



CHADD and the National Resource Center on ADHD

Ask the Expert Chat Series

June 22, 2011 – Parenting When the Parent has ADHD

Moderators – NRC Staff

Expert – Patricia Quinn, MD

Moderator 1: Welcome to today's Ask the Expert chat sponsored by the National Resource Center on ADHD (NRC). The NRC is a program of CHADD and is funded by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to provide science-based information on all aspects of ADHD. Today's chat, "Parenting When the Parent has AD/HD" is a continuation of our April 2011 chat with expert Patricia Quinn. The transcript for this chat will include the questions from April and from today.

Patricia Quinn, MD, is a developmental pediatrician and well-known international expert and speaker on the topic of ADHD. Additionally, she has authored several bestselling and groundbreaking books on ADHD, including *Understanding Girls with ADHD*; *100 Questions and Answers about ADHD in Women and Girls*; and *When Moms and Kids have ADD*.

For the last decade, Dr. Quinn has devoted her attention professionally to the issues confronting girls and women with ADHD, as well as high school and college students with the disorder. She is currently the director of the National Center for Girls and Women with ADHD. Dr. Quinn received the CHADD Hall of Fame Award for her work in these areas. For more information on Dr. Quinn, please visit her website: www.addvance.com.

Dr. Quinn, we are privileged to have you here today. Thank you for joining us!

Pat Quinn: Glad to be here today!

Moderator 1: And now, on to our first question

SammGirl: I dread mornings and the chaos of getting the kids and myself out the door on time. The usual 'morning routine' advice doesn't seem to stick with me and I frequently feel overwhelmed. Help?!

Pat Quinn: I would suggest that you think about some alternate solutions to this problem. First, try to enlist help from the kids. Set up charts of the morning routine and have a family meeting to decide what everyone is responsible for.

Second, see what can be done the night before – showers for the kids, having them make their own lunches, get their clothes and books ready, etc. Remember, you don't need to handle EVERYTHING by yourself. It's important that your kids learn the skills of getting out the door on their own in the morning as well.

Third, try to do as much for yourself as possible the night before as well. Set an example for the kids and try organizing things together.

Kim: My house looks like a bomb went off. As an ADD parent (with a mildly ADD husband and an ADD daughter), I understand how important organization is to helping us all function well, but no one else seems to fully grasp its importance. How can I enlist the help of my family so that they aren't unintentionally working against my efforts?

Pat Quinn: Family meetings are great for getting everyone on the same page. Hold weekly meetings to decide what needs to be done and who will do it. See what can be delegated and what needs to be done on a daily or weekly basis.

Ask for suggestions. When someone volunteers or has an idea for completing a project, it creates more buy in. If you find that something is not getting done, call a meeting and try to address the issue and see what the problem is. Make sure that each person knows that if they commit to a job it is their responsibility to see it through. And then have a party! Remember, everything doesn't need to be perfect only passable. Words of encouragement are far better than nagging!

Debber: I live in rural America & have not been able to locate a psychiatrist that specializes in adult ADD. The adolescent psychiatrist's in the area will not see anyone over age 18. Any recommendations on who/where I should check out next?

Pat Quinn: See if there is a local University in the area. Call the Disabilities office and ask who they refer their students with ADHD to.

I also suggest family practitioners or general practitioners who treat children with ADHD. They are more knowledgeable than internists. Hope this helps.

Shonda: I have 2 children; my oldest has ADHD as I have. I have struggled for years with my ADHD. I have lost my job and I am desperately trying to make everything work, but I am really falling short now. I need attention ASAP, I need help badly. I want to go back to school, but how do I do that as a mom and a wife?

Pat Quinn: First and foremost get your ADHD treated. You need to do this not only for yourself, but for your family.

There are now many opportunities for women to go back to school, but you need to make sure that you address your ADHD in order to be able to study and be successful at school. AARP (the over 50s organization) offers scholarships to women over 40 to go back to school. Check out www.aarp.org.

GoodMom: Dr. Quinn, is it possible to have acquired ADD after you are an adult? I used to be very organized as a young woman at college with three jobs and was very proud of myself but after I had my kids my life has become chaotic and I find myself with a lot of the symptoms of ADD. It is very frustrating; the image that I had of myself and who I am now. How can I change this? Help!

