of your undiagnosed and untreated ADHD is the reason your health is suffering, or that your relationship or job is in jeopardy, or you are mired in a disorganized mess.

Other times this 'AHA' moment comes when you recognize your child, recently diagnosed with ADHD, is a chip off the old block. Maybe, reading *Delivered from Distraction* by Drs. Ned Hallowell and John Ratey, or *Women with Attention Deficit Disorder* by Sari Solden, you knew they are telling YOUR STORY. Perhaps you caught the documentary *ADD & Loving It?! on TV*, and for the first time in your life you could show someone, "this is what goes on in my head".

Here's one way to play the hand you are dealt.

If you suspect ADHD is the underlying cause, get the diagnosis from an expert. Start with your family doctor. You may be referred to a psychiatrist or psychologist who has more expertise in adult ADHD who will work with you and your family doctor. You will need the help of these professionals not just for a diagnosis, but their ongoing medical treatment is important for you to successfully manage your ADHD over your lifetime.

Learn as much as you can about Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. It's important to realize that the many years of struggles and failures as a result of your ADHD symptoms don't define who you are. You can find ways to successfully overcome or work around those negative ADHD behaviours and develop coping strategies that will serve you better. There are professionals who offer services like a

coach, or a therapist, who can help you pinpoint when and what ADHD symptoms are problematic and can recommend appropriate interventions.

Develop an awareness, recognition and understanding of ADHD and learn how to explain it to those you live with and work with. It helps when everyone understands that your behaviour is a result of a neurobiological disorder and not one of will, motivation or control. This basic knowledge about ADHD and its impact goes a long way to reduce the tension and eliminate attribution errors and mistaken assumptions about your behaviour.

Improve your odds. Master the game.

Become a knowledgeable and well informed ADHD consumer. Be an active part of the solution. Learn what it takes to make your life work for you. Build a supportive team that includes your primary care provider, other medical personnel, coaches, therapists, support personnel as well as family, friends and co-workers. You will appreciate their help and support but ultimately the successful management of your ADHD is really up to you.

Lisa Booth is an Education Co-ordinator and Workshop Facilitator with Sue Potter at The Art of Possibilities, Specialized ADHD Services and Programs. Together they deliver a number of group programs and workshops designed for adults and adolescents with ADHD and those who live with them. If you would like more information about these programs, please visit www.theartofpossibilities.ca

Lisa and Sue are also the co-founders of ADDressing ADD: Adult and Adolescent, a not-for-profit organization. Their facilitated group for adults and adolescents "Let's Talk about ADHD" is held on the third Wednesday every month in Oakville, ON. For more information, check out www.ADDcubed.com.