

ADHD, Anxiety and Depression A Perfect Storm

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Conditions for the Storm

The lights went out.

The trees were torn.

The sky was gray.

The night was born.

The lightning crashed.

The thunder roared

The Eye Of The Storm Kim Robin Edwards

Neurological Conditions for the Storm

ADHD affects the frontal lobes of the brain's high level information processing including the Executive Functions.

Some parts of the ADHD brain are 3-5% smaller with less blood flow in the right frontal region of the brain.

Neurotransmitters (dopamine and norepinephrine) explain inconsistency of performance in ADHD (blinky hard-drive).

Neurotypical Executive Functions finish developing around 25. ADHD brains development finishes around the age of 30.

Environmental Climate

General Risk Factor

- Family history of mental illness
- Chronic physical or mental health disorder

ADHD Life Outcomes

- ADHD families tend to be at risk for SUD, depression, anxiety and have a parent or parents with ADHD.
- ADHD folks at higher risk for learning disabilities, SUD, insomnia, obesity, more accidents and traumas, early pregnancy etc..

Environmental Climate

General Risk Factor

- Major life changes and stress
- Little or no social support

ADHD Life Outcomes

- ADHD folks have an increased incidence of divorce, occupational changes, money issues, social issues, academic stress and accidents.
- Higher rates of divorce and challenges with social interpersonal relationships.

Environmental Climate

General Risk Factor

- Female
- Trauma

ADHD Life Outcomes

- Women with ADHD usually report to physicians with depression and anxiety symptoms.
- Children with ADHD may be at increased risk for Adverse Childhood Experiences which contribute to experiencing trauma triggers as an adult

Environmental Climate

General Risk Factor

- Low self-esteem
- Years of school before the age of 21

ADHD Life Outcome

- ADHD folks vulnerable to low-self esteem because of perceived “failures” in the past. Many ADHD folks co-morbid learning disorders as well.
- ADHD teens more likely to drop out of school, have been suspended at school and have failed or had to repeat a year of school.



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The Eye of the Storm

We were caught in the eye of the hurricane.
We were caught in the eye of the storm.
We were caught by the lights that lit the
sky.

We were caught in the eye of the storm.

The Eye Of The Storm Kim Robin
Edwards

Daily Weather
Patterns
Executive
Functioning
Weaknesses

Low-self esteem is a high-risk factor for depression and anxiety.

“Low self-esteem is having a generally negative overall opinion of oneself, judging or evaluating oneself negatively, and placing a general negative value on oneself as a person.”

(Centre for Clinical Interventions)

Daily
Weather
Patterns
Executive
Functioning
Weaknesses

Executive function weaknesses explain the daily struggles of folks with ADHD and why “neurotypical” strategies don’t work well for people.

Executive function weaknesses explain why certain approaches work better for folks living with ADHD.

(Ari Tuckman, Understand Your Brain Get More Done)

Executive Functions

Response Inhibition
Working Memory
Emotional Control
Sustained Attention
Task Initiation
Planning/Prioritization
Organization
Time Management
Goal Directed Persistence
Flexibility
Metacognition



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The Damage From the Storm

The rain came down.
The thunder roared.
The rain came down.
The trees were torn..
The rain came down.
It crashed to the ground.

The Eye Of The Storm Kim Robin
Edwards

Self-esteem Damage From Executive Function Weaknesses

Repetitive inconsistent outcomes from weak executive functions lead to negative self appraisals and low self esteem.



The Start of the Damage

- Disruptive home life
- Bullying, bullied or lack of social support
- Academic challenges in school
- Negative environmental feedback from parents, teachers and friends.
- Impulsive decisions and impulsive behaviour.

Damage
Control

Unhelpful
Rules and
Assumptions
Develop



I need to **try harder** to pay attention, have self-control, be productive, be on time etc..



I need to make sure I **please** other people.



I **can't please** people I always fail so why try?



I must **avoid** or **leave things** to the last minute in order to reduce my distress about not being able to deliver.



I must be "**perfect**" to avoid negative feedback.



I need to **blame** others or **cover-up** for my weaknesses to protect myself.

