

Adult ADHD Assessment

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ALL ABOUT ADULT ADHD!

If you have always been wondering if you have ADHD/ADD and are now thinking about having an assessment, you might be interested to know that many clients who were assessed for or diagnosed with ADHD do not feel like all of their questions have been answered (e.g., rationale for determining severity; the difference between having the symptoms and meeting the diagnostic criteria; various explanation models).

For children who do not yet possess the intellectual capacities to understand their condition, it is sensible that they often just take the pills prescribed by doctors and do the things recommended by psychologists. As adults, it only makes sense to take actions with a comprehensive understanding of your condition. It is a big commitment to get assessed. You are entitled to receive an in-depth examination of your condition.

WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR?

A good assessment should be tailor-made to fit the unique needs of individuals. A brief assessment based on filling out a survey (i.e., symptoms checklist) or a short Q&A type of interview (i.e., counting symptoms) can yield a diagnosis but not much else. When I conduct ADHD-focused assessment with adults, the basic components would include an in-depth clinical interview, developmental history and occasionally a performance test as well.

If you are planning to have an ADHD assessment, learning about the following facts will be very helpful:

ADHD is a condition with three different subtypes

Namely, the *Predominantly Inattentive Type*, the *Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive Type*, and the *Combined Type*. The predominantly inattentive type is sometimes known as ADD, where hyperactive/impulsive symptoms, if any, do not meet the full diagnostic criteria. Most adults seeking for an assessment are interested to look into their inattentive symptoms.

You can ADHD symptoms without being diagnosed

Having some symptoms of ADHD does not necessarily mean you meet the full criteria of the diagnosis. However, you can definitely benefit from various treatments or interventions insofar as the symptoms are causing some degrees (significant or minor) of difficulties in life.

ADHD has different levels of severity

The basic categories include mild, moderate and severe. A good assessment will ensure sufficient data is gathered to determine severity. Severity can increase or decrease according to a number of factors such as environmental demands, stress and mental stability. Severity is an important consideration when it comes to treatment decisions.

ADHD generally have a traceable developmental history

The extent to which your symptoms can be traced back to childhood has implications on severity and prognosis/treatment prospect. It is true that a person can be diagnosed with ADHD without a history of relevant difficulties in childhood, but there are alternative explanations or concerns associated with a sudden onset in adulthood. This is a major reason why just going over a checklist online is never

sufficient. In a formal assessment, a more in-depth clinical interview and developmental history taking are required.

ADHD can affect your functioning in different areas

A major indicator of severity is the extent to which ADHD symptoms affect your everyday performance at work, home and social situations. Serious conditions are indicated by impairments across different areas of functioning, or by extremely damaging consequences caused by impairments in a specific area such as getting fired from work.

It actually makes sense why ADHD is not always detected earlier

Some people have skills or attributes to compensate for the difficulties caused by ADHD, but they might end up with a lot of stress doing it on a daily basis. On the other hand, some people might be functioning well until the environmental demand suddenly rises, such as getting promoted, running one's own business for the first time, having a newborn child, etc.

Mental health issues can be mistaken as ADHD symptoms

A good assessment must rule out other mental health issues that are known to affect our concentration and cognitive functions, such as depression, anxiety and PTSD. This is especially true if you have a history of other mental health conditions or have recently encountered some major psychological events such as bereavement and domestic abuse. For example, a person who has recently been abused or traumatized could be seemingly restless and distractible whereas a person with recent depressive episodes could seem quite forgetful. In such case, your assessment must include a mental health component as well.

ADHD symptoms can interact with other mental health symptoms

In the case where a person meets the criteria for ADHD and other mental health conditions, the story does not end there as there are interactions between them. Particularly with depression and anxiety, ADHD symptoms can escalate these emotional disturbances and vice versa. A good assessment should help clients to understand how these different issues interact and develop a treatment plan accordingly.

There are different perspectives to view your ADHD

Most psychologists are trained to look at ADHD from different perspectives, such as biological/medical, developmental, behavioral, cognitive, socio-cultural, etc. Most clients are interested to learn about the different ways to view their condition as it has implications on their self-perception and life narratives.

A FINAL NOTE

People who feel like they are fully-informed about the nature of their ADHD are more hopeful and motivated about follow-up treatment. Whether it is a full diagnosis or just some troubling symptoms, you should definitely get all the answers you need from an assessment before proceeding to the next steps.

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