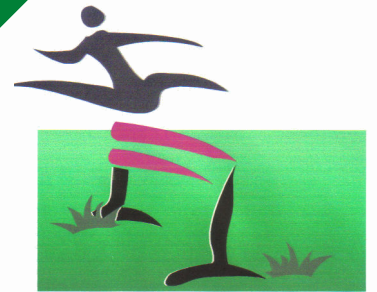


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BMC JOURNAL

The monthly newsletter of
Behavior Management Consultants



CELEBRATING 15 YEARS

It has been 15 years since BMC was established and we would like to thank you all for being an essential part of our success and supporting us all these years.

Women and girls face ADHD misdiagnosis due to misconceptions around symptoms

Boys are five times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than girls, although in later life case numbers of ADHD are roughly similar for men and women.



Women and girls with ADHD are struggling to get diagnosed, or are being misdiagnosed because of a misconception about the symptoms.

The stereotype of hyperactivity, or disrupting classes with fidgeting, just doesn't apply for lots of children. Girls especially are more likely to have symptoms such as inattentiveness or introversion, which can be overlooked, or dismissed as daydreaming.

Boys are five times more likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than girls, although in later life, case numbers of ADHD are roughly similar for men and women.

That's partly because most of the studies, which inform diagnosis, are done with boys. But girls may be better at masking their symptoms as well, says consultant psychiatrist and ADHD specialist Dr. Pablo Jeczmiem.

"ADHD is under-recognized in girls and in women because the symptoms of ADHD we associate with hyperactivity and impulsivity are usually not present in girls and women," he said.

"Because there is this cultural expectation that you should behave in this certain way. That is the starting point, then this diagnosis is relegated."

Katherine Mengardon, who has a son and a daughter both with ADHD, says it was a battle to get her children's schools to accept the diagnosis when they didn't display the normal disruptive behaviours.

It was especially hard for the school to accept that her 13-year-old daughter, whose main symptom is trouble sleeping, but who struggles to pay attention in classes she finds boring, had ADHD. But, it was important.

"The main reason to get them diagnosed is because at school it means you can get some support and accommodation," Ms Mengardon said.

"You really have to make a bit of a fight with the schools to get them to understand it's not about being wilful or lazy. It's properly difficult." If it isn't diagnosed, it can have a devastating effect on young women struggling to live with ADHD without support.

Dr Jeczmiem said: "It is incredibly important to recognise this [ADHD] because of the long-term effects ADHD has when it's not [recognised.]

"The issue with girls and women later on is because it's not recognised it has this huge impact on their lives, with sometimes severe mental health conditions. Because of the consequences later on in life: frustration, anger, feeling low self-confidence or low self-esteem, and thinking you are either lazy or you're not intelligent enough, which is incredibly painful.

"This is usually the experience that women have, they become overwhelmed, they become stressed, they become anxious, they become depressed.

"And they are treated for such a thing, when in fact the treatment should be to address the very roots of the problem. On many occasions when you treat ADHD the other symptoms will simply disappear. "And this is why it is incredibly important in my view to try to identify this as early as possible."

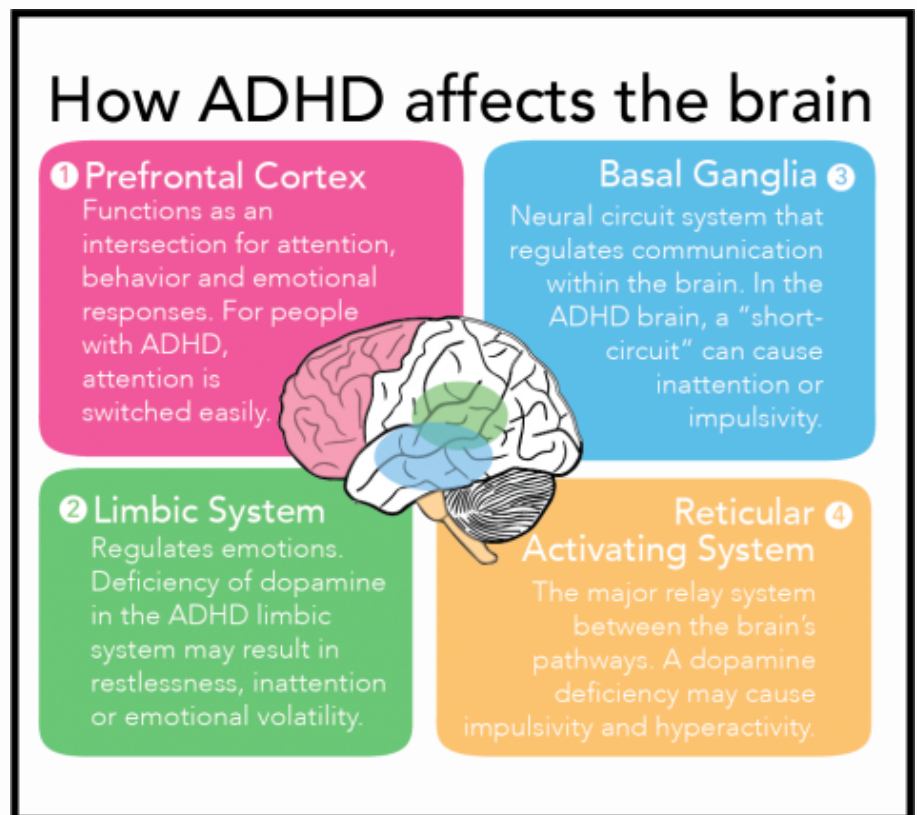
That is exactly what happened to Leanne, who was only diagnosed when she was 25 years old, having spiralled through anxiety, depression and suicidal thoughts. "I was really, really unhappy as a child and teenager, throughout school. I couldn't concentrate in class like at all and was actually often going out clubbing and drinking - because I was always thinking so much and over-thinking, over-analysing, and I figured out quite early on that like drinking helped me calm down the thoughts.

"It just felt like everyone else was on an escalator that I had no idea I didn't even know existed. It felt like I was going completely insane because I knew that I kept self-sabotaging my life. I knew that what I was doing was not normal."

Although she sought help it took years for her ADHD to be identified.

"I just felt like I lost 25 years of my life, like the first 25 years from constantly kind of being controlled by things that weren't my own brain, whether that was like looking for alcohol or feeling suicidal, like just not being able to actually relax and enjoy my life at all, and just always feeling in a constant state of stress, and feeling like there's a problem with you, and there's something wrong with you."

Leanne's now coaching businesses to help others recognise the symptoms earlier. More training for teachers and GPs, about the variation in ADHD symptoms, will be crucial to helping the next generation of girls cope with the disorder.



**Top 10 ADHD
News and
Research
Highlights for
2021**

1. Only 1 in 10 Children with ADHD Will Outgrow Symptoms

A study following 558 children with ADHD from the Multimodal Treatment Study of ADHD (MTA) over 16 years reported that only 9.1% of subjects “recovered” from ADHD by the study endpoint, when most participants were about 25 years old. The study also revealed that ADHD symptoms wax and wane over time for those individuals who continue to experience the disorder.

2. Study: DESR a Core Component of ADHD

Findings revealed elevated rates of deficient emotional self-regulation (DESR) and sleep problems among children with untreated and treated ADHD, suggesting that DESR is a core feature of ADHD that should be considered in both diagnosis and treatment.

3. Emotional Symptoms of ADHD Mitigated by Social Skills and Parent Training

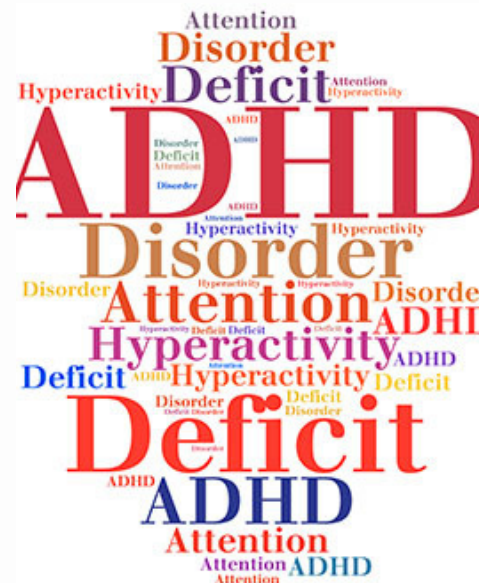
Relationship-strengthening therapies like parent training and social skills training effectively treat the emotional symptoms of ADHD in children, while cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) mitigates common emotional symptoms in adults with ADHD, according to this meta-analysis.

4. Adults with ADHD Face Elevated Risk for 34 Physical Health Conditions

The study of roughly 4.8 million patient records found that adults with ADHD exhibit an elevated risk for 34 of 35 physical conditions studied, including nervous system, respiratory, musculoskeletal, metabolic, circulatory, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, and skin conditions. The only condition for which individuals with ADHD did not exhibit increased risk was rheumatoid arthritis.

5. Computer Simulation Can Supplement Cognitive Tests Used to Evaluate ADHD Symptoms

Researchers reviewed 50 studies of cognitive tests for ADHD and determined how common computational models could help clinicians better characterize ADHD, improve treatment outcomes, and predict the longevity of symptoms.



6. Adolescent Screen Use Worsens ADHD Symptoms, Emotions, Family Dynamics

Too much screen time negatively impacts adolescents with ADHD, according to a study of Chinese children during the pandemic. Notably, children with ADHD and problematic digital media use experienced more severe ADHD symptoms, emotions, lack of motivation, and unhealthy family dynamics.

7. Moderate to Vigorous Physical Activity Benefits Children with ADHD

Moderate to vigorous physical activity (MVPA) has a small but significant effect on ADHD symptoms in children when used in conjunction with medication, according to this study that comprised a systematic review and meta-analysis of randomized control trials.



8. 1 in 6 College Freshmen Have ADHD – Most with Comorbidities

Roughly 16% of college students worldwide have ADHD, according to findings from an WHO survey spanning nine countries and dozens of colleges. The study also found that 58% of students with ADHD have at least one comorbid disorder; 30% have two or more comorbid conditions.

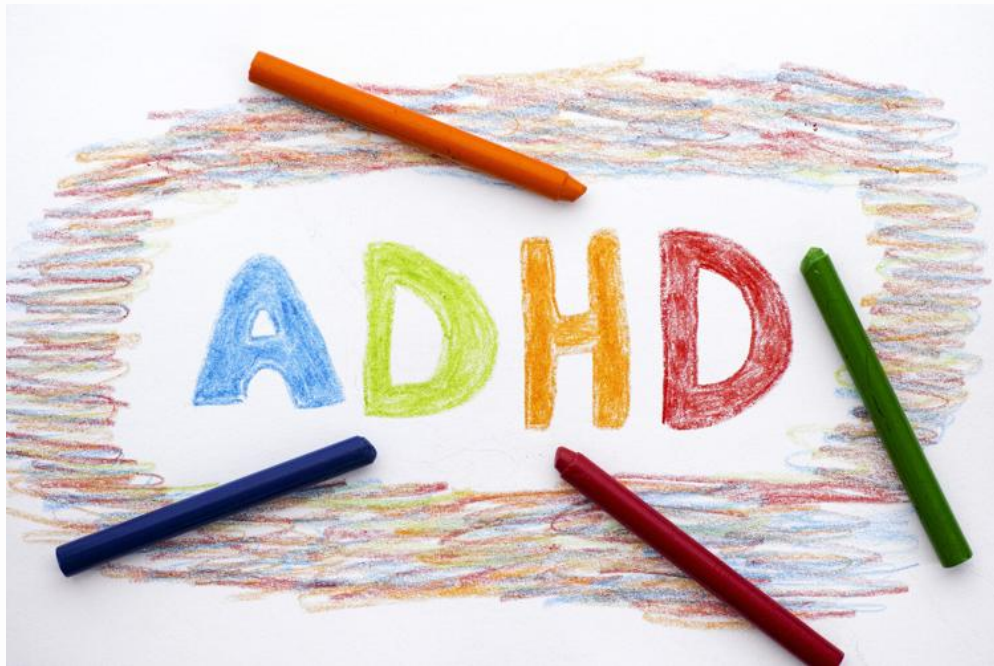
9. PMDD, Menopause, Postpartum Depression May Be More Severe in Women with ADHD

The study found that women with ADHD commonly experience more severe symptoms of hormone-related mood disorders than do women without ADHD.

10. Emotional Dysregulation Prevalent in Adults with ADHD, Accurately Assessed by Self-Reported Scale

This study found that the Self-Reported Wender-Reimherr Adult Attention Deficit Disorder Scale (SR-WRAADDS) reliably and accurately assesses the broad range of symptoms associated with adult ADHD, including emotional dysregulation.

My son's ADHD diagnosis helped me see my own struggles



It was one of those books so engrossing that I didn't see the twist coming.

The neuropsychologist who diagnosed my first-born son with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) recommended it so I could better understand how my oldest was wired. The title, "Smart But Scattered," seemed like a brilliant description for my creative, distracted second-grader.

Filling out a questionnaire in the book, I showed no mercy while judging his ability to remember where he put his hat and gloves, or whether he could stick to a morning routine before school. No surprises here.

But a few pages later, I had to evaluate myself as a parent. On a scale from 1 to 7, the book implored, how would I rate myself on the following statements?

- No matter what the task, I believe in getting started as soon as possible.
- Procrastination is usually not a problem for me.
- I have a good memory for facts, dates and details.
- It is natural for me to keep my work area neat and organized.

Who wrote this book, and how do they have a window into my disheveled, free-spirited soul?

When COVID-19 shut down classrooms last year, I watched my son struggle with distance learning. It was heartbreaking to see him drag out a simple exercise – write five sentences about a favorite memory – from what should have been 15 minutes into several hours, then melt down in frustration. He started to resent school and lose confidence in himself.

The pandemic forced me to get my son the help he needed. And it was only through learning about my child's ADHD that I realized I probably have some version of it, too. As a 44-year-old mom coming to terms with my own ADHD-like symptoms including disorganization, problems completing tasks and difficulties with focusing – I am experiencing a kind of clarity I wish I'd had decades earlier.

It's common for parents to realize they might have ADHD when navigating the diagnosis for their children, said Dr. Lidia Zylowska, a psychiatrist with the University of Minnesota Medical School.

"Initially, there may be excitement, you know — this really explains my life," she said.

She knows of many adults who seek out diagnosis and benefit from treatment, including therapy and medication. But after a period of reflection and learning about themselves, some have a sense of regret, especially if they dropped out of school or struggled with substance abuse.

"There may be a sense of sadness and even anger, that if I had the right support, my life would be different," she said.

ADHD runs in families and has significant genetic predisposition. If you have it, there is a 40% or better chance that your child will have ADHD. The condition exists on a spectrum and sometimes escapes notice in childhood, said Zylowska, who wrote the book "The Mindfulness Prescription for Adult ADHD."

And it's especially overlooked in girls. Among children, the boy-to-girl ratio of diagnosis is about 4 to 1. But among adults, the ratio edges closer to 1:1, Zylowska said.

One reason that ADHD can go undetected is that girls tend to have symptoms of inattentiveness, rather than overt hyperactivity. Think of the boy who is interrupting his classmates, playing too rough or doing cartwheels in the classroom. That kind of impulsive behavior is more likely to be flagged by a teacher than a girl quietly spacing out during social studies.

Growing up I was a model student; a B-plus in high school would have disappointed my parents and me. I'm sure none of my teachers would have ever guessed I was neurodivergent in any way. I also was a pleaser, so my parents' expectations for straight A's pushed me to near the top of my high school class.

But in college, I was surrounded by fellow high-achieving nerds. The coursework, especially the crush of required reading, overwhelmed me.

For the first time in my life, I dealt with depression, anxiety and overpowering feelings of self-doubt. To this day, I still have that recurring dream in which it dawns on me that I won't graduate on time because I forgot to attend a 20th century British lit class all semester. I know it's a common nightmare, but the scenario was something I could actually see myself doing.

Zylowska says college can be a vulnerable time for people with ADHD. Other stressful transitions may include starting one's first real job, getting promoted, moving to a new city, and becoming a parent.

In her practice, Zylowska has seen adults successfully manage their ADHD by adopting tricks that have worked for them. Maybe it's scheduling breaks throughout the day, finding time to exercise, or turning to hobbies that replenish them – on their time.

“But once you're a parent, your ability to do that is compromised,” she said. “At the end of the day, you have to not just get yourself ready for the evening, but you have to get your children ready for bath and ready for bed. And that requires a lot of executive functions to direct them, because children will often not want to do what you ask them to do. It's hard to then stay calm, effective and consistent when you're depleted yourself.”

She added that mothers with ADHD often have to face gendered expectations and an emotional burden about who is responsible for organizing the house and planning their kids' schedules. Even putting dinner on the table can be a struggle.

I told her that for more than 20 years, I was able to mask my symptoms by throwing myself into journalism. I thrive on deadlines, learning something new every day, and working with others who, like me, are plungers rather than planners. I was lucky to land in a career where my adaptability and spontaneity were considered strengths. My strategies for getting things done (like this column!) include life hacks like the Pomodoro Technique – setting a timer for 25 minutes to do a single task. Once I get going, I usually find I can do 25 minutes more.

But I wish my old college self would have known that I wasn't dumb or lazy. I wish my newly married self knew how to stop when I was getting hyperfocused at work, letting everything else fall away. I wish the parent in me could be gentler on herself for not being that mom who planned perfect birthday parties.

