

ADHD in Adults: Coping Strategies in the Workplace; Neuropsychologist Dr. Ashley Gorman Provides Tips for Managing ADHD on the Job

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Parsippany, NJ, April 2014 - Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder is well recognized and now commonly diagnosed in children. It is estimated that between 3% and 10% of school-age children exhibit the hyperactivity, inattention and impulsiveness that characterize the disorder. Less attention has been focused on the fact that for about half of those children, the symptoms continue into adulthood. "Many ADHD adults have not been diagnosed or treated," says neuropsychologist and ADHD specialist Dr. Ashley Gorman of Morris Psychological Group. "As a result, they have endured years of frustration and disappointment in their professional lives stemming from difficulty with concentration, task completion and restlessness. But by employing straightforward strategies, ADHD adults can manage their symptoms and thrive in their work lives."

Some ADHD symptoms are more subtle in adults than in children, particularly hyperactivity, which may be less often exhibited as "off-the-wall," highly energetic behavior and more often as fidgeting, agitation and general restlessness. Other characteristics of the disorder in adults that have significant implications on the job include: trouble concentrating and staying focused on a task, disorganization, forgetfulness, impulsive actions such as frequent interruptions and outbursts of temper, and keeping to a schedule or routine. These behavioral traits can make it difficult to follow company rules, meet deadlines, be on time, and may ultimately result in inability to keep a job. On the other hand, people with ADHD often have positive traits such as creativity, passion, imagination and energy that, when properly channeled, can be great career assets.

Tips for Coping with ADHD in the Workplace

- **Make sure you have the right job:** Jobs that require repetitive, routine tasks, a lot of sitting and listening quietly and a highly structured environment might not be the best fit for someone with ADHD. A faster pace, more variety and flexibility are often better suited. Many ADHD adults do well as entrepreneurs, where they can leverage their creativity and passion and have others attend to detail and deadlines.
- **Minimize distractions:** Try to locate your work space in a quiet, low-traffic area; if necessary to complete a task, ask if you can use an unoccupied room or office. Put up a "do not disturb" sign. Consider a sound machine or headphones to eliminate noise. Set aside a block of time once a day to respond to e-mail and return phone calls rather than let them interfere with your concentration. De-clutter your desk or work space.
- **Get organized:** Set up a color-coded filing system, make a to-do list, post notes to yourself, use a daily planner or calendar app, set alerts and reminders for due dates, set

your alarm to arrive at work early, write everything down to avoid forgetting, break complex tasks down into manageable chunks.

- Take a break: If you have a sedentary job, get up and walk around when you feel restless or fidgety. Find a place where you can do jumping jacks to release excess energy.
- Manage impulsive behavior: Ask for regular feedback about your interactions with others, enlist a coach or psychologist to role play scenarios likely to trigger frustration or anger, practice relaxation techniques such as meditation.

Many of these challenges in the workplace - distractions, repetitive tasks, time pressures - are issues for all workers but present particular difficulty for those with ADHD. According to Dr. Gorman: "While most people are able to just soldier through the boring or uninteresting tasks and everyday distractions, ADHD sufferers are more easily rattled than most and may have to work harder to find the situation that's right for them and that allows their strengths to shine."

"The most important thing for ADHD sufferers to realize is that if they are having difficulty on the job, it is not due to a character flaw or to a deficit of intelligence," Dr. Gorman concludes. "ADHD can be treated and managed. Anyone who suspects that they may have undiagnosed ADHD should see a doctor or psychologist who specializes in ADHD so they can be treated appropriately and learn coping strategies that will improve their job performance and their overall quality of life."

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