Pat Quinn: Great question! There is no such thing as adult onset ADHD. That being said, many women who actually do have ADHD have been able to cope over the years because they have developed elaborate coping systems - work harder and longer, not letting anyone know how much they are struggling.

In addition, they may become perfectionist and use lists or other techniques to cope. These women are bright and do well until the stressors in their lives (kids, etc) exceed their ability to cope and then they have more problems. Symptoms were always there but they coped.

For some women, they can do well until their estrogen levels fall as they approach menopause and then their ADHD symptoms get worse and they can no longer manage.

Parenting is a difficult job for which few of us are adequately prepared. Add ADHD to the mix and at times it becomes EXREMELY difficult! There are lots of things you can do, however, to address parenting when you have ADHD.

The first is to get your own ADHD treated. We all try to look out for our kids first, but this is one time we need to take care of ourselves.

Second, try to keep everything in perspective. Each response we make is one of many hundreds of thousands that will occur in our lifetime. Step back and ask yourself: Is this important? And, how much time and energy should I give to this one?

Develop a sense of humor and say to yourself often, it's only spilt milk! Appreciate your gifts and talents.

I worked with one mom who said, my house may be chaos, but my kids have great Halloween costumes and we always have fun!

Mschroeder: My 6 1/2 year old has ADHD combined and I'm ADD - with focus/attention being my deficit. How do parents in similar situations keep a balance between their kids and the family/dinner/cleaning? I especially struggle with the planning of things!

Pat Quinn: Planning is always an issue and there is so much to do. The best strategy is to get your ADHD treated but also to take some time for yourself each day to plan. Set up a routine as much as possible and remember to get help. You don't need to do it all by yourself.

That's where I find family meetings come in. Lay out what needs to be done and then discuss together who will do what. When kids and spouse commit to helping more will get done.

Susy: As a parent (with ADD) of 2 teenagers (non-ADD, thankfully) I am looking for help with relationship issues. My relationships with my 2 teens were damaged when my ADD and mood disorders were affecting our family life before I was diagnosed. Now that I have a diagnosis what can I do to improve our relationship?

What a wonderful gift! Now I know it always doesn't feel like that, but you can be an example for your teens.

First by acknowledging how ADHD affected you and your relationships and second, how you can all work together now to make things better.

Again, ask for suggestions on ways things can be improved. Be honest and open. Sometimes it helps to start the dialog in a non-threatening environment. If your teens like to email or text maybe you can start there. Go out to a restaurant together - everyone is more likely to be open when eating in a public space. It helps keep emotions in check and it will seem like you are treating them more like adults.

The important thing to remember is that you have made progress and that you are trying. Ask them to accept that. If they don't, then you need to move on and do what is best for you. Once they see that, they will respect you for taking care of yourself and things will go on from there.

Jenni: My husband and I both have ADHD (me with anxiety, him with impulsivity). We have a four-year-old son, full-time jobs and he has a long commute. We are both medicated and drowning. What strategies can we employ to establish and maintain a consistent routine and structure?

Pat Quinn: SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY, SIMPLIFY!!!! You and your husband should get together and discuss what you can eliminate and still be okay with your decision. Can you afford a housecleaner once a week? Can you get rid of all the carpets? Can you use paper plates? 😊 Whatever works.

You should also try to divide the tasks based on who is better at them. And remember, just because you have done it that way, or because everyone else does it that way, is not a reason to continue doing it that way!

Just have fun and remember to take time to enjoy each other as much as possible. It will make everything easier!

Sam: Recently I have been diagnosed with ADHD, which explains all the negative, confusing things I've had to deal with in my life. My 9-year old daughter has all of my bad traits. and I think she might 'suspect' something. She sees my inbox with all these emails about ADHD. I would like to 'come clean' with her, and let her know what my and her situation is, and try to move forward to help both of us. But I really don't want the neighborhood, other parents, etc. knowing about this. And I know my daughter can't keep a secret. Should I just wait to tell her until she's older?

Pat Quinn: What a great question! ADHD is only part of who you are. I would suggest that you take an inventory and discuss the idea of strengths and weaknesses with your daughter. While I would prefer to

use the term ADHD and call it what it is, it is just a list that contains some of these strengths and weaknesses.

It's okay to be honest about them and it will help you daughter understand that it is part of life and that nothing is perfect. And when we have problems and face difficulties, there is always something that we can do about them. What a great lesson you can teach her by being honest!

