

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

A, Williams. University of Wales Trinity Saint David. 2233349

Identification and Diagnosis

The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (Fifth Edition) (DSM-5) defines Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) as a disorder that begins in early childhood and is characterised by symptoms of hyperactivity, inattention and impulsivity that disrupt a person's daily functioning. Early diagnosis of ADHD is being given greater attention in psychological literature due to the positive outcomes of early intervention. DSM-5 has reclassified ADHD as a neurodevelopmental disorder (Leon, C et al. no date).

NHS (2021) states that there are two types of behavioural issues associated with ADHD, these are inattentiveness which causes difficulty concentrating and focusing and the other is hyperactivity and impulsiveness. About 2 to 3 in 10 people with ADHD experience difficulties with concentrating and focusing, but do not struggle with hyperactivity and impulsiveness. This form of ADHD is known as Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). ADHD is usually more commonly diagnosed in boys than girls.

Children usually begin the pathway to an ADHD diagnosis after they are around 5 years old. There is not a single test for ADHD, there is a process that requires several steps and involves gathering lots of information from multiple sources (healthychildren.org, 2017).

A specialist can make a diagnosis after a detailed assessment. This assessment will include a physical examination, interviews with the child and reports from adults who are involved with the child. A child must display 6 or more symptoms of inattentiveness or 6 or more symptoms of hyperactivity and impulsiveness (NHS, 2021).

Support Strategies

Low, K (2023) states that ADHD strategies are techniques used by parents and teachers to support children to succeed. A strategy that can be effective when working with children with ADHD is a short task then reward system. Tripp, G (2022) explains that children with ADHD respond to immediate rewards. When setting out a task for a child with ADHD it is important to match all task and behaviour expectations to the child's ability.

Sometimes a child with ADHD will need a break from what they are doing or where they are working because the task or the environment is becoming over stimulating or they need to get up and move to exert some energy. Allowing a child with ADHD to take regular breaks after completing short tasks can help the child stay alert, on task and focused (EPIC, 2022).

Impact on children and families

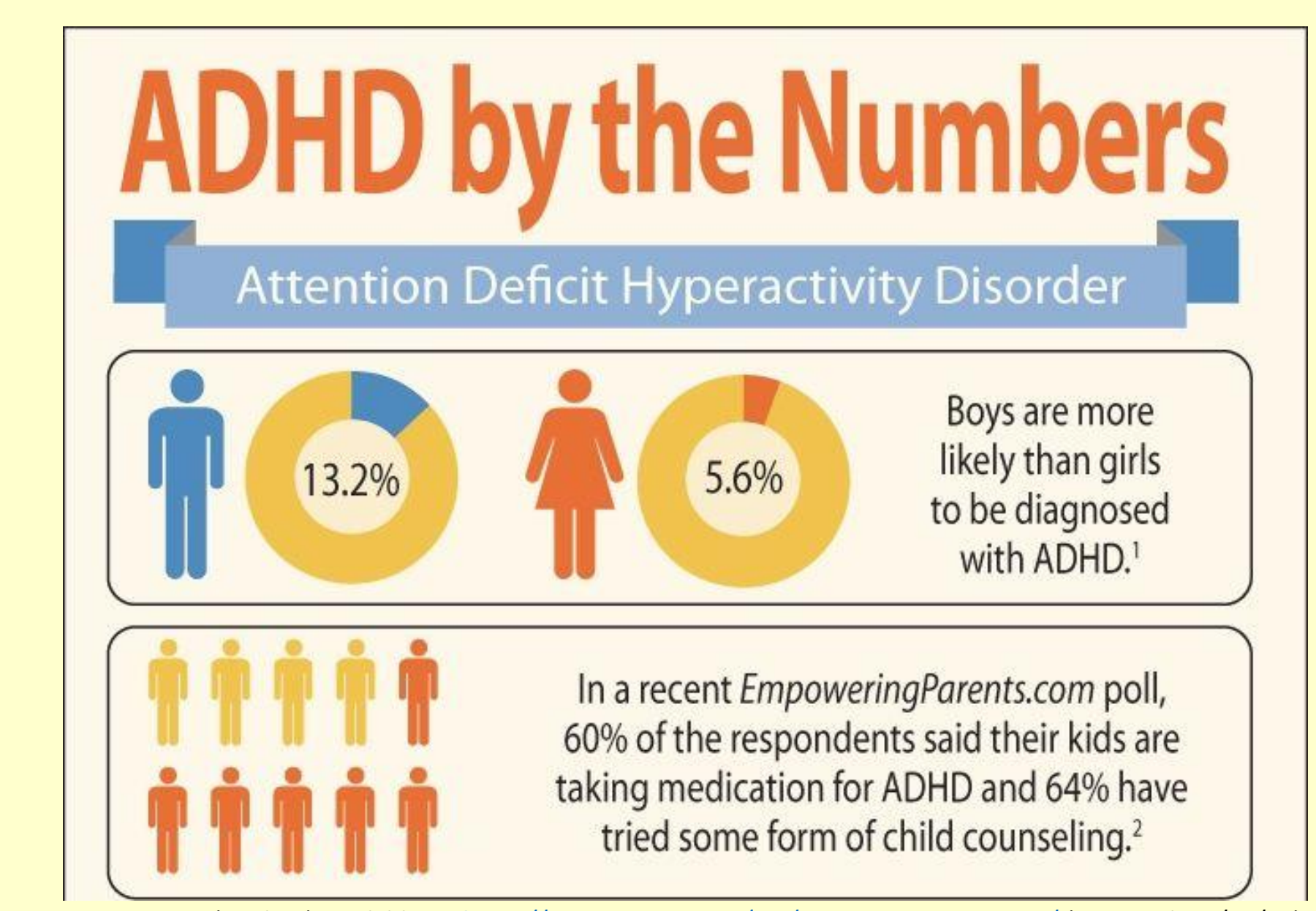
Harpin, V (2005) states that ADHD can affect all aspects of a child's life. The adverse effects of ADHD on children and their families will vary throughout the child's life and may be more prominent at different stages. ADHD has also been associated with increased healthcare needs for the child and their family members.

Children with ADHD may have negative experiences with education because they can become easily frustrated and distracted, they can be seen to act in ways that are inappropriate, they have difficulty following instructions, and they make careless mistakes. Research suggests that some adults with ADHD report having had a disrupted education (ADHD Institute, no date).

Barriers

Edwards, A and Greenway, C (2020) state that ADHD rates have increased in recent years which has resulted in the need for more classroom support. A study interviewed 15 primary school TAs to answer questions regarding their feelings about their job. This study highlighted poor knowledge and attitude towards children with ADHD. Ward, R, Kovshoff, H, and Kreppner, J (2021) found that teachers feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of children with ADHD due to lack of training. Studies on ADHD teacher training have been largely focused on measured gains in ADHD knowledge and behaviour strategies, these traditional training methods for ADHD show initial improvements which begin to deteriorate over time. Interviews conducted with 19 primary school teaching staff discovered that there is a need for training and support which meets the needs of all school staff. 89% of school staff reported teaching pupils with ADHD but 63% of those reported receiving inadequate training and support for children with ADHD (ComRes, 2017).

Often, where staff have received ADHD training they feel is inadequate or won't work for them they can be dismissive of information and strategies given to them. Cherry, K (2022) found that according to Dweck, there are two basic mindsets, fixed and growth. If you have a fixed mindset, you have fixed traits that cannot be changed. On the other hand, if you have a growth mindset you believe that your abilities and knowledge can be developed over time.



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