



Recognising ADHD

The three different types of ADHD present quite differently, but there are overlaps:

- **Predominantly inattentive ADHD:** does not show significant hyperactive-impulsive behaviour but is mainly inattentive.
- **Predominantly hyperactive ADHD:** characteristics are mainly hyperactive and impulsive, but there will be some inattention.
- **Combined ADHD:** displays both inattentive and hyperactive and impulsive symptoms to a significant degree.

Inattention is demonstrated by an inability to focus on demand. The young person may not be able to focus at certain times, but can hyper-focus when they are highly motivated by a subject or activity. They can be easily distracted from the task at hand and can fail to complete all of a given piece of work.

There may often be times when they appear to be absent from the activity in hand, day-dreaming or appearing disengaged. As maintaining attention is difficult, instructions can be misunderstood; appointments and opportunities can often be missed.

Although it is called inattention, the difficulty is actually over attention, because the individual may perceive all auditory input at the same level. This means that they pay equal attention to everything in their surroundings, and are unable to filter out the less important information.

Hyperactivity can display as fidgeting, rocking, tapping, running and climbing. In school settings, getting up and walking around the classroom at inappropriate times can cause conflict with teachers and other pupils.

Combined with inattention this characteristic can make it very difficult for an individual to complete a task. Hyperactivity can also be intensified if the young person has sensory processing difficulties.

Hyperactivity can present differently in older children and adults. Physical movement lessens and shows more as restlessness; they can find it very difficult to relax. No matter where they are, a person with ADHD often feels they would rather be somewhere else.

Impulsivity can lead to problems in many situations. Shouting out in class can be difficult to resist and result in the young person getting into trouble in school.

Saying what is in their head before thinking how it may be received can get a young person into even more trouble. This is because the impulse to do something is processed much more quickly than the reason to resist. Coaching in this area can help the young person to manage their impulsivity.

Children with ADHD also often have poor organisational skills, poor short term memory and an inability to see a task through to completion.

The characteristics of ADHD can also result in difficulties in developing and maintaining friendships and positive relationships with peers, family members and teachers.

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