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Homeschooling

ISSUE 9, 2022

EDUCATION IS AN ADVENTURE

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**HOME
LEARNING
SPACES**

Questions
answered
about your
child's ADHD

7

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7 questions answered about your child's ADHD

“The biggest consequence of ADHD is the labels many kids are given at home/in school/by family and friends and the effect those labels have on their self-esteem.”

When a parent suspects or has recently received an ADHD diagnosis, they usually have many questions. Dalena van der Westhuizen, cognitive development specialist, master brain coach and co-founder and Managing Director of BrainAbility, answers some of them

What's the difference between ADD and ADHD? In the past (and even now), people referred to attention struggles where there was no hyperactivity as attention deficit disorder (ADD). That terminology, however, has changed and we now only refer to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

ADHD is the umbrella term used to describe children (and adults) who experience significant challenges with focus, impulsivity or hyperactivity.

Are there different types of ADHD?

There are three main types of ADHD, which differ according to the symptoms that present most commonly:

ADHD, predominantly inattentive: People with this type of ADHD don't exhibit signs of hyperactivity or impulsivity. Instead, they're easily distracted





often labelled as lazy, naughty or trouble-makers.

What are the treatment options for ADHD? Medication. Cognitive behavioural therapy. Cognitive development programmes (aimed at strengthening weak underlying skills for attention and focus).

What causes ADHD? ADHD is a developmental impairment of the brain's executive functions.

Research to date suggests the underlying reasons for concentration and focus struggles may stem from specific cognitive weaknesses – those brain functions responsible for how well we pay attention, learn, read and remember.

Here's a great example of one such research study, conducted by the Gibson Institute of Cognitive Research and presented at the annual convention of the American Psychological Association in



and find it difficult to pay attention. (This is the one often referred to as ADD.)

ADHD, predominantly impulsive/hyperactive: This is the least common type. The person shows signs of hyperactivity and the need to move constantly, as well

as displaying impulsive behaviour. They don't show signs of becoming distracted or inattentive.

ADHD, combined presentation: This is the most common type of ADHD. The person shows impulsive and hyperactive behaviour, as well as being easily distracted and struggling to maintain attention.

Does this hamper a child's ability to learn and keep up with academic work?

For most children with ADHD, processing of information can be slower. This might mean that it may take longer for all or some of the stages of learning to occur.

For me, the biggest consequence is the labels many kids are given at home/in school/by family and friends and the effect those labels have on their self-esteem – they're



August 2017 in Washington, DC. The example was titled: *“Beyond Attention: Memory and Processing Speed Deficits Dominate Cognitive Profiles in ADHD Across the Lifespan”*.

Here are some of the interesting findings:

- Attention wasn't the weakest cognitive skill among more than 5 000 children and adults formally diagnosed with ADHD.
- Across the lifespan, the greatest cognitive deficits in clients with ADHD were working memory, long-term memory and processing speed.
- Sustained attention was the fourth-weakest out of seven skills.

Does one outgrow ADHD? ADHD usually persists into adulthood.

It was once believed that children with ADHD outgrew the disorder during adolescence because hyperactivity is often reduced as children become teenagers.

While it's true that hyperactivity is usually less of an issue in teenagers and adults with ADHD, other symptoms can often get worse. These include impulsive behaviour, poor concentration and risk-taking.

Most people diagnosed with ADHD as adults recall having similar problems as children.

Are there strategies that parents can implement at home to help a child struggling with

ADHD or attention issues?

- Create structure by means of a routine and stick to it as much as possible.
- Break tasks down into manageable pieces.
- Simplify and organise your child's life.
- Limit distractions, when possible.
- Encourage exercise and outside play.
- Regulate sleep patterns – eg stick to bedtimes, getting enough sleep and not allowing the child to watch screens for an hour before bedtime.
- Encourage out-loud thinking (planning and organisational skills).



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