**Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)**

**Handout for Families**

“*ADHD is a term that describes a way of being in the world. It is neither entirely a disorder nor entirely an asset. It is an array of traits specific to a unique kind of mind. It can become a distinct advantage or an abiding curse, depending on how it is managed.*”

--Hallowell and Ratey, 2021

**What is ADHD?**

**Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):**  ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that is commonly diagnosed in children and often persists into adulthood. It is a “condition that makes it unusually difficult for (individuals) to concentrate, pay attention, sit still, follow directions, and control impulsive behavior” (childmind.org). These challenges with executive functioning skills[[1]](#footnote-0) can make it more difficult for individuals to complete assignments for work or school on time, remember to brush their teeth or wash their hair in the morning, or plan for long-term goals.

*Symptoms of ADHD* are divided into two groups: **inattentive behaviors** and **hyperactive and impulsive behaviors**. It is common for individuals to exhibit *both* inattentive and hyperactive, and impulsive behaviors, making it difficult to function in school, at home, and in extracurricular activities.

*Role of Dopamine* – Dopamine, aka “the happy hormone,” is a neurotransmitter that assists with movement control and emotion regulation. It is known as the “happy hormone” because it is often released during pleasurable situations, such as meeting up with a friend. Individuals with lower dopamine levels may experience difficulty when their social skills are not yet sufficient enough to effectively navigate social interactions. This may impact feelings of frustration, anxiousness, depression, impulsivity, and behavioral issues. ADHD individuals are dopamine-seekers, meaning that they have lower levels of dopamine, and their senses are highly attuned, looking for new stimuli. Persons with ADHD have higher concentrations of dopamine transporter proteins, and high concentrations of these proteins are called dopamine transporter density (DTD). The higher the DTD, the lower the dopamine levels are in the brain, leading the individual to seek out more (www.healthline.com).

**ADHD is a neurobiological difference, meaning that it is not your fault! Support for ADHD works best when self-blame is removed.**

**Types of treatment for ADHD:**

There are many types of treatment for ADHD. While there are many types of treatment, it is important to understand that there is no cure for ADHD. An individual may try different types of treatment, and individually-based services are important for making sure that a person seeking treatment finds approaches and techniques that are meaningful and effective for them.

* Medication
  + Medications are not a cure, and they can often be used to increase dopamine and focus. This can be beneficial for managing symptoms in conjunction with other treatments, such as counseling or behavior therapy.
  + The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry (AACAP) and the American Psychiatric Association (APA) created a medication guide for parents. The ADHD: Parent’s Medication Guide can be accessed using the link <https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/resource_centers/resources/med_guides/ADHD_Medication_Guide-web.pdf>
* Nutrition
  + Foods rich in protein can stimulate the production of neurotransmitters in the brain and prevent dramatic changes in blood sugar (attitudemag.com).
* Homeopathic treatments
* Physical activity
  + Helpful for increasing dopamine and norepinephrine baseline levels naturally over time to support individuals in adulthood (www.attitudemag.com).
* Neurofeedback therapy
* Counseling therapy services
* Behavior therapy

**Resources for Children and Parents**

There are many different types of resources available for parents, children, and teens. Below is a brief list of resources, and the list is not exhaustive. Take some time to search for resources that meet your needs, and in the meantime, the list below may be helpful.

**Resources For Parents & Helpful Links:**

* CDC Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder information and resources: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/index.html>
* *Complete Guide to ADHD* by the Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/guide/parents-guide-to-adhd/>
* *School Success Kit for Kids with ADHD*, by the Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/article/school-success-kit-for-kids-with-adhd/>
* *Parenting a Child with ADHD*:

<https://chadd.org/for-parents/overview/>

(this site also offers parent-to-parent support groups and other information on ADHD)

* *Back to School Resources*, includes book and software suggestions: <https://www.additudemag.com/back-to-school-resources/>
* *When ADHD Drains and Strains Sibling Relationships* is an article by Sharon Saline, Psy.D. that offers 7 strategies to strengthen sibling relationships: <https://www.additudemag.com/sibling-relationships-adhd-families/>
* *From Scattered to Focused,* by Zac Grisham (for parents) (book resource available on Amazon)
* *ADHD: What Every Parent Needs To Know*, by American Academy of Pediatrics (book resource available on Amazon)
* *The ADHD Sibling Challenge, How to Thrive When Your Brother or Sister has ADHD* (an interactive family guide), by Barton S. Herskovitz, MD (book resource available on Amazon)

**Resources for Children**

* Kid’s Quest: ADHD by the CDC (for fun games, information, book ideas, and more visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/kids/adhd.html> )
* *Thriving with ADHD Workbook for Kids: 60 Fun Activities to Help Children Self-Regulate, Focus, and Succeed* by Kelli Miller (LCSW, MSW) (book/workbook resource that can be found on Amazon)
* *My Busy Busy Brain: the ABCDs of ADHD*, by Nicole Russell (book resource that can be found on Amazon)
* *The Abilities in Me: ADHD*, by Gemma Keir (book resource that can be found on Amazon, geard towards children between the ages of 3-8 years)

**Resources for Teens**

* Evernote app, available for Apple and Android– An app for setting up calendar reminders, timers, and list making. Journal prompts, meeting note capabilities, and daily/monthly/yearly calendars. Some features are not available in the free plan (the free plan is great for note-taking but does not support some of the other features, such as calendar reminders).
  + Pick Your Plan
    - Evernote offers two different plans, one for $0/month and one for $6.67/month
  + Evernote Link: <https://evernote.com/>
* Productive App, available for Apple- An app for setting weekly goals and one-time tasks, it promotes planning and tacks the user's progress.
  + The Productive app is free, and it does have in-store purchases to make it more useful and individualized. The app can be purchased monthly for $3.99/month or yearly ($23.99).
* MyHomework App, available for Apple and Android- An app for keeping track of homework and tasks, the app allows the user to create a homework folder for each class, track when assignments are due, set reminders, and add other important details
  + Free and does have in-app purchases to make it more useful and individualized
    - Free or $4.99/month (includes file attachments, import homework and file attachments, external calendar access, and more app widgets)
  + MyHomework app website link: https://myhomeworkapp.com/

**Helpful Video Links for Children:**

CADDAC Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada

* That’s Me, I Have ADHD! (Part 1): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4TELMCf98g>
* When My ADHD Gets Me Into Trouble (Part 2): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AhRo168HclA&t=4s>
* My ADHD at School (Part 3): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1zZp8MAn9cE&t=13s>

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1. Executive Functioning skills: self-regulating skills and cognitive processes that facilitate planning and memory, help focus attention, and strengthen our capacity to handle multiple tasks. Without strong executive functioning skills, it can be challenging to complete assignments for work or school on time, remember to brush our teeth or wash our hair in the morning or plan for long-term goals. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)