

Review Article

Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder: A Weakness or A Superpower??

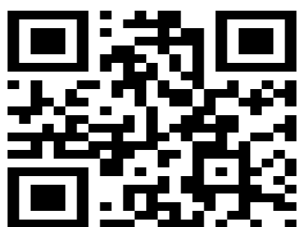
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ABSTRACT

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that has long been known to impair children's ability to function. But it can affect both children and adults. The prevalence is increasing in recent times due to awareness about this condition. The risk factors include genetic, environmental and prenatal. ADHD is not a weakness but just people with differently functioning brains. If we could make the patients of ADHD aware about how their brain functions and how to make use of it, we could help them unleash the superpowers that each one of them has concealed within.

Keywords: ADHD, neurodevelopmental, superpowers, inattention, hyperactivity, impulsive



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INTRODUCTION

ADHD is not a new condition and has been called different names throughout history. It was initially called 'minimal brain dysfunction' in 1930's. Later on, it came to be known as ADD (Attention Deficit Disorder) & ADHD respectively.

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder that has long been known to impair children's ability to function. But it can affect both children and adults. Neurodevelopmental disorders are characterized by developmental deficits that produce impairments of personal, social, academic or occupational functioning.

Prevalance:

Surveys suggest it occurs in most cultures in about 5% of children and about 2.5% of adults. In the recent years, prevalence has increased due to proper research about it. ADHD doesn't go away just because someone gets older. The symptoms just look different depending on the age of the individual.

Male:Female ratio accounts 2:1. But it is believed that ADHD is over diagnosed in males due to hyperactive behaviour and

underdiagnosed in females due to inattentive behaviour.

Risk Factors:

These include Genetic, Environmental and Prenatal.

Genetic:

30-50% of first-degree biological relatives (mom, dad, sister or brother) of children with ADHD also have ADHD. So, it's super common for a person diagnosed with ADHD to have a close relative with ADHD. Siblings have twice the risk of having ADHD than the general population.

Environmental:

Most frequently suspected factors include:

- Exposure to environmental toxins, especially Lead.
- Infections (encephalitis)
- Severe head injury.
- There maybe a history of child abuse, neglect or multiple foster placements.

Prenatal:

Most frequently suspected factors include:

- Maternal drug use, alcohol use or smoking during pregnancy.

- Low birth weight baby.
- Premature birth. (before 37th week of pregnancy)
- Children with epilepsy.
- Brain damage – either in the womb, during or post delivery.

How does an ADHD brain differ from the normal brain?

ADHD brains have a smaller prefrontal cortex which is responsible for Executive Functioning.

Executive functioning includes a wide range of functions like impulse control, organization, task initiation, planning and prioritizing, self-monitoring, working memory, flexible thinking, emotional control, etc. So, patients with ADHD may experience difficulty with any or all of these functions in varying degrees.

ADHD brains have low levels of Dopamine. Dopamine is usually concerned with regulating our brain's Pleasure and Reward system. Moreover, it also affects a person's mood, motivation and movement. So, ADHD patients usually have difficulty staying motivated; focus drifts easily; keep seeking stimulation.

Diagnostic Criteria:

People with ADHD show a persistent pattern of inattention and/or hyperactivity-impulsivity that interferes with functioning or development:

Inattention:

Six or more symptoms of inattention for children up to age 16 years, or five or more for adolescents age 17 years and older and adults; symptoms of inattention have been present for at least 6 months, and they are inappropriate for developmental level:

- Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork, at work, or with other activities.
- Often has trouble holding attention on tasks or play activities.
- Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.
- Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork, chores, or duties in the workplace (e.g., loses focus, side-

tracked).

- Often has trouble organizing tasks and activities.
- Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to do tasks that require mental effort over a long period of time (such as schoolwork or homework).
- Often loses things necessary for tasks and activities (e.g. school materials, pencils, books, tools, wallets, keys, paperwork, eyeglasses, mobile telephones).
- Is often easily distracted
- Is often forgetful in daily activities.

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

Six or more symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity for children up to age 16 years, or five or more for adolescents age 17 years and older and adults; symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity have been present for at least 6 months to an extent that is disruptive and inappropriate for the person's developmental level:

- Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet, or squirms in seat.
- Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.
- Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is not appropriate (adolescents or adults may be limited to feeling restless).
- Often unable to play or take part in leisure activities quietly.
- Is often "on the go" acting as if "driven by a motor".
- Often talks excessively.
- Often blurts out an answer before a question has been completed.
- Often has trouble waiting their turn.
- Often interrupts or intrudes on others (e.g., butts into conversations or games)

In addition, the following conditions must be met:

- Several inattentive or hyperactive-impulsive symptoms were present before age 12 years.
- Several symptoms are present in two or more settings, (such as at home, school or work; with friends or relatives; in other activities).
- There is clear evidence that the

symptoms interfere with, or reduce the quality of, social, school, or work functioning.

- The symptoms are not better explained by another mental disorder (such as a mood disorder, anxiety disorder, dissociative disorder, or a personality disorder). The symptoms do not happen only during the course of schizophrenia or another psychotic disorder.

Types of ADHD:

Based on the types of symptoms, three kinds (presentations) of ADHD can occur:

1. **Combined Presentation:** if enough symptoms of both criteria inattention and hyperactivity-impulsivity were present for the past 6 months
2. **Predominantly Inattentive Presentation:** if enough symptoms of inattention, but not hyperactivity-impulsivity, were present for the past six months
3. **Predominantly Hyperactive-Impulsive Presentation:** if enough symptoms of hyperactivity-impulsivity, but not inattention, were present for the past six months.

Because symptoms can change over time, the presentation may change over time as well.

Can ADHD become a Superpower?

ADHD has been prevalent since time immemorial but we see a recent rise in the cases due to more awareness about the condition. Many successful people are known to be victims of it. To name a few we have Abraham Lincon, Albert Einstein, Bill Gates, Virginia Wolf, Socrates, Thomas Edison, etc.

ADHD Superpowers:

HYPERFOCUS – When a person with ADHD is engaged in something that interests them, they can focus on it for hours. They work very passionately and can outperform even normal individuals in such tasks.

Very high on energy: Only this energy needs to be channelized in the right direction.

Highly Creative. They look and think very differently.

Quick in taking actions and good at tackling tasks that are urgent.

Can find better solutions to challenging problems as they look at things very

differently.

Highly sensitive and intuitive – Can easily know what your feeling. This makes them very empathetic, loving and kind.

30% more likely to start their own business as they always think out of the box.

ADHD is real; something that you don't grow out of, it tends to stay even as people age. It needs to be addressed and only medication is not sufficient. People with ADHD are not weak but different and all of their qualities can be converted into superpowers only if they are made aware about how their brain functions differently and what they can do to make full use of it.

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