# Women and ADHD

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# Learning Objectives

- Understand the difference in symptom presentation between men and women
- Understand the social differences in diagnosis
- Learn 3 behavioral techniques to cope with symptoms

#### A Word of Caution

Careful of self diagnosis

Not "boy" or "girl" ADHD

More needs to be understood about nonbinary

#### What is ADHD?

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
- Symptoms Fall Into 2 categories
  - Extremely high levels of inattentive/distractible/forgetful behaviors
  - Extremely high levels of acting before thinking about the consequences of the action
  - Or Both

#### The misnomer of 'attention'

- "Attention Deficit" implies a person can't pay attention
- In ADHD is a fundamental difficulty in REGULATING attention as the demands of a given task, project, or situation shift



# Hyper focus

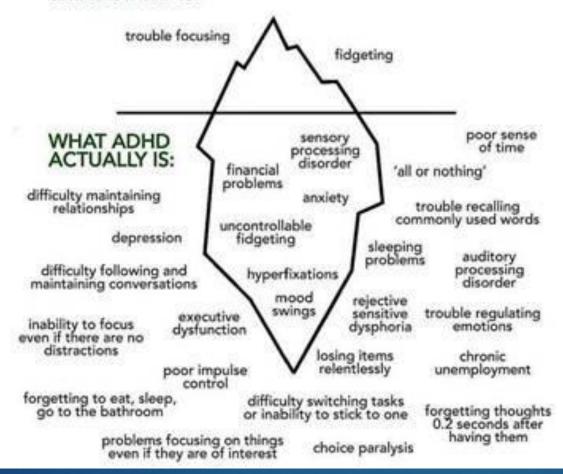
- An intense fixation on an interest or activity for an extended period of time
- Often time blocking out the world around them

 Neither inherently good or bad – it depends on the context and needs

#### THE ADHD ICEBERG

@FINUCCINIALFREDO

#### WHAT PEOPLE THINK ADHD IS:



#### Prevalence

- ▶ 6.1 million children in the US (9.4%) between the ages of 2 17 have ever been diagnosed with ADHD
- Boys are more likely to receive an ADHD diagnosis
  - ▶ 12.9% vs. 5.6%

#### **Why Girls And Women Are Undiagnosed**



Research on ADHD uses male sample



Different presentation of symptoms



Societal expectations



**Masking symptoms** 



Misdiagnosis of another disorder

## Gender Differences in ADHD

## Predominant Symptoms

- Men/boys tend to be diagnosed with more hyperactive/impulsive symptoms
  - ▶ Fidgety, always on the go, disruptive, restless, impulsive, impatient
- Women/girls tend to be diagnosed with more inattentive symptoms
  - Harder to focus, pay attention to details, stay organized, listen, and remember things

# Differences in Symptom Presentation

- Hyperactivity
  - ▶ Internal vs. external
  - Verbal vs. physical



# Predominant symptoms for girls: Inattentive Behaviors

- ► Fails to give close attention makes careless mistakes
- Appears to not be listening
- Difficulty with organization
- Loses things easily
- Easily distracted forgetful in daily activities
- Daydreaming
- Poor time management or planning

### Gender Norms

- Masking
- Societal Expectations
- Symptoms seen as a character flaw
- People Pleasing

### Time Blindness

Inability to sense the passing of time

- Over or under estimating how much time has passed
- Not knowing how long a task will take
- Not knowing which of 2 activities will take (or did take) the longest



# PUNCTUALITY

Consistently being on time is the product of proper planning, personal discipline, and a respect for other people's time.

Making a habit of being late demonstrates none of these things and is often a sign of patchy priorities and selfishness. Habitual lateness says, "My time is more valuable than yours."

Learn to be reliable and a person of integrity by adopting the discipline necessary to be on time.

Excerpt from PUNCTUALITY

- ZEROSOPHY.COM

# Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria

 Extreme emotional sensitivity and pain triggered by the perception that a person has been rejected or criticized

# Shift in Treatment

#### Neuroscience advances

#### Positive Psychology

Recovery and Strengths based

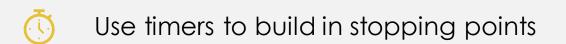
#### Movement from

- Medical Model "What is wrong with you"
- To
- Trauma Informed Care "What happened to you"
- To
- Resilience/Strength Based "What is right with you"

## People are not broken

- The goal isn't to 'fix' them to be like everyone else
- It's about understanding how THEY function and working within that to live the life they want

## Coping Skills





Turn off notifications

Block time to complete tasks



Color Coding



**INCUP** 

Interest, Novelty, Challenge, urgency, and passion



Exercise