



# Smart Comebacks to ADHD Doubters

Tired of hearing people say that ADHD 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 ADHD is over! Mainstream medical, psychological and educational organizations long ago concluded that ADHD is real and that children and adults with the disorder benefit from treatment. So next time one of these five types of ADHD naysayers speaks his opinion, use these snappy comebacks to respond.

**1 THE SKEPTIC** denies the very existence of ADHD, calling it a phantom that was cooked up as an excuse for bad parenting. What about the adults who say they have ADHD? 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” ADHD is because they've probably been lucky enough never to have experienced it.
- **Use hard facts.** The National Institute of Mental Health counts ADHD as a real medical condition, so does the American Psychological Association, which includes ADHD 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 ADHD 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 ADHD 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 ADHD, using sarcasm and pretending that his barbs are innocuous. A Joker might say, “I wish I had ADHD! 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 ADHD—even when shown evidence to the contrary. Or, in response to news that his child has been diagnosed with ADHD, 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 ADHD. It's about our child and what we need to do for her.”

**5 THE VOICE OF DOOM** She sees a bleak future for ADHD kids, ignoring the evidence suggesting that people with ADHD 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 ADHD I'm not worried about my son,” or “If my daughter turns out as well as Suzanne Somers or Whoopi Goldberg, who both have ADHD, that's fine with me!”