

DEAF CHILDREN WITH ADHD AND LEARNING DIFFICULTIES



Scott R. Smith, MD, MPH
Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician
University of Rochester Medical Center



Common Complaints about Children with Problems

- Your Guesses....

Common Complaints about Children with Problems

- Not listening, not paying attention, not following directions
- Not sitting still, moving around too much, touch or bother other students
- Trouble learning, problems remembering important information
- Being very shy, nervous, fearful
- Being obsessive, repetitive, and no real friends
- Being negative, becoming frustrated easily, getting angry easily, being mean or aggressive to others

Medical Labels

- Common diagnoses for children who have “problems”
 - ADHD (90%)
 - Learning Problems (50%)
 - Anxiety (30%)
 - Depression (10%)
 - Bipolar Mood Problems (1-5%)
 - Developmental Disorders (5%)***
 - MR, Autism, Asperger Syndrome

***Might be higher rate in deaf children because of birth problems causing deafness and other medical problems

Most Common Problem in Children

- Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- What is ADHD really?

Common Myths of ADHD

- ADHD is not “real”
- ADHD is caused by “bad” parents, eating too much sugary foods, food additives, fluorescent lights, etc.
- ADHD means that a person is “dumb” or “lazy” and will not be able to succeed
- Others??

ADHD Does Not Mean Cannot Focus on Anything



ADHD Really Means Trying to Focus on Too
Many Things Instead of Focusing on the Boring
Things You Really Should Be Doing

ADHD: A Combination Problem

- ADHD is a combination problem
 - Biological - brain might be wired a little differently, less efficient – not as “straight wired” – *un-stimulated “bored” brain* – loud car engine
 - Genetic – children with ADHD often have parents who also have ADHD
 - Environment – parents who have ADHD “teach” ADHD to their children
 - Emotional – people who have ADHD seem to have more trouble adjusting to life in general

ADHD: Technical Diagnosis

- Technical Medical Diagnosis – “by the book”
 - 6 of 9 significant inattention problems (ADHD-Inattentive Subtype)
 - and/or
 - 6 of 9 significant hyperactivity and impulsivity problems (ADHD-Hyperactivity/Impulsivity Subtype)
 - Both (ADHD-Combined Type) – Most Common
- But....the treatment is basically the same for whatever type of ADHD...so whatever...ADHD is basically ADHD...ADD (old word) is same as ADHD...



Symptoms of ADHD (Inattention)

- Often pay no attention to detail and make careless mistakes in schoolwork or other activities
- Can't concentrate on one game or task for long
- Often seem not to listen when spoken to
- Often don't follow instructions, and fail to finish schoolwork and tasks around the house
- Often have difficulty organising tasks and activities
- Often avoid tasks that need a lot of concentration
- Often lose things
- Are easily distracted
- Are often forgetful

Symptoms of ADHD (Hyperactivity/Impulsivity)

- Often fidget or squirm when sitting down
- Keep getting up
- Often run about or climb instead of sitting still
- Often have difficulty playing quietly
- Are on the go all the time, and act as if driven by a motor
- Talk too much.
- Often blurt out answers before a question is finished
- Often have difficulty waiting their turn
- Often interrupt others.

Diagnosing ADHD: Other Criteria

- Your child must have been behaving like this for **at least six months**.
- Some of the symptoms must have been present **before your child reached the age of 7 years old**.
- Above all, your child's behaviour must be causing problems in **at least two places** (for example, at home and at school).

Who has ADHD?

- Everybody probably has some ADHD issues....who really wants to pay attention and focus on something very boring??
- The real issue is how does that person force himself or herself to focus on important things even when they are very bored....
- If not being able to focus on boring, but important things cause the person real problems in school, work, or life.....this person basically has ADHD...

Having ADHD Doesn't Mean You Can't Succeed...

- People with ADHD can do very well with school, work, and life if they figure out how to work around their ADHD problems or make their ADHD tendencies work for them...
- People who know or learn how to adjust well to life challenges tend to have less ADHD problems

But ADHD Does Make It A Little Harder...

- ADHD makes things a little harder
- ADHD brain needs higher level of stimulation to process information
- People with ADHD who try to do well often have a busy mind that over-process and overanalyze information – attempt to stimulate own brain...

ADHD = More Effort Required

No ADHD



ADHD

VS.



WHO HAS TO TRY HARDER TO WIN THE RACE???

ADHD is Usually the Beginning of Other More Worse Problems

- Because 90% of children with “problems” have ADHD, ADHD seems to be the beginning or the gateway for children to have other problems as well
- So, if we catch ADHD early and do our best to treat and manage it, we can make a big difference for children’s future

How to Catch ADHD?

