Identifying and Overcoming Learning Difficulties

“Maybe I’m just not concentrating enough. If I just study harder, I’ll be fine.” Those are thoughts that go through the minds of many graduate and professional students. So when does trouble focusing on coursework indicate there may be an undiagnosed learning disorder like attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder?

“One of the common misconceptions about the AD/HD is that if it hasn’t been diagnosed in childhood, you don’t have it,” says April Stein, Ph.D., Director of the Compas Program for Young Adults at The Menninger Clinic in Houston. “Many people are very good at compensating for AD/HD. They learned coping skills long ago and no one else ever caught on.”

Until recently, most people believed that children outgrew AD/HD in adolescence, perhaps because hyperactivity often diminishes during this time. Research demonstrates that many symptoms continue into adulthood. Recent studies reflect rates of roughly 2-4 percent among adults, according to information from the national non-profit organization Children and Adults with Attention Deficit Disorders (CHADD).

“There’s the notion that if you don’t have a problem with hyperactivity, you don’t have attention deficit,” Stein adds. “But adults who have no problem sitting still can have attention problems. They may make careless mistakes, or they can’t attend to tasks without getting distracted. They think maybe they just aren’t focusing enough, and they miss the signs that there may be an underlying physiological disorder that’s never been diagnosed,” says Stein.

More and more people are becoming aware of adult AD/HD and related problems, and Stein says at least half of the adults who enter the inpatient treatment program she directs have attention deficit in some form.

AD/HD shows up in college students’ behavior and performance in a number of ways, says Stein. “In addition to difficulty keeping up with school work, they may have trouble conversing and focusing in social situations, and others may think they’re rude. Another unusual aspect of the
**Students & Learning Difficulties**

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Can a person be smart and still have AD/HD?

Yes, AD/HD has nothing to do with how smart a person is. Some individuals with AD/HD have very high IQ scores, others score in the average range, and others score much lower. Often individuals with AD/HD who are very bright are not recognized as being impaired with AD/HD symptoms.

Source: *Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD)*

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Managing money while you are in school can involve setting financial goals and objectives, determining how you will finance your education, budgeting, learning about public and private financing resources and how to survive cash flow crunches. The following publications and Web sources offer guidance and tips.

**Money Matters: Useful Resources for Students**

- **Can a person be smart and still have AD/HD?**
- **Other strategies for managing attention deficit disorders include clinics and special programs that teach coping strategies, studying and test-taking skills.**
- **A professional coach can help the AD/HD adult learn how to organize his life, suggests National Institutes of Health literature. Tasks can be organized into sections, so that completion of each part can give a sense of accomplishment. Above all, AD/HD adults should learn as much as they can about their disorder. Small successes can help students begin to appreciate some of the positive characteristics of AD/HD — boundless energy, warmth and enthusiasm.**

**Resources**

- International Dyslexia Association www.interdys.org
- Learning Disabilities Association of America www.ldanatl.org

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