

THE TREATMENT OF ADHD

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ADHD: TREATMENT

Once a diagnosis of ADHD has been made, a treatment plan can be developed and implemented.

Each child (or adult) is unique, and will have their own unique history and complexity. Therefore each treatment plan needs to be tailored to that individual's needs within their own unique circumstances.

ADHD itself can be diagnosed as being with Hyperactivity or without Hyperactivity or as having both. It can also be judged as being mild, moderate or severe. There is also often a range of "comorbid" (going together with) conditions associated with ADHD such as anxiety, depression, or a possible range of learning problems. (See the information on Assessment of ADHD). Depending on the severity of the presenting behaviour problems, and the person's age, they could also receive a diagnosis of Oppositional Defiant Disorder or when older, Antisocial Personality Disorder.

Because of the complexity and range of possible problems and presentations, the treatment approaches discussed below are of a general nature and are by no means exhaustive. Treatment is tailored to address the diagnosis and the presenting problems. Treatment may be focused on the individual with the presenting problems and/or significant others in that person's life. Obviously with children, parents and often teachers will also be involved in the treatment plan. Depending on the child's age different treatment approaches may be adopted. With young adults, parents may continue to be involved, and with adults in relationships partners may also be involved in the treatment.

In all cases the establishment of trust and rapport within the therapeutic relationship is crucial to a positive outcome. The psychologist will therefore take some time to develop a good working relationship with all those involved in the treatment.

WHERE A CHILD IS THE FOCUS OF TREATMENT

Provide age appropriate information regarding ADHD at the level the child can understand. This may include information regarding medication and how this helps the brain to work effectively.

Play therapy may be used with younger children.

The child will be helped to deal with emotions such as sadness, anxiety or anger.

Strategies for controlling these emotions (sometimes called self-soothing or affect regulation) will be addressed.

Relaxation strategies may be taught.

Relationships within the family, such as with siblings or parents will be discussed and dealt with.

Problems relating to the child's social life, which is often problematic, will be addressed.

Strategies for dealing with difficult social situations such as bullying or teasing will be developed.

Generally the psychologist will be a support person for the child. Someone whom the child can trust and with whom they feel understood. Someone with whom they can discuss their problems and obtain guidance and suggestions as to how to deal with life's challenges.

WHERE THE PARENTS ARE THE FOCUS OF TREATMENT

Provide information as to the results of the assessment and diagnosis and treatment plan.

Provide ADHD education and information as it pertains to their child.

Focus on parenting issues as it pertains to both the parent-child relationship (which is often strained as a result of all the issues relating to the child's problems) and behaviour management.

Strengthen the parent relationship which is often strained as a result of the child's challenging and difficult behaviour, so that both parents adopt the same approach in dealing with all the presenting problems.

Address specific behaviour problems such as the morning routine, sibling rivalry, chores, bedtime, computer time and homework.

Provide strategies for behaviour change using rewards and consequences.

Discuss how to use the Time Out strategy.

Discuss how to use a Token Economy.

Develop an understanding as to how to help their child deal with the challenges of ADHD and whatever other issues that may arise in their child's life.

How to develop a more positive relationship with the child following what may have been years of conflict and stress.

WHERE AN ADULT IS THE FOCUS OF TREATMENT

Education regarding ADHD and the role of medication.

Review the individual's history and the impact of ADHD in their life. Deal with the thoughts and feelings that emerge from this review.

Develop insight and understanding as to the impact of ADHD on the individual's school performance, social life, relationships and self-image.

Should medication have only recently commenced, then dealing with the changes (both positive and negative) that may emerge as a result of taking medication.

Developing strategies to improve attention, memory, impulse control, and time and paper management.

Developing problem solving strategies.

Managing and resolving emotions such as depression, anxiety, and anger.

Developing social skills such as recognising and understanding the thoughts and feelings of others.

Developing empathy and negotiation and conflict management skills.