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ADHD MYTHS vs REALITY

A Guide for Clients and Families

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Evidence-based information to help you understand ADHD better

Introduction

ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) is one of the most misunderstood conditions in mental health. This guide separates fact from fiction to help you, your family, and your support network better understand what ADHD really is.

MYTH vs REALITY

MYTH #1: "ADHD isn't a real medical condition"

REALITY: ADHD is a recognised neurodevelopmental disorder with decades of scientific research behind it. Brain imaging studies show structural and functional differences in ADHD brains. It's listed in both the DSM-5 and ICD-11 diagnostic manuals.

What this means for you: Your struggles are valid and real. You're not "making it up" or "being dramatic."

MYTH #2: "ADHD only affects hyperactive young boys"

REALITY: ADHD affects all genders and ages. Many girls and women have inattentive type ADHD, which can look like daydreaming, disorganisation, or being "spacey." Symptoms often become more noticeable during hormonal changes or increased life demands.

What this means for you: If you're female or weren't diagnosed as a child, your ADHD is still valid. Many people receive their first diagnosis in adulthood.

MYTH #3: "People with ADHD just need more discipline"

REALITY: ADHD involves differences in executive functioning - the brain's management system. It's not about willpower or character. The prefrontal cortex (responsible for planning, focus, and impulse control) develops differently in ADHD brains.

What this means for you: You need strategies and support, not criticism. Working harder isn't always the answer - working smarter is.

MYTH #4: "ADHD medication is dangerous and overprescribed"

REALITY: ADHD medications are among the most researched treatments in psychiatry. When properly prescribed and monitored, they're safe and effective for most people. The goal is to help you feel more like yourself, not change your personality.

What this means for you: Medication is one tool in your toolkit. You have the right to make informed decisions about your treatment with professional guidance.

MYTH #5: "If you can focus on things you enjoy, you don't have ADHD"

REALITY: ADHD brains can experience "hyperfocus" - intense concentration on interesting or rewarding activities. This doesn't contradict an ADHD diagnosis. The issue is with sustained attention on less stimulating but important tasks.

What this means for you: Your ability to binge-watch Netflix or spend hours on a hobby doesn't invalidate your ADHD. It's actually a common symptom!

MYTH #6: "ADHD is caused by bad parenting or too much screen time"

REALITY: ADHD is primarily genetic, with heritability rates of 70-80%. Environmental factors may influence symptom severity, but they don't cause ADHD. Parents don't cause ADHD through their parenting style.

What this means for you: If you're a parent, this isn't your fault. If you have ADHD, your parents didn't cause it either.

MYTH #7: "People with ADHD are just lazy or unmotivated"

REALITY: People with ADHD often work twice as hard to achieve the same results as neurotypical people. They may struggle with tasks that seem simple to others due to executive functioning differences, not lack of motivation.

What this means for you: You're not lazy. Your brain works differently, and you may need different strategies to succeed.

MYTH #8: "ADHD is overdiagnosed - everyone has a bit of ADHD"

REALITY: While everyone experiences attention difficulties sometimes, ADHD involves persistent, pervasive symptoms that significantly impact multiple areas of life. Proper diagnosis requires comprehensive assessment by qualified professionals.

What this means for you: Your diagnosis matters. ADHD symptoms are more severe and persistent than typical attention challenges.

The Reality of Living with ADHD

ADHD affects every aspect of daily life:

- Work/School: Difficulty with organisation, time management, and sustained attention
- Relationships: Challenges with listening, following through, and emotional regulation
- Self-esteem: Years of being misunderstood can impact confidence
- Daily tasks: Simple activities like cleaning or paying bills can feel overwhelming

The Strengths of ADHD

ADHD isn't just about challenges. Many people with ADHD also experience:

- Creativity and innovation
- Hyperfocus abilities
- High energy and enthusiasm
- Thinking outside the box
- Resilience and adaptability
- Empathy and emotional sensitivity

Getting Support

If you recognise yourself in these descriptions:

1. Seek professional assessment from a qualified practitioner
2. Connect with others who understand ADHD
3. Learn about strategies that work for ADHD brains

4. Be patient with yourself - understanding ADHD is a journey

Remember

- ADHD is a neurodevelopmental difference, not a character flaw
- You deserve understanding, support, and appropriate treatment
- With the right strategies and support, people with ADHD can thrive
- Your ADHD traits can be both challenging and valuable

Need more support understanding your ADHD?

I offer ADHD-informed counselling and coaching to help you understand your brain, develop effective strategies, and build confidence.

Contact me for a free consultation:



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Specialising in neurodivergent therapy and ADHD support

This information is for educational purposes and doesn't replace professional medical advice. Always consult qualified healthcare providers for diagnosis and treatment decisions.