



SPECIAL COLLECTION

# ADD Myths & Realities

Resources for spreading awareness

25 THINGS TO LOVE ABOUT ADHD



HOW TO SPREAD THE WORD



7 MYTHS ABOUT ADHD...DEBUNKED!



SNAPPY COMEBACKS TO ADD DOUBTERS

# 25 Things to Love About ADD

by Bob Seay

1. Insomnia makes for more time to stay up and surf the net!
2. The drive of **HYPERFOCUS**.
3. Resiliency.
4. A sparkling **PERSONALITY**.
5. Generosity with money, time, and resources.
6. **INGENUITY**.
7. A strong sense of what is **FAIR**.
8. Willingness to take a **RISK**.
9. Making far-reaching analogies that no one else understands.
10. **SPONTANEITY**.
11. Possessing the mind of a Pentium—with only 2 MBs of RAM.
12. Pleasant surprises due to finding clothing (or money or spouses) you had forgotten about.
13. Willingness to fight for what you believe in.
14. Being **FUNNY**.
15. Being the last of the **ROMANTICS**.
16. Being a good conversationalist.
17. An innately better understanding of intuitive technologies, such as computers or PDAs.
18. Honestly believing that **ANYTHING IS POSSIBLE**.
19. Rarely being satisfied with the status quo.
20. Compassion.
21. Persistence.
22. Joining the ranks of artists, musicians, entrepreneurs and other creative types.
23. Always being there to provide a different **PERSPECTIVE**.
24. Excellence in **MOTIVATING OTHERS**.
25. Being highly organized, punctual, and generally responsible (OK, so I lied!).

## Spread the word about ADHD!

ADHD is a medical disorder, affecting more than 15 million Americans, with symptoms—distractibility, impulsivity, hyperactivity—that seriously interfere with the ability to function. But children and adults with ADHD can do well, even excel, when they receive help and support.

Unfortunately, there are still a lot of ADHD naysayers out there. That's why we suggest you become an activist. You can start by sharing your own ADHD story. Then employ the eight strategies outlined in this special ADDitude clip-and-save guide to "broadcast" the "ADHD-is-real" message to a wide audience.

Also check out our other handouts, including "7 Myths about ADHD," where we debunk seven pernicious myths about ADHD. Make copies to share with others: fellow ADHD advocates and those who have yet to join the ADHD fold. Here's to ADHD advocacy!

—THE EDITORS

**1 BE A MYTH-BUSTER.** Copy "7 Myths about ADHD" (available at [additudemag.com](http://additudemag.com)) and hand it out to teachers, friends, relatives. Leave copies at local libraries, doctors' offices, and schools.

**2 CULTIVATE NEWS COVERAGE.** Contact your local newspaper or TV station. Tell the editors or producers about National ADHD Awareness Day, and urge them to prepare related stories—about high-achieving local ADDers, about the medical aspects of ADHD, about a teacher you think has been especially helpful. Write a letter to the editor of the newspaper, or submit an op-ed piece, using the information in "7 Myths about ADHD."

**3 ENLIGHTEN VIA E-MAIL.** Remind everyone that ADHD is real by adding a mention of National ADHD Awareness Day to your e-mail signature. Include an important fact, such as, "The American Psychiatric Society recognized ADHD as a medical disorder in 1980," or, "3 to 5 percent of school-age children have ADHD."

**4 REQUEST SERVICES.** Contact your child's teachers, and explain how ADHD affects your child. Make a game plan for how you can work together. (Be sure to send a thank-you note after the meeting.) To download a free information packet for the teacher, including an introductory letter, a list of



National ADHD Awareness Day (in September) is the perfect opportunity to make a difference for yourself, your child, and others with ADHD.

classroom accommodations, and three helpful articles, go to [additudemag.com/teacherinfo.asp](http://additudemag.com/teacherinfo.asp). Ask the principal whether you can give a packet to every teacher at the school.

**5 PUMP THE P.T.A.** Work with the parent-teacher organization at your child's school to create an ADHD education program for students, teachers, and administrators. Invite an ADHD specialist to speak or conduct a workshop. Hand out "7 Myths about ADHD" to everyone at the event.