Negative Core Beliefs Formed From Repeated EF Challenges

I can't trust/
believe in
myself.

I am
unworthy

I am
unlikeable

I am dumb

I am hopeless

I am out of
control

I am alone

I am helpless

I am
undeserving

I am an
imposter

Negative Core Beliefs Leads to Sub-Optimal Decisions and Choices

If new strategies aren't incorporated

- More “failures” at home, school, friends, work, money, relationships, substance abuse, job changes etc...
- Relationships between core beliefs, negative assumptions and “bad” decisions and behaviour strengthen the rules and assumptions.
- The cycle gets strengthened.
- Low self esteem is solidified.
- More psychology around ADHD develops such as depression and anxiety.
- Unhelpful or maladaptive coping mechanisms are used as individuals feel out of control to change situation: substance abuse, avoidance, procrastination, perfectionism, blaming and “lying”.



Anxiety disorders are focussed on future risks whereas depressive disorders reflect on past “failures” or mistakes.



The self-esteem hit from fallout from executive functioning weaknesses causes the ADHD person to mourn their past failures and have regrets over what might have been. Which can lead to depression symptoms and often the person “checking out” or “numbing”.



If the ADHD person has not checked out psychologically, they may develop anxiety over future “failures” or fears of underperforming in the affected areas of their life.



Many ADHD folks develop procrastination and perfectionism as ways to moderate their anxiety about future performances.



Collateral Damage Causes Regrets over Past Past Challenges and Worries over Future

Cycle of Failure My Own Experience

Kindergarten

- “She is not able to persist too long in a task as yet, becoming easily tired and frustrated”
- Grade 1
- “Jennifer is a nice little girl in class but so “scatty”. She is so active and enthusiastic which often leads to careless work habits”
- Grade 2
- “Jennifer is sometimes a little too talkative in class and consequently her work suffers”
- Grade 4
- “Jenny’s...; however, talking, thereby distracting herself and others has kept her from achieving excellent marks, but she’s trying hard and improving”
- Grade 9
- “her work has slipped a little not enough attention to class work”
- “Very irregular and careless”
- “Talkative, inconsistent, poor attitude toward the subject”
- “Have noted a little drop in Jenny’s work. A little more active attention in class will help.”



The Calm After the Storm

Or Getting Support for Your
Executive Functioning Weaknesses

As we watched the storm pass.

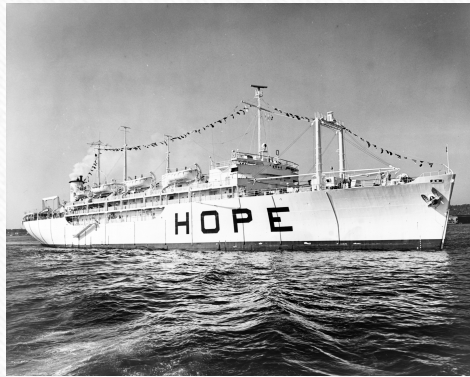
We watched the winds blow.

As we watched the storm pass.

We watched the storm grow.

The Eye Of The Storm Kim
Robin Edwards

A Solid Foundation for Hope



- Education is the first step about what ADHD is and what it isn't (I Am Not Lazy, Crazy or Stupid)
- Accept that ADHD is a particular set of struggles.
- Make an informed choice about medication.
- Get some good Executive Functioning strategies with the assistance of a coach or a support person.
- Go to therapy to deal with your underlying self-concept which may be affecting self-esteem and contributing to anxiety and depression symptoms.
- Maintaining a resilient mindset and understand that there will be trial and error and that it is a process not a destination.

-
- Questions?

References

Books

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Journal Article

RISK FACTORS FOR ANXIETY DISORDERS: COMMON AND SPECIFIC EFFECTS IN A NATIONAL SAMPLE

Carlos Blanco, M.D., Ph.D.,^{1*} José Rubio, M.D.,¹ Melanie Wall, Ph.D.,^{1,2} Shuai Wang, Ph.D.,¹ Chelsea J. Jiu, M.D.,¹ and Kenneth S. Kendler, M.D.³

Video

How to Treat ADHD Based on Science: Dr. Russell Barkley https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=-_tpB-B8BXk0