Adult ADHD and Its Impact on the Family System
What is ADHD?

- Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is a chronic condition that affects millions of children and often persists into adulthood. ADHD includes a combination of problems, such as difficulty sustaining attention, hyperactivity and impulsive behavior.
- Children with ADHD also may struggle with low self-esteem, troubled relationships and poor performance in school. Symptoms sometimes lessen with age. However, some people never completely outgrow their ADHD symptoms. But they can learn strategies to be successful.

http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/adhd/basics/definition/con-20023647
The Seven Types of ADHD

- One ADHD expert, Daniel G. Amen, M.D., says there are many types of ADHD-
  - Classic ADHD
  - Inattentive ADHD
  - Over-focused ADHD
  - Temporal Lobe ADHD
  - Limbic ADHD
  - Ring of Fire ADHD
  - Anxious ADHD
When we think about ADHD in children, what do we think about?
What eventually happens to children?
They become adults...
They enter relationships...
And they become parents.
And the challenges of ADHD continue.
What are the broad challenges facing some of the adults with ADHD that you are working with?

- Job instability
- Trouble with the law
- Alcohol and/or drug use
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Relationship difficulties
- Speeding tickets
- Financial stressors
- Difficulty with details keeping track of things.
So what exactly does that look like?
Challenges with Getting Things Done

- Difficulties getting started
- Maintaining deadlines
- Hard time getting motivated
- Here’s what may help:
  - Realize that motivation is needless.
  - Do it because you can.
  - Create urgency.
  - Create a list of must-dos.
  - Work with a buddy.
  - Reward yourself.
  - Go for “just good enough.”
  - Perform projects at your peak times.
  - Picture the end result.
Here’s what may help:

- Play a “guessing game” to improve one’s ability to estimate how long activities take to complete. Utilize a stopwatch or timer. If the timer goes off before a task is finished, document how long it actually took to complete. Take a look at this over a week’s time and look for patterns.

- Then, make changes by implementing structure to make better use of time.
“In my brain, everything’s either now or not now.

- **What might help-**
  - Break down your day into the beginning, middle, and end. Make a list of what usually gets done during the day and assign each task to one of five slots-
    - Morning Wake-up
    - Morning Work
    - Afternoon Work
    - Evening Personal
    - Bedtime
Losing Track of Minutes

- Ask your client what keeps them from moving from one task to the next. This will often uncover the realization that simple tasks such as “saying goodbye” for the day are taking much longer than expected.

- What may help-
  - Set an alarm clock to, for example, allow for 15 minutes to leave work in order to be home on time. This may help keep your client on track and become more aware of the time that passes unexpectedly.
Some thoughts on Procrastination

- Difficulties getting started.
- Know that you can’t do everything perfectly.
- Create the right environment.
- Set up the task.
- Break big projects up.
- Post your deadlines.
- Do the fun stuff first.
- Start somewhere, start anywhere.
- Make it public.
- Beware of multitasking.
ADHD and Sleep

- Individuals with ADHD often express difficulties with sleep.

- What may help-
  - Is your medication keeping you awake?
  - Do your own sleep study.
  - Curb caffeine.
  - Increase physical activity.
  - Turn the light off.
  - Slow down your brain.
  - Create wake-up and wind-down routines.
  - Be consistent.
  - Get your sunlight.
  - Avoid sleep traps.
  - Set a bedtime alarm.
Hyperactivity and Impulsivity in Adults

- Most teens and adults with ADHD learn to control their energy, and may not appear overtly hyperactive.
- However, they often feel restless, and may not be able to relax in the same way others do.
- They may act impulsively when it comes to spending money, entering sexual relationships, or eating and drinking.
- They may interrupt others, or talk without thinking, which can lead to damaged relationships.
But wait- What is “Hyperfocus?”

- Adults with ADHD are able to pay attention to tasks that interest or excite them, to the point of losing track of time and place. This intense state is called hyperfocus.
- But when “those boring things” such as laundry, bill pay, or finishing a project at work come into play, they may find themselves feeling like they are falling short in life.
Co-occurring Depression

- Depression is estimated to be 2.7 times more prevalent among adults with ADHD than it is among the general population.
- Effective remedies for Depression are readily available, and they work well for adults with ADHD.
- What may help-
  - Have clients talk with their doctor, psychiatrist, and/or counselor.
  - It becomes important to focus treatment on the more serious of the concerns first; and in this case, that is the Depression.
  - Meditation.
Shame and ADHD:

- "Living with ADHD can feel like a constant stream of apologies; we’re sorry we’re late, sorry we lost our keys, sorry we can’t keep the house neat.” If you have ADHD-especially if you were diagnosed late in your life-those endless apologies and self-blame may have added up to a crippling sense of shame.
- Shame is characterized by a sense of inadequacy and agonizing feelings of embarrassment and humiliation. You may even feel like you’re developing a secret life-you’re so ashamed of who you are or what you’ve done that you’re certain you’ll never pass for “normal.”
- Consequences of shame- it can lead to deep depression, crippling anxiety, and in some cases, self-medication with drugs or alcohol.
- What may help:
  - Adopt a strength-based approach.
  - Expect respect.
  - Never worry alone.
  - Come up with anti-shame systems.
  - Don’t make excuses.
  - Don’t give up!
At Last- ADHD and Parenting

- Increased potential for chaos and fun.
- Consistency, consistency, consistency.
- Parenting a child who does not have ADHD.
  - There is potential for frustration for both the parent and the child. Often times the non-ADHD child ends up taking on more of a parent role. As a parent, it is important to be aware of this tendency and avoid relying on your child too much for help with reminders and organization.
- Parenting a child with ADHD.
  - Children with ADHD are often at a developmental stage a few years younger than their age indicates. It is helpful for parents to keep this in mind. It is also important to remember that “Many times, it’s not that your child ‘won’t’ listen to you, it’s that they ‘can’t.’”
But wait- What are the Strengths that an individual with ADHD may have?

- Strong problem-solving skills.
- Can often think about many things at one time.
- Creative
- Intelligent
- Big picture thinkers.
- Tenacious
- More comfortable taking on new challenges; risks.
- Thrive with structure.
- Environments that provide adrenaline may help them stay focused.
- Often do well covering a variety of topics; to counteract low boredom threshold.
And now that you know what you know...

How can we honor their strengths as to help them best navigate their way around some of the challenges?
What to read next-

1. **Driven to Distraction**: Recognizing and Coping with Attention Deficit Disorder from Childhood through Adulthood by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and John J. Ratey, M.D.

2. **Driven from Distraction**: Getting the Most out of Life with Attention Deficit Disorder by Edward M. Hallowell, M.D. and John J. Ratey, M.D.

3. **The Gift of Adult ADHD**: How to Transform Your Challenges and Build on Your Strengths by Lara Honos-Webb, PH.D.

4. [http://www.additudemag.com](http://www.additudemag.com)