**6 LOBBY THE LIBRARY.** Contact the head librarian of your local library (or your child's school library), and suggest that the library prominently display ADHD books

#### FOR ADULTS:

- *Dr. Larry Silver's Advice to Parents on ADHD*, by Larry B. Silver, M.D. (Three Rivers Press, 1999)
- *Driven To Distraction*, by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D., and John J. Ratey, M.D. (Touchstone, 1995)
- *Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder*, by Russell A. Barkley, Ph.D. (Guilford Press, 2005)

#### FOR CHILDREN:

- For kids age 4–8, *Shelley the Hyperactive Turtle*, by Deborah M. Moss. (Woodbine House, 1989)
- For kids age 6–9, *Eddie Enough!*, by Debbie Zimmert (Woodbine House, 2001)
- For kids age 10 or older, *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key*, by Jack Gantos (HarperTrophy, 2000)

and resources on National ADHD Awareness Day—or all September long. If they don't have many books on ADHD, donate a few (suggestions above).

**7 BUY A SUBSCRIPTION.** Give *ADDitude* to your child's teacher or pediatrician, and to your library. Go to [additudemag.com/customerservice.index.asp](http://additudemag.com/customerservice.index.asp).

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# Myths about ADHD... Debunked!

Few psychological conditions have generated more discussion in recent years than attention-deficit disorder. Yet, people continue to harbor many mistaken beliefs about it. Read on to learn the truth about ADHD.

## MYTH #1: ADHD is not a real medical disorder.

ADHD has been recognized as a legitimate diagnosis by major medical, psychological, and educational organizations, including the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Department of Education. The American Psychiatric Society recognizes ADHD as a medical disorder in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—the official mental health “bible” used by psychologists and psychiatrists.

Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (also known as attention-deficit disorder) is biologically based. Research shows that it’s a result of an imbalance of chemical messengers, or neurotransmitters, within the brain. Its primary symptoms are inattention, impulsiveness, and, sometimes, hyperactivity. People with ADHD typically have a great deal of difficulty with aspects of daily life, including time management and organizational skills.

## MYTH #2: ADHD is the result of bad parenting.

When an ADHD child blurts things out or gets out of his seat in class, it’s not because he hasn’t been taught that these behaviors are wrong. It’s because he cannot control his impulses. The problem is rooted in brain chemistry, not discipline. In fact, overly strict parenting—which may involve punishing a child for things he can’t control—can actually make ADHD symptoms worse. Professional interventions, such as drug therapy, psychotherapy, and behavior modification therapy, are usually required.

## MYTH #3: Children with ADHD eventually outgrow their condition.

More than 70 percent of the individuals who have ADHD in childhood continue to have it in adolescence. Up to 50 percent will continue to have it in adulthood.

Although it’s been estimated that 6 percent of the adult population has ADHD, the majority of those adults remain undiagnosed, and only one in four of them seek treatment. Yet, without help, adults with ADHD are highly vulnerable to depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. They often experience career difficulties, legal and financial problems, and troubled personal relationships.

## MYTH #4: ADHD affects only boys.

Girls are just as likely to have ADHD as are boys, and gender makes no difference in the symptoms caused by the disorder. But because this myth persists, boys are more likely to be diagnosed than girls.

## MYTH #5: Children who receive special accommodations because of their ADHD diagnosis are getting an unfair advantage.

The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that public schools address the special needs of all children with disabilities, including children with ADHD. Special accommodations, such as extra time on tests, simply level the playing field so that kids with ADHD can learn as successfully as their non-ADHD classmates.

## MYTH #6: Children who take ADHD medication are more likely to abuse drugs when they become teenagers.

Actually, it’s just the opposite. Having untreated ADHD increases the risk that an individual will abuse drugs or alcohol. Appropriate treatment reduces this risk. The medications used to treat ADHD have been proven safe and effective over more than 50 years of use. These drugs don’t cure ADHD, but they are highly effective at easing symptoms of the disorder. The drugs do not turn kids into addicts or “zombies.”

## MYTH #7: People who have ADHD are stupid or lazy—they never amount to anything.

People with ADHD are of above-average intelligence, recent studies show. They certainly aren’t lazy. In fact, many well-known, high-achieving individuals from the past are thought to have had ADHD, including Mozart and Benjamin Franklin. The list of high-achieving ADDers in business today includes top executives, such as David Neeleman, founder of JetBlue Airways, and Paul Orfalea, founder of Kinko’s.





