

The Truth Behind ADHD

Symptom Free Ezine

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A Note From Rory

Dear Reader,

It's been so wonderful this week! Spring has made an appearance, and we have been enjoying the warm weather. My daughter, Dylan, is so thrilled to be running and playing outside again. And it is a real treat to see Gavin (our little one) explore the world and take everything in. Although the weather in Boston is often unpredictable, we are taking advantage of every single ray of sunlight available to us.

And wouldn't ya know, the news just reported that this weekend it will hit 80 degrees. Wow! I sure hope Spring is here to stay. I don't know about you, but I am NOT a cold-weather person. I am totally out of my element living in the Northeast (despite growing up in the cold).

Well - it's bright and early right now as I put the finishing touches on this week's newsletter. I am excited by the prospect of things to come over the next month. And I am also looking forward to my wife's vacation from work next week.

As always, it's a privilege to be with you each week - and I thank you for this opportunity.

Rory Stern, PsyD

<http://www.theADHDparentsmovie.com>

Featured Article

A Reader's Question: Telling ADHD Symptoms From "Non-ADHD" Symptom?

By, Dr. Rory Stern

Megan asks:

"In your e-mail today [last week's issue] you mention the fact that often you see more non-ADHD symptoms that are interpreted as being ADHD symptoms than not. How do you determine what the causes actually are

then? Is it just a conversation with the parents or the person? What are the most common other causes? Is it possible that what seems to be inattentiveness is actually just boredom because the task is not mentally challenging for a child with a high IQ? How can you tell the difference and request adjustments at school?

Answer:

In terms of ADHD symptoms and "non-ADHD" symptoms, I am talking about very subtle, yet important distinctions between true ADHD and other circumstances that can be misinterpreted without careful attention and investigation.

For example, I once worked with an 11-year-old boy who was previously diagnosed with ADHD. He was reportedly not paying attention in school, his grades were slipping, he was said to have a "negative" attitude, and also always appeared to be preoccupied with other things (other than school).

When I was introduced to him, I was informed that he and his younger brother were in the middle of a messy divorce. Custody had just changed hands from Mom to Dad. Very rarely, if ever, did I see this boy's symptoms of his "supposed" ADHD. Instead, I saw an 11-year-old boy who was taking on the roles and responsibilities of a young adult (and not of a child). He was responsible for getting up, getting himself dressed, waking his younger brother, getting him ready for school, and then making the two of them breakfast.

That's what I mean by ADHD symptoms and non-ADHD symptoms. Here is a boy who showed the classic signs of ADHD - but I didn't see them as related to a diagnosis or illness.

I often try to imagine myself in the shoes of my clients. And I know that if I were an 11-year-old boy under these circumstances - I would probably respond the same way. I would probably be distracted in school. I might have a negative attitude, and I might be struggling in school.

Did this boy have ADHD? He might have! But what I needed to focus on more than anything else were the circumstances this young boy was dealing with. They were real, and that's what he was concerned with.

Above everything else, he just wanted to be understood. He was so frustrated... So angry... And he had been asked to shoulder so much, all without an outlet to express how he felt.

How do I figure this out?

Generally it just takes time and investigation... I am a "systems" person - so I pay attention to everything. I pay attention to the child, the family, the parents, the environment, and all the other external forces that are impacting people. We don't live in a vacuum, we don't make progress with just one hour a week in treatment, and problems like divorce or ADHD impact more than just the people who seem to be "directly" involved.

Other common "causes" of ADHD-like symptoms?

There is a whole list including (but not limited to...)

- Diet
- Stress
- Trauma

- Bipolar Disorder
- Anxiety
- Giftedness
- And so much more

Oh and it could always also be health / medically related. This is why it is so important to have a complete medical evaluation (and not just an ADHD evaluation or "prescription" appointment). Properly diagnosing ADHD - or whatever else is REALLY going on - takes more than 15 minutes and answering a few key questions. It is a complex process that should be given the time it deserves and needs.

Inattentiveness and gifted / high IQ?

Being bored is usually a sign that "something" is going on... In the case of a child with a high IQ - it can be from their intelligence, or in being gifted. Many children are diagnosed or labeled as having ADHD. But boredom **can** be a telltale sign of a child being gifted.

Adjustments at school?

The best way to really figure out what is going on is to have your child evaluated. If you are in the US - you want to request psychological and educational testing. Psychological testing can be suggestive of so much, and it can help generate a better understanding of what might be going on.

Being able to tell the difference between "giftedness" and ADHD is a true ART. It is not a science...although science can help us better understand what is going on and also provides us with a framework of knowledge. That needs to be said. Science and Art are both critical factors in really figuring this out. Science provides support and theory, while the art of diagnosis is something that is carefully crafted. In situations like this, it is critical to have the right doctor, the right supports, and the right people in your lives and the life of your child.

News & Events

Do you have questions?

If you are struggling to get the answers you need... the answers that will make a difference for your family and your child(ren), then **wait no more!** As a valued reader and subscriber, you can contact me and ask the questions you need answers for.

If I don't know the answer, I will find someone who does know it, and we'll learn together.

To get your questions answered, [click here](#). Just be sure to use "Question" in your subject line.

About The Truth

[The Truth Behind ADHD](#) is managed by Dr. Rory Stern. Dr. Stern is an advocate, therapist, coach, and speaker on parenting children with ADHD. In managing "The Truth" and this newsletter, he offers a unique style of providing parents of children with ADHD both information and insight into what their child is experiencing. In addition, he connects with parents on a level that allows them to understand their own struggles along with how their children are struggling. His **main goal** is to provide parents with the support, encouragement, and resources to take action now - so they can start to experience change in their child's life, as well as in their own.

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