

Understanding ADHD by Dr. Kirstina Ordetx



Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) manifests as impairment in attention, activity level, and impulsivity. The effects of ADHD are different for every child. Inattentiveness in one child may be observed as fidgety and disruptive behavior, while another child may stare into space with his thoughts a million miles away. Some may have difficulty focusing on a task, while others become so intensely focused that they are unable to transition away from a task.

Children with ADD/ADHD may be:

- Inattentive, but not hyperactive or impulsive.
- Hyperactive and impulsive, but able to pay attention.
- Inattentive, hyperactive, and impulsive (the most common form of ADD/ADHD).

Inattentiveness may cause the child to:

- Pay little to no attention to details
- Make careless mistakes
- Have trouble staying focused; become easily distracted
- Appear not to be listening when spoken to
- Have difficulty remembering things and following instructions
- Have trouble staying organized, planning ahead, and finishing projects
- Get bored with a task before it's completed
- Frequently lose or misplace homework, books, or other items

Hyperactivity may cause a child to:

- Constantly fidget, squirm, touch his peers
- Often leave his seat in situations where sitting quietly is expected
- Talk excessively
- Have difficulty playing quietly or relaxing
- Be constantly “on the go,” as if driven by a motor
- Have a low frustration tolerance or a “short fuse”

Impulsivity may cause a child to:

- Act without thinking
- Blurt out answers in class without waiting to be called on or hear the whole question
- Have difficulty waiting for his turn in line or in games
- Say the wrong thing at the wrong time
- Often interrupt others
- Inability to regulate emotions, resulting in angry outbursts or temper tantrums
- Make a random guess rather than taking time to solve a problem

Students who have ADHD can thrive in the right learning environment. When motivation and movement are integrated into their daily routine, they feel comfortable and confident about learning and being part of a social community. In addition to their challenges, these students have amazing strengths such as creativity, lively personalities, leadership qualities, enthusiasm, and energy. Classroom settings that offer and model organization, structure, clear expectations and opportunities to demonstrate learning in various ways are the perfect growing ground for children with ADHD.

Parents should invest in thorough evaluations that involve both testing and observation in the child’s natural environment. The symptoms of ADHD are so similar to those of auditory processing disorder, sensory processing disorder, and language processing disorders that I commonly refer to them as the “look-alike disorders”. In addition, children who have ADHD may also be identified as having other difficulties with processing, dyslexia, or other learning challenges. The treatment is different and specific for each of these conditions and comorbid diagnoses, so it is important to have the support of a specialist.

Students who have ADHD need multiple opportunities to move while learning. Brain-based learning, Brain Gym™, and yoga can provide appropriate stimulation and regulation for students who require movement and sensory input in the classroom.