

## Could ADHD Be Impacting Your Relationship?



Indications that undiagnosed ADHD might be impacting your relationship include:

- You have a child diagnosed with ADHD (which is highly hereditary)
- One of you sometimes feels ‘as if you have another child’ rather than a partner
- One partner is ‘consistently inconsistent’ – often promising to do something, and then forgetting or having trouble following through. This happens even when the partner really wants to follow through...
- Your courtship was wildly exciting and you couldn't pay enough attention to each other. Now one partner feels lonely and ignored in the relationship, while the other seems often ‘tuned out’ or doing other things
- One of you nags a lot. Even though this partner does not like to nag, it seems the only way the other partner gets things done. The other partner avoids the nagger (or pursuer) resulting in more pursuit
- There seems to be chronic anger and resentment building in the relationship.

### Finding Out About ADHD is an Important Step Forward!

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is not really about ‘attention deficit.’ It’s really about ‘attention dysregulation.’ People with ADHD can sometimes focus very intently, while at many other times they have difficulty staying focused and are very easily distracted. Furthermore, adults are less likely to have the ‘hyperactivity’ part of ADHD than children. Instead, many adults have the ‘distracted’ version of ADHD. In fact, chronic distraction is the #1 symptom of adult ADHD.

About 5% of adults have ADHD, but almost 90% of adults with ADHD don’t *know* they have it. This means that even though the symptoms of ADHD may be present in a relationship, partners are usually unaware of it. All they know is they are struggling, yet feel they should be able to do much better. Since common ADHD symptoms such as distraction, difficulty planning or following through, emotionality, and poor short-term memory have a real impact on your day-to-day lives, finding out about ADHD is great news! Finally, you know what is going on and can do something about it!

### What Comes Next

1. If you haven’t been evaluated to confirm whether or not ADHD is present, this is the first step. Your counselor can help you find the right resources in your area.
2. If you determine that one or both of you has ADHD, then it’s time to learn both about ADHD and about the impact it has on adult relationships. Once you both

learn to properly interpret and respond to ADHD symptoms, your relationship can improve immensely! You may well be able to find the warmth and love you thought you had lost.

3. Responding to ADHD issues by “trying harder” typically doesn’t work. If it did, you would have already been able to address the issues you are facing before now. So, instead of ‘trying harder,’ learn to ‘try differently.’ That means having the ADHD partner learn to manage ADHD symptoms in ways that are known to work when one has ADHD, and encouraging partners without ADHD (or who also have ADHD) to learn to respond to ADHD symptoms in ways that improve your feelings for each other and experiences in your relationship. There is more and more information available about these strategies.

## Good Resources

**Your counselor can help you find a qualified diagnostician in your area.**

**For more on the symptoms of ADHD, diagnosis and what it feels like to have ADHD:**

1. *Driven to Distraction*, by Edward Hallowell, MD and John Ratey, MD
2. *What it feels like to have ADHD*. A Psychology Today blog post at: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/may-i-have-your-attention/201311/adhd-adults-what-it-feels-have-adhd>
3. *NIMH overview of ADHD* at this link provides a good overview, even though it has a focus on children: [http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/easy-to-read.shtml?utm\\_source=REFERENCES\\_R7](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/easy-to-read.shtml?utm_source=REFERENCES_R7)

**To learn about the impact of adult ADHD on your relationship:**

1. *The ADHD Effect on Marriage*, by Melissa Orlov
2. *The Couple’s Guide to Thriving with ADHD*, by Melissa Orlov & Nancie Kohlenberger
3. [www.ADHDmarriage.com](http://www.ADHDmarriage.com)

**For information about the treatment and management of adult ADHD:**

1. *More Attention, Less Deficit*, by Ari Tuckman
2. *Taking Charge of Adult ADHD*, by Russell Barkley

**How to get more organized when you have ADHD:**

1. *ADD-Friendly Ways to Organize Your Life* by Judith Kohlberg and Kathleen Nadeau