

GUEST BLOGS

10 Things People Need to Stop Saying About Children with ADHD

One mom shares the top ten ADHD myths that she wishes people would stop saying and spreading around, and why they're untrue.

BY KRISTIN MAE

We knew from the time Lucas was a toddler that he was different than other kids in his peer group. While the other preschool kids sat attentively through story time and coloring projects, Lucas was the child who wriggled, paced, climbed, jabbered, tapped, hummed, and sang his way through the day.

Now eight, Lucas has been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder ([ADHD or ADD](#)). For years, my husband and I have had countless discussions with all sorts of people about this disorder, either in passing for purely conversational reasons, because we needed to vent our frustrations so as to not lose our minds, or deliberately and methodically as a means to formulate better approaches for behavioral management and academic success.

These conversations with friends, family, coworkers and teachers have elicited every reaction and opinion imaginable, and I'm sorry to say the majority of reactions I've encountered are uninformed at best, and ignorant bordering on cruel at worst.

We still have a very long way to go for people to understand what are [ADHD myths](#) and what are truths, and what the disorder does and doesn't imply about a child and his or her parents. Here are the top 10 [ignorant reactions](#) I'm regularly confronted with during conversations about my child's ADHD:

1) **"Being distracted is normal. Who isn't distracted these days?"** My phone is distracting. I love social media and sometimes I'm on Facebook when I should be folding laundry, cleaning a toilet or paying bills. But when the hammer's about to fall, I can flip a switch in my brain, turn off my phone, and make magic happen. *A kid with ADHD doesn't have that switch.* My son could have his homework sitting directly in front of him and be so absorbed in his own imagination that he literally cannot even see the paper in front of him.

[Free Resource: [What Not to Say to Your Child](#)]

2) **"He's just being a kid. All kids act a little crazy sometimes."** Any medical professional will tell you that attentiveness and distractibility exist on a spectrum, just like autism. It's time we laypeople get with the program and stop shrugging off ADHD as "normal kid craziness." We need to recognize that when a parent says, "Hey, my kid is out of control and nothing I've been doing is working" that *they mean it and they are not crazy.* Yes, all kids act crazy *sometimes* and *to varying degrees.* So do adults, *sometimes* and *to varying degrees.* The determining factor with ADHD is *the degree to which* and *the frequency with which* this "craziness" occurs.

3) **“He just needs to try harder.”** If you’ve ever worked one-on-one with a child who suffers from ADHD and who is trying to complete a homework task that they find challenging or tedious, you will see just how hard these kids try. It is a heartbreaking thing to witness.

4) **“The real problem is that he’s bored.”** Yes, sometimes distractibility becomes more pronounced when a child with ADHD is bored. But no, that is not why the child is presenting symptoms of ADHD. A neurotypical child can force himself to pay attention, *even when bored*. That is the difference.

5) **“He must not be getting enough discipline at home.”** Discipline is important in any household, but the implication that ADHD can be cured with discipline is absolutely ridiculous. That households exist with ADHD children and neurotypical children under the same roof is evidence that this assertion holds no merit.

[“What Is Wrong With Me?” ADHD Truths I Wish I Knew As a Child]

6) **“Why wouldn’t you medicate him? You’d medicate him if he had diabetes, right?”** Diabetes is a life-threatening illness, ADHD is not, unless we get into discussions of comorbid conditions. Even then, ADHD is still not immediately life-threatening. Of course these risk factors should still be considered when a family is making decisions with their qualified healthcare professional, but we need to stop comparing apples to oranges on this one. Diabetes is *not* ADHD. Let it go, people.

7) **“Don’t medicate him! He’ll turn into a zombie!”** That you have a medicated, glassy-eyed cousin who speaks in a monotone is not justification for you to offer your unsolicited advice on the subject of whether or not I medicate my child. The decision to medicate or not is a *private* one, between a family and their qualified healthcare professional. Kindly butt out.

8) **“He focuses fine when he wants to; he must not really have ADHD.”** This one drives me nuts, but *I get it*. There are days when Lucas focuses so well that I question the last seven years of my sanity. *Maybe he doesn’t have ADHD. Maybe I’ve imagined the whole thing!* And then I get a stack of unfinished work from the teacher that looks like squirrels nibbled on the corners and all is right in my world again. I’ll tell you what parents of children of ADHD children already know: ADHD is both relentless *and* fickle.

9) **“Don’t worry; he’ll grow out of it.”** Some kids grow out of ADHD around puberty; most do not. Lucas will likely struggle with ADHD for the rest of his life, and though I know the phrase “he’ll grow out of it” is meant to be comforting, I wish people would stop saying it. We parents of ADHD children need to face reality head on and develop workable solutions, not indulge promises of “maybe later things will be better.”

10) **“He just needs to learn to pay attention better.”** Haha. *Hilarious*.

[Stay Calm and Mom (Or Dad) On]

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