

WHAT DO YOU MEAN I HAVE ADHD?!

You've just been told that you have ADHD – but what does THAT mean?? And how are they so sure? And now what?

First off, relax – you are no different today than you were in the past. You are not sick, you have no disease, and you are NOT contagious. It simply means that there is a common term that describes how you function in the world and it might help explain to you and others some of the difficulties you may have encountered in school and at home.

ADHD stands for Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (although I think the “D” simply means Difference!). ADHD is not the result of brain damage and it doesn't mean you are dumb. Often, but not always, it is inherited from a parent or close relative. ADHD is a neurobiological condition resulting from a malfunction in the transmitter system of the brain. Huh?? It means that the areas of the brain that are responsible for helping you pay attention and control some of your activity are not working in the ways that they should.

You may have found that there are times when you have difficulty paying attention to what you are supposed to be paying attention to. Maybe in class when the teacher is talking about something that isn't so interesting to you (even though you know you should be listening since it will be on the homework or a test). Or maybe when you should be getting your homework done but other thoughts and sights keep pulling you away. Well you are certainly not alone. Many kids (between 3 and 7 % of school age children) and adults, have the same problem. Of course, that's only one aspect of having ADHD. On the positive side (yes... I said there is a positive side), it has been found that people with ADHD are generally very creative, innovative, intuitive and spontaneous.

In fact, there are many famous people who themselves have ADHD. David Neeleman, the founder of Jet Blue considers having ADHD to be a plus – it allowed for his innovations in the airline industry. Then there's Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinkos (recently bought by FedEx), Olympic Swimmer Michael Phelps, Basketball All---Star Jason Kidd, and you need look no further than Ty Pennington of Extreme Home Makeover to see how his positive energy and enthusiasm have impacted countless lives.

It has been said that ADHD is not a problem of not knowing what to do – it's a problem of not doing what you know! How often have you struggled with just getting started or completing your work – even though you knew that the work itself wasn't the hard part – it was just getting it done that seemed impossible?! Many students are starting to use the services of a Professional Coach – just like top Executives in corporations and professional athletes have for years. They find that having someone to work with on a regular basis to help them stay motivated, develop new strategies, stay organized and manage their time effectively helps them really improve their lives. A special teacher or your parent can help you out with this, too.

Being diagnosed with ADHD does not mean that you now have an excuse not to be the best you can be. With some new strategies, tips and tools and some hard work, you will not only succeed, but thrive. So hold these thoughts in mind:

Know that for every difficulty your ADHD traits may give you, there is a positive side as well!

Be vigilant about blocking out distractions and creating opportunities for you to do your best.

Advocate for yourself! Be prepared to tell your teachers how you learn best and how you work to best deal with your challenges – and how they can help you succeed.

Be yourself and believe in yourself! You will find that you are smarter than you now realize – you just need to find your best way to gather, use, and produce information.

Take this pledge each day: This day has been given to me fresh and clear... I can either use it or throw it away. I realize that it is up to me to make the choices and take the action. I promise I shall use this day to its fullest, realizing it can never come back again.

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