# Snappy Comebacks to ADD Doubters

Tired of hearing people say that ADD doesn't exist—or that it's somehow your fault? When self-appointed “experts” speak their mind, it can be hard to convince them of the truth: that the debate about the existence of ADD is over! Mainstream medical, psychological, and educational organizations long ago concluded that ADD is real, and that children and adults with the disorder benefit from treatment. So next time one of these five types of ADD naysayers speaks his opinion, use these snappy comebacks to respond.

**1 THE SKEPTIC** denies the very existence of ADD, calling it a phantom that was cooked up as an excuse for bad parenting. What about the adults who say they have ADD? “They just need to grow up and take responsibility for their shortcomings, rather than blaming an illness.”

#### Here's what to do:

- **Explain that the reason** they don't “believe in” ADD is because they've probably been lucky enough never to have experienced it.
- **Use hard facts.** The National Institute of Mental Health counts ADD as a real medical condition; so does the American Psychological Association, which includes ADD in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, the bible of mental-health professionals.
- **Agree to disagree.** Say, “We have different opinions on this issue, so let's agree to disagree and not discuss it.”
- **Try sarcasm.** “Gosh, it must be nice to be smarter than thousands of doctors, scientists, and psychologists.”

**2 THE CRUSADER** takes a holier-than-thou approach, second-guessing adults who take ADD medications and parents who give them to their kids. “I would never take a stimulant medication or give one to my child,” she proclaims.

#### Here's what to do:

- **Make it clear that** drug therapy for ADD is not a cause for shame. Medicating your child doesn't make you a lazy or incompetent parent. It shows you are an effective parent.
- **Look her in the eye and ask,** “If you had diabetes, would you not take insulin? Would you deny insulin to a child who had diabetes? Then why should I withhold appropriate medication from my child?”
- **Issue a challenge.** Ask, “What do you think is the best solution?”

**3 THE JOKER** takes potshots at ADD, using sarcasm and pretending that his barbs are innocuous. A Joker might say, “I wish I had ADD! At least then I'd have an excuse for my bad behavior.” Or, “Pass the Ritalin—I could use a (wink, wink) ‘boost.’”

#### Here's what to do:

- **Use selective silence.** As soon as you realize someone is being nasty, follow Ghandi's example—choose not to respond.
- **Be blunt.** Look them in the eye and ask, “Are you trying to help me or hurt me?”
- **Be direct.** “When you say X, I feel Y,” or “Mocking my medical condition is hurtful, and I'd like you to stop.”
- **Take it to the next level.** If The Joker is in your work place and the direct approach fails, consider moving up the chain of command or consulting a lawyer.
- **Kill them with kindness.** Say, “I know you only say that because you care.”
- **Give them a taste of their own medicine.** Say, “You done ‘spressin’ yourself?”

**4 THE OSTRICH** can't accept that a person (including himself or his own child) has ADD—even when shown evidence to the contrary. Or, in response to news that his child has been diagnosed with ADD, he might inform the doctor, “There's nothing wrong with my kid that an old-fashioned spanking won't cure.”

#### Here's what to do:

- **Educate.** Simply state the facts and move on.
- **Neither agree or disagree.** Just muse aloud, “Hmm. I suppose that's possible.”
- **If you're married to an Ostrich,** say, “This is not about you or how you feel about ADD. It's about our child and what we need to do for her.”

**5 THE VOICE OF DOOM** She sees a bleak future for ADD kids, ignoring the evidence suggesting that people with ADD are often energetic, intelligent, and creative.

#### Here's what to do:

- **Be gracious.** Remark, “That's an interesting viewpoint. I'll have to give that some thought.”
- **Try honesty.** Say, “That comment really hurt my feelings.”
- **Turn the tables.** “If Richard Branson can found Virgin Records and Virgin Atlantic Airways, despite having ADD, I'm not worried about my son,” or “If my daughter turns out as well as Suzanne Somers or Whoopi Goldberg, who both have ADD, that's fine with me!”