"Sometimes you get in your own way, even with the best intentions with already receiving treatment, so there is a need for acceptance and self-compassion," Zylowska told me.

When life gets more complex for my son, I want him to know I share his brain-based struggles. I'll also remind him that there are gifts associated with ADHD, such as his limitless energy and imagination.

As for myself, I'm not sure where I go from here. Other ADHD women in my life say therapy and medication have made a world of difference, but I haven't sought an official diagnosis yet.

I'll make sure to do that – tomorrow.





**Headspace App
Reduces Anxiety,
Sleep Problems in
Children with ADHD:
Study**

The pediatric version of the guided meditation app Headspace may benefit children with ADHD, according to this small pilot study that explores the feasibility and promise of digital health interventions.

Headspace, a digital meditation application, significantly reduces anxiety and sleep problems in children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD or ADD), according to a small study recently published in the *Journal of Attention Disorders*¹.

The pilot study, which evaluated the efficacy of the health app in 18 children with ADHD between 6 to 12 years old, saw a decrease in anxiety and sleep problems in the group after four weeks of use compared to baseline. These reductions were true for participants no matter how much they meditated.

The Headspace app guides users through mindfulness-based techniques and exercises designed to reduce stress. For this study, the authors tested the recently developed pediatric version of Headspace. (Headspace's role in the study was limited to providing participants with free access to the app and providing the authors with data on participant application usage.)

The study participants were recruited from a pediatric psychopharmacology clinic, and they were asked to complete at least one minute of age-appropriate meditation per day for a total of four weeks. (Parents and guardians downloaded the app on their devices or accessed the intervention online.) About 80 percent of participants were male, with an average age of 9.2 years.

Parents and guardians also completed the Beck Anxiety Inventory, which tracks symptoms of anxiety in children, and the Children's Sleep Habits questionnaire, which asks about sleep difficulties in children, at the start and end of the study period. About 60 percent of participants meditated for at least half of the total study period.

The authors took into account the total number of meditation days, total duration of meditation in minutes, and percent of days with meditation among participants, but found that anxiety and sleep problem scores did not move in accordance with greater participation.

Though preliminary, the findings, according to the authors, suggest that an easy-to-use, in-home, digital guided meditation intervention may benefit children with ADHD with comorbid anxiety and or/sleep problems, and is worthy of further investigation in larger trials.

Such digital health interventions, the authors write, are promising, given that most of the studied mindfulness approaches in literature lack ease and accessibility (require travel, in-person sessions, etc.).

IMPORTANT
NUMBERS



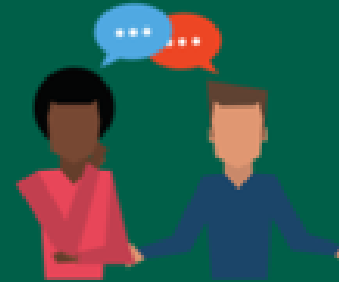
IF YOU NEED
HELP, PLEASE
MAKE THE CALL



GET THE SUPPORT
YOU NEED



YOU ARE NOT
ALONE



National Suicide
Prevention Hotline:
1-800-273-8255

National Domestic
Violence Hotline:
1-800-799-7233

Runaway and
Homeless Teen
Hotline Help:
1-800-246-4646



Coalition for the
Homeless:
212-776-2000

Drug and Alcohol
Hotline:
800-622-2255

Food and Hunger
Hotline:
866-888-8777

Homeless Services
Hotline:
212-533-5151

Rape Crisis Hotline:
212-227-3000

National Child
Abuse Hotline:
1-800-422-4453

National Teen
Dating Abuse
Helpline: 1-866-
331-9474

Crisis Lifeline for
LGBTQ Youth:
1-866-488-7386

Boys Town National
Hotline:
800-448-3000

American
Pregnancy Helpline:
866-942-6466

Behavior Management Consultants believes that, “No Child is Born Bad”. Our mission is to educate, mentor, and assist parents, caregivers, and professionals to cope with, socialize, and identify values important to today’s youth.

The goal is to serve public and private social service organizations including, but not limited to:

- Residential Treatment Facilities (RTFs)
- Juvenile Detention Centers
- Residential Treatment Centers (RTCs)
- Public Schools
- Community Based Organizations (CBOs)

We are confident that we will meet our goals thereby ensuring that our clients are being kept abreast in the ever-changing landscape of Human/Social Services.

Quote of the Month

“There is no better than adversity. Every defeat, every heartbreak, every loss, contains its own seed, its own lesson on how to improve your performance next time.”
— Malcolm X



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