What is ADHD?

- Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a neurobiological disorder that affects adults, adolescents, and children. While typically first diagnosed in children or teens, ADHD is sometimes not identified until adulthood.
- There are 3 subtypes of ADHD:
  - ADHD, predominantly inattentive subtype: difficulty paying or sustaining attention without symptoms of impulsivity or hyperactivity
  - ADHD, predominantly hyperactive subtype: symptoms of hyperactivity and/or impulse control without difficulty with attention
  - ADHD, combined presentation: shows symptoms of hyperactivity/impulsivity and inattention
- Untreated ADHD in college students can negatively affect academic performance and social functioning, sometimes leading to frustration, sadness, anxiety, and even depression.
- ADHD tends to run in families. Often, once an individual is diagnosed, he/she is then able to observe that other members of the family might also have the disorder, some of whom may have been treated, others whom may have never been formally diagnosed or treated.
- Remember that we all have attentional challenges at times, and these can arise for various reasons, not necessarily linked to ADHD. For instance, lack of sleep, low blood sugar, and anxiety can diminish our attentional level.
- The diagnosis of ADHD needs to be made by a medical or mental health professional, not by your roommate, friend, or parent.

The Challenges of ADHD

College students with ADHD may have difficulties in several of the following areas:

- Attention and focus
- Hyperactivity
- Frustration tolerance
- Forgetfulness
- Time management
- Money management
- Tobacco use
- Impulsivity

- Listening
- Anger control
- Self-esteem
- Organization
- Job performance
- High-risk activities
- Alcohol and drug use
What is the best type of treatment?

Combination treatments including stimulant medication, education, and/or counseling are effective at helping you to manage your ADHD symptoms.

**Medication** helps increase attention and focus and decrease impulsivity and hyperactivity. See a medical professional who will prescribe the right medication or combination of medications to control ADHD symptoms.

**Education** teaches an individual and his/her family members the facts about ADHD. Learn more about ADHD by reading books, watching instructional videos, and doing research on the internet.

**Counseling** provides support, education, and guidance with tackling the problem areas and developing strategies to increase success and satisfaction. Meet regularly with a mental health professional to develop ADHD management strategies to improve functioning in and out of the classroom.

What else?

- Realize that ADHD is a lifetime challenge, and your life path can be filled with all kinds of emotional experiences. Be patient and accepting of yourself, and remember that even when you stumble in one moment, you have a chance to walk confidently in the next moment... and the next.
- Increase your awareness through self-education. If you were to be diagnosed with any other medical disorder (e.g., diabetes), you would learn as much as you could about that disorder. Apply the same approach to ADHD. The more you learn about it, the more successful you will be in managing it. If you like to read, get some print books and dive in. If you prefer audiobook/visual learning, you can find many resources on CD/DVD/internet. Either path can be helpful.

Some suggestions...

*Is it You, Me, or Adult ADHD? Stopping the Roller Coaster When Someone You Love Has Attention Deficit Disorder* by Gina Pera (2008).

*You Mean I’m Not Lazy, Stupid, or Crazy?! The Classic Self-Help Book for Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder* by Kate Kelly and Peggy Ramundo (2006).

*10 Simple Solutions to Adult ADD. How to Overcome Chronic Distraction & Accomplish Your Goals* by Stephanie Moulton Sarkis (2011).

CHADD – The National Resource of ADHD [www.chadd.org](http://www.chadd.org)

Attention Deficit Disorder Association [www.add.org](http://www.add.org)

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