



REMEMBER

- The thinking process of ADHD is called neurodivergent which means that the teen's brain experiences the world differently than the neurotypical (majority) population.
- The thoughts and emotions of ADHD teens are more extreme than neurotypicals. Their highs are higher and their lows are lower causing things like happiness and criticism to be experienced more intensely.
- ADHD teens see the world more circular than linear, so figuring out the beginning, middle and end of a task makes organization a huge challenge.
- Finding patterns, creative solutions and workarounds in situations that others are stuck in is where they shine making their voice really useful on a team.
- God made us able to connect with Him in many different ways. He also created us with unique ways of seeing the world. When we look at him side by side with neurodivergent youth, we see much more of who he is.



RECOGNIZE

- Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder can leave a youth feeling stupid, bad or lazy because the world is not built for their type of brain. These young people often experience a cycle of failure that reinforces untrue perceptions of themselves and their ability.
- ADHD is diagnosed in almost 10% of children, 6 times more often in boys than girls. About 60% of children with ADHD carry it into adulthood.
- Things you might notice in a youth are higher levels of impulsive, inattentive or distracted behaviours plus difficulty following instructions, managing time, waiting their turn, planning, organizing thoughts, ordering and completing tasks, and regulating emotions. Many of these are "executive functions" - the skills necessary to typically succeed at school and work.
- Although ADHD behaviours are chronic (show up repeatedly) they aren't constant (show up in every situation). ADHD youth usually have an inability to focus in general yet can hyper-focus on one thing that interests them. This can cause people watching to wrongly assume that their inattention is just a self-control issue.
- ADHD leaves teens at greater risk for mental health challenges. These youth may also have a harder time controlling their emotions or calming down when they're upset. They often have difficulties navigating personal relationships. Learning skills to help manage themselves, relationships and every day life helps an ADHD youth thrive.



RESPOND

- **Suggest the possibility.** It can be a great relief to a teen to find that there really is a reason for the things they are experiencing - and it isn't about "not trying hard enough." A medical doctor can look at the symptoms and help with next steps. A counsellor can help process the impact.
- **Connect them to their people.** ADHD can feel extremely isolating. Help teens discover that they aren't alone and that others are living amazing lives with ADHD.
- **Counterbalance the challenges.** Neurodivergence is not a disease to be cured. Link youth to tools that will help them navigate a world that thinks and sees things differently than they do. Discover and practice strategies and tips together for school and relationship success.
- **Remind them to reinforce.** A poor diet, lack of exercise, little sleep, looming deadlines and chaotic environments will all aggravate ADHD. Healthy life habits strengthen the developing brain and provide a foundation for practicing ADHD management strategies.
- **Create ADHD friendly spaces.** Plan predictably scheduled programs delivered in non-predictable ways with short segments and interesting breaks built in. Provide structured socializing opportunities to help teens to engage more successfully with peers. Make sure program rules and reasons are clearly defined and there's lots of reinforcement for positive effort not just accomplishment.
- **Have a plan.** Expect that crowded, noisy places will overstimulate the youth (even though some may love the excitement). Offer a space where they can step away from the chaos and calm their brain.
- **Speak out the good.** Remind teens with ADHD that while some things are a struggle, they also have some amazing gifts to offer. ADHD-ers are often highly sensitive and empathic. They are creative and able to notice things that others miss. They are spontaneous and full of life.



ADHD



RESOURCES

How to ADD - This YouTube channel is packed full of short, insightful videos to help a youth figure out ADD and live well with it.

additudemag.com - Tons of helpful and positive resources to understand and ADD and its impact on teens.

exceptionalindividuals.com - Search ADHD for great insights into understanding the challenges and strengths that come from ADHD as well as recommended careers for ADHD teens to consider.