



## Attention deficit disorder often persists into adulthood

### There could be a reason your partner is so distracted and forgetful

BY RHONDA RABOW, FREELANCE MARCH 5, 2011

Everyone has distracted moments. We lose our keys, forget our list when we go shopping or are late for an appointment from time to time.

These things happen to most of us and are considered quite normal, if annoying.

However, when there is a disorder involved -such as ADD or ADHD -that's when things become serious.

The feelings attached to ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) or ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) include confusion, frustration and sadness when one can't move from intention to action.

At home or work, relationships can suffer due to disorganization and inconsistent behaviour. A job may be jeopardized because work is late, incomplete or inaccurate.

According to the Centre for ADHD/ADD Advocacy Canada, the most conservative estimates indicate ADHD affects more than one million Canadians.

Experts estimate 80 per cent of children diagnosed with ADHD continue to meet the criteria for diagnosis in adolescence and more than 60 per cent report symptoms in adulthood.

ADHD has a significant impact on our social and economic systems and is estimated to cost the Canadian economy close to \$8 billion each year.

ADHD often runs in families. According to research, if one person in a family has ADHD there is a 25 to 35 per cent chance another family member also has it.

What if your partner's behaviours are all indicators of undiagnosed ADHD?

Indicators may be:

- being easily distracted
- being forgetful
- low self-esteem
- difficulty following through on tasks
- tendency to tune out
- impatience
- impulsiveness, either verbally or in action, such as spending money, changing plans, changing careers
- mood swings
- often being late
- being disorganized
- chronic procrastination
- need for high stimulation. ADHD is a complex neurobiological disorder that affects the brain's ability to function normally. Experts say it is probably due in part to a lack of certain neurochemicals.

ADHD/ADD is recognized by mental health professionals as one of the most common disorders of childhood, and was previously thought to resolve itself in adolescence.

During the past decade there has been a growing awareness that for many if not most individuals with ADD, it persists into adulthood. Effective treatment of adult ADD is a relatively new area of study.

The diagnosis for this condition needs to be done by a specialist. A doctor or psychiatrist who has specialized training in this field generally does it. Proper diagnosis and medication prescribed by the doctor or psychiatrist is recommended.

Cognitive therapy, behaviour modification and lifestyle changes with the help of the therapist can go far to diminish or eliminate these issues.

The good news is that ADHD/ADD often affects people who are creative, intuitive and highly intelligent.

Some famous people who probably had the disorder include: Leonardo da Vinci, Thomas Edison, Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill and Richard Branson.

Counselling deals not only with the symptoms, but also the resulting issues related to emotions, self-esteem, relationships, work performance, etc.

Couple counselling can go far to help the non-ADD partner understand how these behaviours are linked to ADD and not to an unwillingness or lack of care coming from the ADD partner.

Learning new ways to gain control of ADD-related problems is an important part of coping with ADD. A first step is to gain insight and understanding of how ADD impacts your life. This understanding can then be used to identify the challenges and eventually to develop new strategies and skills for dealing with your ADD symptoms, problems and relationship challenges.

Here are some coping strategies for Adult ADD/ADHD:

1. Increase structure: make lists, use schedules, establish routines, prioritize tasks, break down large projects into parts and develop a step-by-step plan
2. Exercise
3. Take frequent breaks
4. Create variety and novelty to sustain interest and motivate
5. Keep a notepad on hand
6. Modify your work environment
7. Become more aware of your thoughts -train yourself to think before acting
8. Make plans, don't let impulses have control

What if someone you love, who you feel you have to parent and nag; who is often disappointing and lets you down; who doesn't seem to listen; and is forgetful, actually has undiagnosed ADHD?

What if the reason behind his/her impulsivity and irresponsible behaviour is not due to not caring or ignoring you, but due to this disorder?

Wouldn't that make it a whole lot easier to forgive, understand and help give you hope that this relationship can be saved?

Something to consider.



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