ADHD: Not Just a Kid’s Problem

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), sometimes referred to as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), is often thought of as “a kid’s problem,” with the belief that the child - most typically meaning boys - will outgrow it. Well, let’s look at some information.

- It appears to be a chronic neurobiological disorder and may be partly genetic.
- It can negatively affect the academic, social, emotional, and work aspects of a person’s life.
- It persists into adolescence and into adulthood.
- While girls and women are less likely to receive a diagnosis of and treatment for ADHD than boys and men, it affects both boys and girls, men and women.
- Diagnosis is not simple, ADHD often co-exists with other psychological disorders.
- ADHD in adults can result in problems at work, at school, in social settings, and at home. Some of the ways ADHD expresses itself in adults is as follows:
  - Forgetting details of projects
  - Difficulty sitting through a long program of any kind (play, dinner party, lecture, meeting)
  - Making impulsive decisions that may be dangerous to the person or others (Engaging in toxic or dangerous relationships, driving while drunk or using drugs, etc.)
  - Procrastinating
  - Making careless mistakes
  - Producing insufficient work on projects or abandoning them altogether
  - Consistently arriving late for appointments
  - Impulsively interrupting others and not following or tuning out conversations
  - Encountering problems when job hunting or in keeping jobs
  - Experiencing higher stress levels, increased risk of marital problems and/or substance abuse problems
If you suspect you have undiagnosed ADHD, you will first need to be adequately assessed by professionals in the mental health and medical field. Treatment is often a combination of medication and therapy. The psychological and life skills issues often associated with ADHD can be ameliorated. Strategies can be developed and individualized to a person’s style. For yourself, your family, friends and co-workers, it is worth getting assessed and getting the help needed. Many adults feel a sense of relief following diagnosis. The uncertainty over what was “wrong” is replaced with information and hope for the future.

Women & ADHD

- Girls and women are often undiagnosed because their primary symptoms can be shyness and inattentiveness. These traits and behaviors are usually not associated with ADHD in the minds of many parents and teachers.

- They may also compensate for their symptoms in order to be the “good girl” at home or in class.

- Coping skills and compensatory mechanisms begin to break down as life stressors increase in adolescence and in adulthood.

- Women and girls often have mood and anxiety disorders, thoughts of suicide, and episodes of self-harm.

*Research into this area is increasing; there is much that still needs to be learned.

References: