

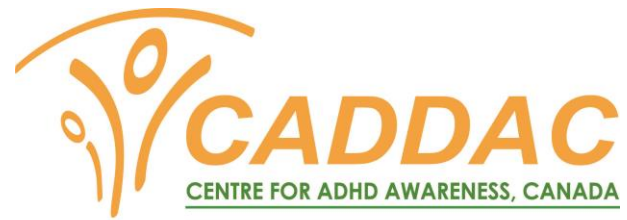
Adult ADHD and the Family

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Resources on Adult ADHD
www.caddac.ca





Topics that will be Covered

- Adult ADHD Facts
- Adult ADHD Impairments
- Impact on the Family
- Impact on Parenting
- How treatment can help
- Communication strategies
- Organizational strategies
- Chores
- Emotional Regulation Outbursts



Adult ADHD Facts

- Occurs in 4.4% of population world wide
- 80% of children continue Dx in adulthood, 2/3s continue to be impaired in adulthood
- 90% of adults remain untreated
- 85% also have other mental health coexisting disorders –anxiety, depression, OCD, personality disorder
- Adults with ADHD present differently from children
- There is no one unique “cookie cutter presentation
- To others - symptoms look like the adult does not care, is lazy and unmotivated, or obstinate and defiant
- Adults can have silos of competency BUT



Adult ADHD Impairments



Typical ADHD Impairments

- Attention dysregulation
- Poor listening skills
- Easily bored
- Executive functioning – lack of organizational skills – house hold duties, paying bills, losing things, messiness, hoarding
- Can become easily overwhelmed
- Remembering routines, appointments, promises
- Following rules
- Time management – always late, missed deadlines, lack of schedule
- Distractibility can lead to poor follow-through on responsibilities and promises



Typical ADHD Impairments

- Difficulty staying motivated
- Social skills – difficulty picking up subtle signals
- Unable to view situations as anything other than black and white -dwelling on perceived slights
- Emotional dysregulation – difficulty dealing with frustration leading to verbal outbursts and meltdowns
- More easily angered, perceive slights and hold onto anger and slights longer
- Impulsivity in speech, actions, spending – seen as uncaring and irresponsible



Impact of Adult ADHD on the Family

- Less years of education - lower wages
- More unemployment
- More impulsive decisions that impact the entire family
- Additional coexisting disorders
- Self medicating
- More marital conflict and breakup
- More child/parent conflict
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Reduced Life Expectancy

- Worst case scenario a 25 year reduced life expectancy
- 2- or 3-times greater risk of dying in the next 5-year period
- More accidents and driving accidents
- More suicide
- More obesity and less healthy lifestyle
- More substance abuse- smoking, alcohol and drugs

R. Barkley, Health Outcomes of ADHD: Do They Adversely Impact Life Expectancy, American Professional Society of ADHD and Related Disorders – Published on: January 14, 2018



How These Impairments can Impact the Family

- Non ADHD spouse becoming the sole parent as well as parenting the other spouse
- Spouse taking on a heavier load – builds resentment leading to more marital discord
- More financial instability
- More maternal depression
- More substance abuse -alcohol
- More unemployment and lower paying jobs impacts family's financial situation



Parenting and ADHD

- Parents will likely go through emotional stages after hearing a diagnosis – similar to the stages of grief
 - Disbelief
 - Denial
 - Confusion
 - Fear and Anger
 - Guilt
 - Bargaining
 - Helplessness and depression
- Parents in different stages of acceptance = Discord
- Parents who disagree on treatment = Discord
- Parents with different parenting styles = Discord
- This can lead to inconsistent parenting



Parents with ADHD

- Children with ADHD require consistent parenting
- This requires following a parenting behavioural plan
- A parent with untreated ADHD makes this extremely difficult
- Their own ADHD impairments will interfere
- Emotional dysregulation on the part of the parent will increase dysfunction
- Therefore all family members should be assessed , diagnosed and treated



Increased Stress for All

Child, parents and siblings are all under more stress for the same or different reasons

- More parent / child conflict
- Increased sibling conflict
- Increase of child non compliance
- Need for more specialized parenting
- More likely that one or both parents have ADHD which further complicates parent/Child interaction

Coping Strategies

- The feeling of lack of control of the stressors increases stress
- Knowing that they have coping strategies can reduce stress



Strategies to Improve Family Functioning



Steps to Repairing the Relationship

Necessities:

1. Assessment for ADHD and all other potential co-existing disorders resulting in diagnoses
2. Review treatment options and implement
3. Education about ADHD in general and how it impacts this person specifically
4. Both partners must be committed to change
5. The partner with ADHD must take responsibility for their treatment and change
6. The N-A partner is responsible for changing their own behaviour and correcting their misconceptions



Next Steps

Except that:

1. ADHD does impact your relationship
2. Do not wait until things are irreparable
3. ADHD is a medical disorder with impairments – change the lens of how you view actions and issues
4. ADHD symptoms and impairments are not an intentional act – forgive and forget past transgressions
5. The blame game must stop – who is right is not as important as getting along – use the team approach
6. Nagging and shame does not work
7. Continual criticism is demoralizing



ADHD Treatment

Medication:

May assist with attention, forgetfulness, emotional regulation however,

- This is not a substitute for ADHD education
- Strategies must be put in place

Therapies that can also be helpful:

- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) – challenges negative thought process
- ADHD Coaching for organization and strategies
- Anger management and marriage therapy by ADHD expert

Lifestyle changes:

- Better diet, sleep habits and more aerobic exercise can be helpful



Strategies



Treatment

- Diagnosis and Treatment of ADHD adult!!!!
- Initiate healthy lifestyle choices – exercise, sleep, balanced diet, mindfulness
- Counseling, therapy – CBT, mindfulness
- Treat any coexisting disorders – anxiety, depression, OCD
- Medication
- Assess and improve self and emotional dysregulation
- Treat substance use and abuse – nicotine, caffeine, alcohol, pot consumption, cocaine etc.
- Workplace accommodations



Communication Strategies

- Not being heard – most common complaint – once the person feels heard their stress level reduces
- Each person needs to increase their own listening skills
- Make time to sit down to talk rather than using the phone, text or e-mail – nonverbal cues are important
- Use eye contact to make sure your partner is engaged
- Reiterate what you heard your partner say to check your understanding movie story



Communication Strategies Continued

- ADHD partner can ask questions to help stay focused or take notes to hold an idea for later
- Non-ADHD partner can be more direct and use shorter sentences
- Listen openly without judgment – helps to walk in other's shoes
- Ask for repetition if your mind wonders – both parties
- Ask for breaks if you feel yourself tiring and unable to stay focused
- Don't make assumptions as to your partner's motivation
- Be aware of what you say and how you are saying it – tone matters



Organizational Tips

- Identify both of your areas of strength and weakness
- Use individual and joint organizational methods – family laminated calendar in the fridge
- Remember that one partner's organization strategies may feel very strange and not work for the other partner
- Designate specific areas for things that get lost frequently – keys, electronic devices, papers
- Develop routines and schedules – use visual reminders
- Decrease clutter – may need to use a professional
- Use organizational tools for bills, papers etc.
- Weekly family meeting to organize upcoming week's events and responsibilities



Fighting About Chores

- Address workload imbalances
- Divide chores along strengths
- Trade and/or divide chores – partners must feel the balance is equal
- Agree on a mutually acceptable way to use reminders – lists, post-its, verbal reminders (use humour) – wife versus coach
- Some tasks may need to be split with one person being the closer
- If neither partner is good with a specific task find ways to outsource them – bookkeeping, cleaning, yard work
- Some tasks can now be automated – grocery shopping
- If one partner has had a heavier load due to unforeseen circumstances find ways to show your appreciation



Parenting

- The untreated adults with ADHD will find it impossible to parent patiently and consistently – get diagnosed and treated
- Adults with ADHD who take responsibility for their treatment and use strategies make great role models for their children with ADHD – who could relate better
- Parent as a team – do not allow kids to divide and conquer
- Arguing over parenting can be hugely detrimental to your relationship and your parent/child relationships
- Divide parenting chores by strengths
- Remember to divide the fun duties and the onerous ones equally – no one wants to be the “bad guy” all the time



Parenting

- The untreated adults with ADHD will find it impossible to parent patiently and consistently – get diagnosed and treated
- Learn as much as you can about ADHD, so you can understand your child
- Reframe your thinking of the behaviours as being caused by an impairment due to a medical disorder
- Create a supportive environment by reducing conflict as much as possible and put structures and supports in place to offset impairments
- Be aware that some of the things you are asking your child to do may not be in their control
- Be proactive rather than reactive, try and anticipate times, and situations that trigger behaviours and have a plan in place for when behaviours happen
- Don't take behaviours, moods, ODD, disrespect personally



Parenting

- Have only a few house rules e.g., not hurting others, staying safe, and school work
- Decide as a team of care givers what these rules will be and make this known to the child
- Let small things go, at least for now
- It is important to model the behaviours you want to see
- Avoid power struggles - pick your battles (CPS)
- Keep issues in perspective - don't overreact to small things
- Neither you or the child will be perfect, expect this and practice forgiveness
- You may need to take a time out yourself if you are feeling overwhelmed
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Parenting

- Think of interactions (consequences) as a bank account – you need to be more heavily loaded on the credit side – more positive interactions – always use positive consequences first
- When consequences are required, both good and bad, they must be done immediately and consistently
- Don't engage in arguing - allow the rules to take the blame
- When speaking with your child make sure you are telling and not asking your child to do something
- Make sure you have their attention - eye contact and touching
- Don't continually lecture or nag your child
- Do listen to their perspective of a situation - you can obtain insight into their thinking and children with ADHD are not always at fault
- Keep your perspective and sense of humor



Emotional Outbursts

- This can be the most destructive thing to a relationship
- Emotional dysregulation is a core symptom of ADHD – however this is not a well known fact
- Adults with ADHD become easily frustrated and become unable to deal with frustration in an appropriate or constructive way
- Easy to anger and can become unintentionally aggressive



Emotional Outbursts Continued

- Person with ADHD may be unaware that they are speaking loudly or being scary – this can be costly to a relationship
- Both partners need to become aware of the other partner's triggers and signals – non-ADHD partners should not expect subtle cues to be picked up
- Call for time outs – code word that stops interaction immediately – use cool down periods



The Keys to Great Strategies

By John Tucker ADHD Coach

- They work for YOU
- They are tied to your strengths
- They take advantage of the resources available



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Resource

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