



DISPELLING MYTHS ABOUT ATTENTION DEFICIT/HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER (ADHD)

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is complex. How it is exhibited can differ for every child and adult. Most of us have some knowledge about the condition, however, there are many myths circulating about ADHD that shape how we think about, react to and support those who have it. This tip sheet addresses some of the common myths.

MYTHS VS. FACTS

Myth: ADHD is not a real condition.

Fact: Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological condition that can cause inattention, hyperactivity or impulsivity, along with a number of related difficulties, inappropriate for an individual's age.

Myth: All children with ADHD have behavioural problems.

Fact: Although approximately 50 percent of children with ADHD develop behaviour difficulties, 50 per cent do not demonstrate significant problems with behaviour.

Myth: ADHD results from ineffective teaching or poor parenting.

Fact: ADHD is primarily biological and genetic in its origins. Environmental factors, however, can minimize or intensify the difficulties experienced by an individual with ADHD.

Myth: Children with ADHD can never pay attention or complete their work.

Fact: Inconsistency is a pervasive characteristic of ADHD. Sometimes, and under some circumstances, individuals with ADHD can focus and concentrate, while at other times they experience extreme difficulty. They are, for example, often able to focus on stimulating video games or creative activities such as Lego or drawing.

Myth: All children with ADHD are hyperactive.

Fact: A person with ADHD may not necessarily demonstrate hyperactivity. In fact, some individuals with ADHD, predominately inattentive type, may appear to lack energy, and seem quiet and reserved.



Myth: ADHD only occurs in boys.

Fact: Boys are four to nine times more likely to be diagnosed; however, the disorder occurs in both boys and girls. Girls are more prone to inattentive type ADHD, which is marked by disorganized and unfocused behaviour rather than the disruptive, impulsive conduct typically seen in boys. Girls with ADHD tend to have higher rates of overall distress, anxiety and depression compared to boys with ADHD.

Myth: Food allergies, refined sugar, food additives and poor diet cause ADHD.

Fact: The actual correlation between ADHD and diet has not been proven. Good nutrition and general health are always important. Poor diet and poor health can influence attention and functioning.

Myth: Medication alone can manage ADHD.

Fact: While there is no cure for ADHD, medication can have positive effects on symptoms of inattention, impulsivity and hyperactivity. A “multi-modal” or comprehensive approach is most beneficial and includes appropriate diagnosis, family understanding of the disorder, behavioural interventions and educational supports.

For Further Learning

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