

Women and ADHD

LARA L. ASHBAUGH, MS, LPC, NCC

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



Use timers to build in stopping points



Turn off notifications

Block time to complete tasks



Color Coding



INCUP

Interest, Novelty, Challenge, urgency, and passion



Exercise