

What is ADHD?

ADHD (Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder) is a condition that affects anywhere between 5 and 20% of school-going children and it is recognised as a condition that can persist into adulthood. ADHD is often thought of as a “concentration” problem but this is something of a misconception. ADHD is, in fact, a problem with switching attention between competing stimuli/ tasks and with sustaining attention on sometimes mundane and uninteresting, yet important tasks. Children with ADHD find it difficult to ignore minor distractions in order to focus on important tasks but once focussed, they also then struggle to change focus easily.

Most of us find it quite difficult to focus on tasks and activities we find boring but for people with ADHD, avoiding distraction when the task is mundane or challenging is much more difficult than for the average person. For the person with ADHD, when faced with a task that requires focussed attention, distractions that other people seem easily able to ignore can seem irresistible as they continuously draw focus away from the task at hand. This makes day-to-day tasks quite arduous for the person with ADHD. Imagine trying to concentrate on a difficult maths equation in a busy, noisy, smelly market place – that feeling of struggling to keep track of the “thread” is what it is like for many people with ADHD when faced with many ordinary tasks like packing a bag for school or getting ready for work/ school in the morning.

Treatment of ADHD

ADHD manifests differently for each person, depending on age, gender and lifestyle. Medication can be extremely useful for managing some of the more evident symptoms of ADHD but research suggests a multi-faceted approach has more long-term success. Successfully living with ADHD often means finding more helpful ways of dealing with peers and social situations; new ways of responding to the demands of school and home; and ways of thinking about the self that are self-supportive yet realistic. As no experience and expression of ADHD is completely alike, psychosocial intervention for ADHD is most effective when it holds the person's individual needs in mind.

Evidence suggests that the best practice begins with a thorough assessment of each child so that their own individual personal challenges can be understood. Depending on each person's needs in terms of their age,

gender, family constellation and personality, management can include any of the following treatment modalities in combination:

Social Skills Training

Social skills groups can help with social interaction problems (peer group problems), sibling problems, perspective taking, turn-taking, empathy building and setting and complying with appropriate boundaries.

Family Therapy and Parenting Children with ADHD

Family therapy can help the family to find skilful ways to manage stresses and frustrations while having a supportive non-judgemental space to make sense of their experience in a way that addresses self-blame, guilt, resentments and frustrations.

Parenting is an art that develops with practice. Parenting a child with ADHD poses particular challenges and honing parenting skills can help reduce stress at home as well as provide a supportive yet contained environment which can help the child with ADHD face his/her challenges more skilfully.

Individual Therapy/ Play Therapy

Individual therapy can help children and adults alike learn new ways to make sense of their experiences of the world and themselves so that they can find increasingly skilful ways of behaving that enhance rather than erode their self-esteem. A healthy self-esteem can be a key in being able to recognise the benefits and strengths that can be harnessed from ADHD and can pave the way for an empowering experience of a successful, masterful self.

Useful Links

- ✓ The Frankfurt ADHD and ODD Effectiveness Study

<http://www.sfi-frankfurt.de/forschung/forschungsfeld->

[1/therapiewirksamkeitsstudie/frankfurt-adhd-and-odd-effectiveness-study.html](http://www.sfi-frankfurt.de/forschung/forschungsfeld-1/therapiewirksamkeitsstudie/frankfurt-adhd-and-odd-effectiveness-study.html)

- ✓ ADHD in adults

http://www.emedicinehealth.com/adhd_in_adults/page3_em.htm

- ✓ A conceptual history of Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder – Colman Nefsky, Faculty of Medicine, University of Ottawa, Canada.

<http://www.medicine.uottawa.ca/historyofmedicine/hetenyi/nefsky.htm>

- ✓ Socio-educational and Biomedical Models in the Treatment of Attention Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder and related Neurobehavioural Disorders in Childhood and Adolescence, and their Implications for Adult Mental Health.

<http://priory.com/psych/iford.htm>