



Understanding ADHD





Agenda

- What is ADHD and why does it exist?
(General background information about kids & adults)
- Masking and why does it matter?
- How ADHD can manifest in the classroom and at home
- Conversation & Questions



**ADHD is
inherited
and
polygenic.**



*multiple genes associated



ADHD ADHD ADHD ADHD ADHD

*many possible presentations



Why would ADHD be evolutionarily adaptive?

Exploration made possible by novelty seeking

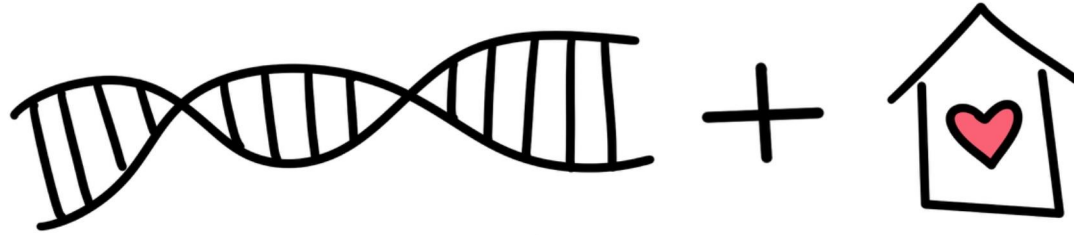


Discovery and invention made possible by risk-taking, creative thinking, novel thought processes

Safety of the social group made possible by attention to environmental stimuli, heightened awareness of threats, ability to function well at nighttime

A study in Kenya found striking differences between carriers of DRD4/7R who were nomadic vs. settled.





Genes + Environment **create** **unique presentations.**

traumatic stress poverty attachment with parents/
toxins and substances caregivers
parental mental health co-occurring conditions
alcohol and nicotine during
pregnancy premature birth
birth asphyxia hypothyroidism during first trimester



With that in mind, there are factors and biases that influence who is diagnosed with ADHD.

Children with behavior problems are more likely to be diagnosed

Children assigned male are more likely to show externalizing behaviors and be diagnosed

BIPOC children are more likely to be assigned more stigmatized labels such as ODD or CD



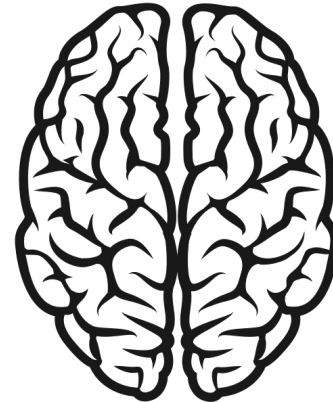
ADHD and Autism:

You can't discuss one without the other

High rate of co-occurrence/genetic overlap

Large amount of trait overlap

- Sensory differences
- Interest-based nervous system
- Differences in attention and focus
- Need for stimming



What is Masking?

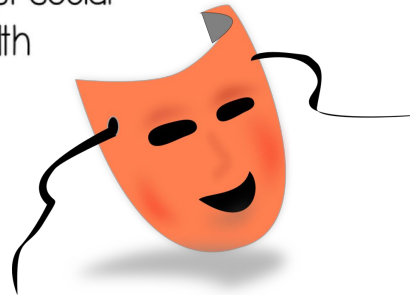
And why does it matter?

Children learn at young ages that certain behaviors and traits are unacceptable (particularly in school)

Masking is the process of hiding traits and difficulties to avoid social exclusion/rejection

Masking looks like coping/managing, but it actually is just social camouflage - and it requires significant mental bandwidth

Masking is significantly related to anxiety, depression, substance use, and post-traumatic stress.



Key Takeaways:



- ADHD does not always look the same.
- ADHDers need novelty and interest in order to focus; boredom is more painful for ADHDers.
- Masking (hiding ADHD traits) has significant adverse health effects and leads to mental health difficulties and substance use later on.
- Movement, stimming, creativity, and engagement in areas of interest are essential for health.





How does ADHD show up in the classroom?

- Ability to focus on areas of interest but strongly dislikes or is unable to focus when disinterested
- Easily bored
- May be highly creative or have novel ideas
- May have either fast or slow processing speed compared to peers
- Engages in stimming or movement (but may mask)
- Sensory differences: may be highly sensitive or may seek input
- Difficulty managing impulses
- Social differences





What might you see at home?

- Trouble focusing on homework or undesirable tasks
- Forgetting to complete chores or hygiene tasks
- Messy room and belongings
- Frequently losing, misplacing, or damaging items
- Frequently moving or sensation seeking, OR underactive and often daydreaming or sluggish
- Seems to need a lot of stimulation or motivation to get going
- Acts impulsively
- Thinks differently - creative, outside the box, inventive ideas
- May “hold it together” at school and “falls apart” at home
- Rejection sensitivity or sensitive to criticism





What do teachers do?

- Allow and encourage differences; demonstrate for kids that they accept all the variations of “normal”
- Choose appropriate seating on a case-by-case basis
- Be open to creative approaches if it helps a student to focus
- Allow sufficient sensory and movement time, and normalize this
- Communicate what they’re seeing to parents
- If a family needs support, teachers can connect them with appropriate staff





Before we talk about what can you do... What is NOT expected of you?