Moderator 1: Before our next question, you should know that the NRC produces a series of Information Sheets. All of our "What We Know" Sheets are found at www.help4adhd.org, in the "About ADHD" section, including our [What We Know Sheet #15: Social Skills in Adults with ADHD](#).

Littlebutloud: I have 5 children with ADHD. The most frustrating thing for me is I find it impossible to implement the structure they need. I am the one holding everything together but I can't even keep track of myself! I try and everyone else resists my efforts. I have yet to find really helpful advice if we aren't rich enough to hire tutors and coaches for all of us. School is especially draining.

Pat Quinn: Congratulations! You are still here and typing sanely :)

I have three children with ADHD and some days were a struggle even for an expert in ADHD! My best kept secret was a family notebook and a family whiteboard in the kitchen! All schedules, due dates, field trip permission slips, etc. were kept in the notebook in the section for each child. All important information was on the white board

If it wasn't put there by the person who needed to be someplace or to get something done, it didn't happen. I also made my kids responsible and accountable from an early age. They could cook and do laundry and pack from themselves for trips from the age of 4. If they forget their underwear, believe me they didn't do it more than once! This gave them a sense of independence and accomplishment.

They were responsible for themselves and their work and their ADHD! They have all thanked me over the years and I feel very proud of them. Remember, you want to empower your child with ADHD not enable them!

Moderator 1: Want to receive well-rounded comprehensive knowledge about ADHD? [Parent to Parent courses](#) offered in local communities and online, provide educational information and support for individuals and families dealing with ADHD and learning to navigate the challenges of ADHD across the lifespan.

mommy22: I have a son with diagnosed ADHD. I know that I have it as well as I have struggled all of my life in school (as a child and as an adult learner), in work, and in relationships. I am 36 and really don't know what to do to become diagnosed. It is something I have always lived with. Where do I start so that I can have a more beneficial life? Do I speak to my family practitioner or broach the subject with my son's therapist? My own family looks upon this diagnose as almost "self-imposed" and one that is "all in the head," so there is no support for my son and has never been support for me - who has always known something is wrong! Please help!

Pat Quinn: Your son's therapist is a great place to start! I would also look for a child psychiatrist that also sees adults or call a local university and ask someone at the disability office where they send the college and graduate students for an evaluation.

In addition learn all you can about ADHD in women and get the help you need! You'll be glad you did. You don't need the approval of others in your family to pursue your diagnosis. It's your life after all, and you are the one that has to live it!

Sam: My daughter has a lot of the same bad add behaviors that I have – lateness, inability to keep places clutter-free, forgetfulness, emotionally reactive, etc, etc, etc. How do I know if my daughter is just 'modeling' my bad behaviors or if she really has ADHD herself? And if so, what do I do?

Pat Quinn: Why would she model your "bad" behaviors? She doesn't get much out of it, unless more attention from you. But probably not positive attention. I would suggest that you discuss her behaviors with her teacher and then her pediatrician.

If indeed she has ADHD, you will now have an opportunity to model the "good" behaviors of taking care of your symptoms and getting the treatment you need. You can work together on dealing with these issues and model behaviors for and remind each other of plans you have set. Also take time to enjoy each other!

What a great role model you can be!

Moderator 1: Navigating the challenges of ADHD can be overwhelming at times. CHADD's National Resource Center on ADHD is the only resource of its kind to offer free access to knowledgeable ADHD health information specialists who can provide you with one-on-one assistance by answering your ADHD related questions, and helping to locate ADHD related resources in your community. Contact us at 800-233-4050 (M-F, 9am-5pm ET) or online at www.help4adhd.org. We're here to help!

msreader1: I struggle with taking on everything for my family of five. My children, 10, 8 and 7 don't have too many true responsibilities - of course this makes having ADHD harder on me. If I work to empower my children and hold them accountable - when as a parent should I swoop in? I seem to swoop a lot - torn between a feeling of responsibility and letting them fall on their face.

Pat Quinn: Here's where the family meeting comes in again! This is a time for you to air your feelings and to discuss what needs to be done. When you ask the kids to be part of the solution, they are more likely to comply and buy in to whatever program you are setting up.

Kids can understand that they need to face the consequences and are often harder on themselves and each other than you may be, and it takes you out of the role of being the "enforcer."

They can decide when they need help and ask for it. A great skill that we all need to learn... asking for help when we need it!

