

SSD FACULTY INFO

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

OVERVIEW AND DEFINITION

According to medical research, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is considered neurobiological in origin. According to the DSM-IV (the diagnostic manual used by physicians), ADHD can occur in three (3) forms: the inattentive type of attention deficit, the hyperactive-impulsive type of attention deficit and the combined type, ADHD. Between 30 to 70 percent of children diagnosed with these deficits continue to have residual symptoms that persist into adulthood. As well, other conditions often co-exist with attention deficits that include learning disabilities, as well as mental health issues including anxiety and depression. This condition is not due to poor parenting or diet. It is treatable through a combination of medical intervention, compensatory strategies and accommodations that will manage the symptoms.

EDUCATION IMPLICATIONS

Inattentive type of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder: The manifestations of this type of Attention Deficit Disorder include problems with "tuning out" or "drifting away" in the middle of reading a page in a book, or in conversations with other or in following a lecture in class. The ability to screen out distractions in class and focus on what is said or demonstrated can be a major problem. This can lead to problems with both listening and note taking.

Impulsivity: Characteristics of this type of Attention Deficit Disorder often result in a tendency to say what comes to mind without necessarily considering the timing or appropriateness of the remark. Being impulsive verbally, interrupting or blurting out answers in class is often noted. Other acts of impulse may also be seen behaviorally; e.g., impulsive spending, changing plans, enacting new schemes or career plans.

Hyperactivity: This type of Attention Deficit Disorder is often seen with individuals who exhibit excessive restlessness. They have significant problems sitting through long lectures without fidgeting or moving. They may talk excessively, and appear to be always "on the go." Sustaining attention for long periods of time is problematic.

Other difficulties experienced by students with this disorder lie in the area of organization and time management that can affect both academic and social functioning. Getting started on a task, organizing and planning the activity, and persisting with the task to completion is often a challenge. Missing deadlines on assignments, forgetting test schedules, coming to class on the wrong day or missing appointments is quite common.

INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

- clear guidelines and expectations about the course, including time lines
- some flexibility in terms of when assignments are due (spacing them out)
- provide reminders about homework, assignments and test dates
- minimize classroom distractions
- students should be encouraged to sit near the front to maximize attention
- encourage the use of student planners so that everything is written down

SUGGESTED ACADEMIC ACCOMMODATIONS

- reduced course load (encourage to take fewer courses each semester)
- provision of a note taker (due to problems with listening and taking notes simultaneously)
- access to a computer to organize and edit assignments
- provision for extended time for tests and exams (usually time and a half)
- tape recording of lectures
- short breaks to help refocus attention
- written exams or tests in a quiet room (test proctoring)
- time extensions on assignments (negotiate ahead of time with the student)