- We don't expect you to “fix” or “eliminate” your child's behavior
- You are not required to have your child evaluated or diagnosed (you can if you want to, but that is your choice as a family)
- You are not required to medicate your child unless you want to and decide to do so with your child's physician
- The school will support your child regardless of diagnosis, medication, or outside supports





So what CAN you do?

- Stay in communication with your child's teacher - let us know how things are going at home, changes or life events that happen, or other things impacting your child
- Ask us for ideas or resources if your family needs support
- Educate yourself on parenting ADHD; seek out neurodiversity-affirming resources
- Allow your child decompression time after school if they seem to need it, OR find ways to allow movement and expelling energy



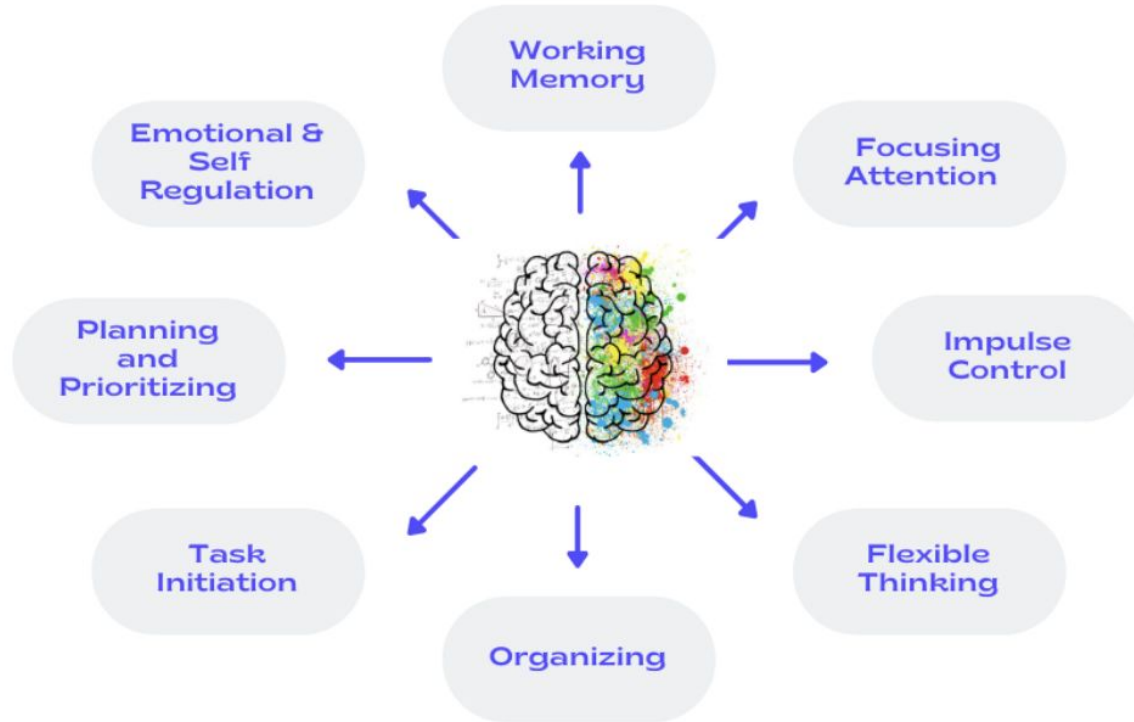


Other things to know...

- Rejection sensitive dysphoria (RSD)
 - Executive functioning issues




Executive Function




ADHD

REJECTION SENSITIVE DYSPHORIA (RSD)


 RSD is an emotional condition that ADHDers sometimes experience. It is triggered by the REAL or IMAGINED perceptions of:


 Teasing, Criticism, Rejection, Disappointing loved ones, failing to meet self-imposed standards, perfectionism, embarrassment, loss of approval, respect or love.

 How to help: Show love, compassion, empathy, understanding; teach perspective-taking, resilience & self-regulation. Get professional help.

DYSPHORIA

"DIFFICULT TO BEAR"

 RSD feels like: unbearable pain; overwhelming sadness; anger or rage; catastrophically emotional, & sometimes physical, pain; rumination.

 RSD looks like: hiding intense emotions & pain, people pleasing, suicidal ideation, rage at loved ones, giving up, withdrawal, low self esteem, hurting self, depression.



Resources

<https://neurodivergentinsights.com/resources>

The ADHD Brain:

<https://www.additudemag.com/ADHD-neuroscience-101/?fbclid=IwAR03YdWwA3w-lqNaqaRuVublfkGYAgYWdWrQ.gq00041l0AwylNEl0uUrdEk>

ADHD in girls:

https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-in-girls-women/?fbclid=IwAR1Jwgcp_xfgxJkcNGQswXkJsMYqA654QgT3XZ9JF2B-_gM3CeJilUqEFHo

Wondering what ADHD is like for adults?

<https://www.additudemag.com/adhd-stigmas-hiding-faults/>