Lioness: I am trying to get an IEP for my son at school. He has ADHD too. But the school doesn't do what they promise. I have limited funds and my ADHD makes it hard for me to stay on top of things during these meetings. I feel so guilty it's paralyzing. What can I do?

Pat Quinn: First, let me suggest something in general that might help. While I do not know your son's needs, I often suggest a 504 accommodation plan rather than an IEP for a child with ADHD. They are much simpler and easier to understand.

Secondly, they are usually between the teacher/school and the child – what will be done on a practical level in the classroom based on your son's needs. They are easier to enforce – the teacher signs them and can be held accountable for what he or she has said they will do. I also suggest that the child attend these meetings and help "write" the accommodation plan, that way they also know how ADHD is affecting him or her in the classroom and what can be done about it. And remember, it's okay to ask for help, ask for things in writing and for someone to explain something to you until you fully understand. This has nothing to do with how smart we are but what is best for our children.

Moderator 1: It's never too early to start planning! CHADD's 2011 Annual Conference will be held in Disney's Contemporary Resort, Orlando, FL, Nov. 10-12. Save the dates and see <http://www.chadd.org/annualconference> for more information!

Momoben: I have trouble with following up with rules that I create. Do you have any tips for helping to enforce them? I'm afraid I am setting a poor example for my son, particularly since he tends to have a need for more structure than I have been able to provide. I am in grad school now, and feel bad that I am not able to provide as much structure as he needs. He said recently, "I forgot. If you forget, it's not your fault." I'm afraid that he's learning that from me, since I do tend to forget things and have said that as a consequence.

Pat Quinn: How about a "star chart?" Writing things down helps us be accountable; you could both set up charts regarding what you need to get done with rewards and consequences. You are teaching him a positive way to handle "forgetting" and could plan a wonderful reward that you could enjoy together at the end of each day. A favorite video, an ice cream, or just a hug and storytelling! Go for it! Be creative! See it as something you can work on together!

Moderator 1: We have ten minutes left. Dr. Quinn will move through as many questions as possible. If we are unable to get to your question please contact one of our Health Information Specialists on ADHD by calling 1-800-233-4050 between 9 AM- 5PM EST or by clicking on the "Ask a Question" link on the top of [every page on our website](#).

Mschroeder: How often do you suggest having a family meeting?

Pat Quinn: once a week at a prearranged time each week. Make it formal with someone taking notes and have rules. For example, no complaining unless you have a suggestion for a solution. Everyone gets a turn to talk. You could discuss chores and well as where to go on vacation, etc.

Moderator 1: Missed part of the chat? Past chat transcripts are available to CHADD members as a benefit. [Learn more about joining CHADD.](#)

Applesapples: I have two children and a husband with ADHD. I struggle with their lack of follow-through. My husband will, with the best of intentions, begin 5 or 6 jobs and leave 4 of them in various states of incompleteness. My kids often begin "projects" and also are onto the next thing without picking up what they finished.

Pat Quinn: OK! Let's hope your husband is being treated for his ADHD. If he is, it needs to be reviewed. If not, I suggest you discuss his getting treatment.

Regarding the kids' "projects," it sounds like a rule is in order here. No dinner or snacks until after "clean up," or maybe they need a place to "store" unfinished projects. Or maybe a large bag or basket could be employed to make a "clean sweep" at the end of each day - all projects can now either be thrown away at the end of the week or retrieved from the bag or basket as needed. Bbet they learn to put away what they want to keep!

Bring it up at your next family meeting...hope you find a solution!

Moderator 1: This will be our final question.

Elona: I am getting treatment for my ADHD and have seen a dramatic difference in my life. My son was taking medication but decided to stop. Now he struggles again, but he fears medication. How can I be an effective parent in this situation. I want him to see the success that I've had with treatment but I don't know how to communicate this to him.

Pat Quinn: You didn't say how old your son is but I would take two tactics here.

First, try to find out why your son doesn't want to take meds. Maybe he needs another medication or needs to learn why he takes them.

Second, be honest about how you think your meds are helping you and about what you hope for him. We all like when we are heard and also that someone cares. good luck!

Moderator 1: Thank you Dr. Quinn! Your thoughtful answers have provided realistic advice for overwhelmed parents. Thank you for taking the time to share your knowledgeable insight with us today!

Pat Quinn: It was my pleasure!

Moderator 1: For more of Dr. Quinn's insightful knowledge, please visit her website: www.advance.com .

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