- Think about your students....what I just described to you...do any of your students seem to match some or most of these descriptions??
- Use common sense....don't have to be a doctor to figure out if children might have ADHD problems...
- If children have any kind of problems, check for ADHD first....keep it simple...

Treating ADHD

- Three Primary Treatment Approaches
- In order of most people's preferences
 - Behavioral counseling
 - Educational supports
 - Medication
- In order of true effectiveness
 - Medication
 - Educational supports
 - Behavioral counseling

No, I Don't Like Using Medicines in Children...

- If we can help children with ADHD problems without using medicines, let's do it...
- But, most children with real ADHD problems need medicines to do much better...behavioral and educational supports helps only a little for most children with real ADHD problems



Medication

- Many people are not comfortable using medicine to treat ADHD or other behavioral or emotional problems in children because it seems to mean bad things about these children...
- But, without medicines, many children with serious ADHD problems will often not do very well with many more serious problems...low grades, school drop out, job problems, family problems, drug or alcohol problems, legal troubles, etc.

Medication

- It is up to parents to decide if they want to use medicine or not...
- But we can help the parents to understand that medicines might really help students with serious problems to do much better and have better future...
- Many different medicines with different options and approaches to get best results

ADHD Medicines

- Stimulant medicines
 - Ritalin, Ritalin LA, Metadate CD, Concerta
 - Focalin, Focalin XR
 - Adderall, Adderall XR
 - Dexedrine
- Non-stimulant medicines
 - Strattera
 - Wellbutrin
- Combination therapy with both stimulant medicine and non-stimulant medicine is often helpful in children with ADHD and other problems

Behavioral Counseling

- Logic, consistent behavioral management approaches
- Clear expectations – communication is key
- Specific rewards for targeted desired behaviors and consequences for targeted undesired behaviors
- Consequences must be meaningful, logic, and unemotional

Discipline and Punishment

- Discipline and punishment is not a negative thing, it can be very helpful and useful when used appropriately to teach respect for some structure and without emotions
- Discipline and punishment with emotion is basically abuse

Educational Supports

- Informal
 - School does it on own
- Formal
 - Section 504 Accommodation Plan
 - Individualized Education Program (I.E.P.)
- Provides variety of accommodations and modifications and specialized services and supports

Educational Supports

- If student has ADHD, it can really help that student to have some educational supports to help the student to overcome ADHD problems to do well in school
 - Preferential seating
 - Teacher or aide repeat most important things to student
 - Copy of notes, study guides
 - Organizational supports – end of day, counseling, workshop, etc...

Educational Supports

- Federal and state laws make it really up to children's parents to push school districts to provide more services and supports for children who might need them
- But we can help tell parents when we think a student might need more supports and encourage them to think about talking with local school district if needed...

ADHD Summary

- The most common problem in children who have “problems”
- Catching ADHD early and encouraging positive treatment can make big difference for children’s future, especially deaf children!!
- Three treatment approaches work best together and when parents and everybody else are really involved

Learning Problems

- Like ADHD, deaf children can have learning problems just like some hearing children do...
- But learning problems can be very hard to figure out in deaf children because of language and communication issues
- If 5-10% hearing children have learning problems, 5-10% deaf children probably will also have learning problems

Deaf Children with Learning Problems

- Deaf children often have some language issues related to the fact that they are deaf people in 99% hearing world...
 - ASL or other sign language as primary language so English is second language
 - Even with CI and very advanced hearing aids, deaf children still tend to struggle a bit more with English than average hearing children

Learning Problems/ Learning Disability

- Verbal (language-based) learning problems – more common and easier to diagnose in hearing children
- Non-verbal (visual-perceptual) learning problems – might be common, but not as easy to diagnose in any children
- Learning Disability (LD) – usually means language-based verbal learning problems
- Non-Verbal Learning Disability (NVLD) – visual-perceptual learning problems

Language-Based Learning Problems in Deaf Children

- How to separate English as Second Language (ESOL) issues from real language-based learning problems?
 - Need to compare with other deaf children who have similar background – hearing or deaf families, oral or manual language predominant, etc.

Visual-Based Learning Problems in Deaf Children

- Very difficult to catch because most deaf children must rely on visual skills to communicate with others so most deaf children will compensate at least somewhat to be able to communicate
- Look for problems understanding more abstract concepts – emotions, feelings, things that you can't touch, metaphors, etc.
- Look for students who have harder time with math than reading in general and students who have harder time understanding big picture of what they are reading...can read ok, but not really understand the big idea

Treating Learning Problems

- No pills to fix or cure learning problems
- Must work around or through learning problems to help student to do best as possible
 - Educational supports (same and more than ADHD problems)
 - Watch for any behavioral or emotional problems because student is struggling and has to work harder in school

Any Questions? Comments? Feedback?

- Thank you very much for your attention and participation today!!

