

EMOTIONALLY HIJACKED INATTENTIVE FEMALE: How can she survive?

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Does Inattention Really Exist?

- Inattentive females are often under-identified due to their intense desire to please and conform.
- Inattentive symptoms are under appreciated, and under studied
- 2.2 times more girls than boys are inattentive
- Teachers refer ADHD males due to externalizing and impulsive symptoms twice as often as females
- Girls are only thought to be slow or intellectually and learning impaired

Staller, Faraone 2006

Why should we be concerned?

- 1 Million women and girls in the US are diagnosed with ADHD
- 32 million ADHD females world wide
- Impact of ADHD in girls is a major international mental health concern
- 70-80% of identified children will have persistent symptoms and impairment that extends into adolescence and adulthood
- Diagnostic criteria have traditionally focused upon male behavioral symptoms
- Inattention must be more scrutinized and understood

Staller, Faraone 2006

What does she look like?

- Inattentive, poor attention to detail
- Limited attention span, forgetfulness
- Distractibility, failure to finish assigned activities
- Less disruptive, less obvious
- Largely goes unnoticed
- Struggles to avoid school failure
- Low self-esteem, feelings of being wrong, not worthy

Quinn, Nadeau

HOW DOES SHE FEEL ABOUT HERSELF?

- High anxiety, wants to please
- Perfectionistic: pulls all nighter's to finish
- Unwanted, never lives up to expectations
- Always wrong, but she doesn't know why!
- Doesn't have friends, has poor social skills
- Compulsively checks, rechecks, trying to get it right
- Feels depressed
- Often diagnosed with Depression before gaining her ADHD identification

She would if she could!

- ▀ She doesn't attend like other adolescents
- ▀ Frantic about wanting to be liked and have attention
- ▀ Sabotages her own success
- ▀ Wounded by earlier social failures
- ▀ Can't meet societies expectations for females
- ▀ Victim of long time social abuse, can't stop the pain
- ▀ Low self esteem avoids social interaction
- ▀ Shuts down

• Hartmann



The Great Identity breakdown

- ▀ Teachers refer boys for help because are squeaking the classroom wheel
- ▀ Teachers assume poorer academic levels are due to reduced IQ
- ▀ Lack of language and cognitive clarity, enhances the idea that they are slow and non-productive
- ▀ Social difficulties are ignored as just part of the problem
- ▀ Gifted ADHD take if until middle and high school when the overload hits

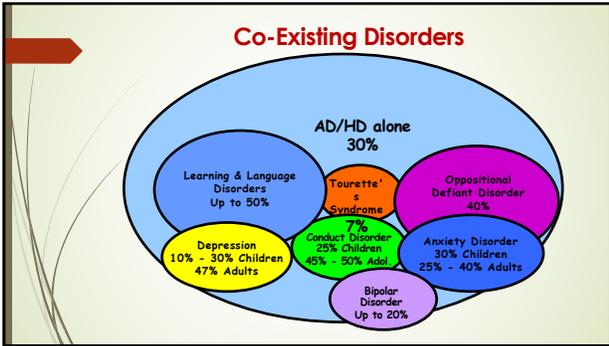
Late diagnosis and Lack of Identifying needs leads to:

- ▀ **INTERNALIZING PROBLEMS**
 - ▀ Tutoring, special classes, repeated grades
 - ▀ Language disorders
 - ▀ Anxiety and depression
 - ▀ Panic, substance abuse, OCD, alcohol abuse
 - ▀ Drug dependency cigarette smoking
 - ▀ Sexual promiscuity



Juggling Comorbidity

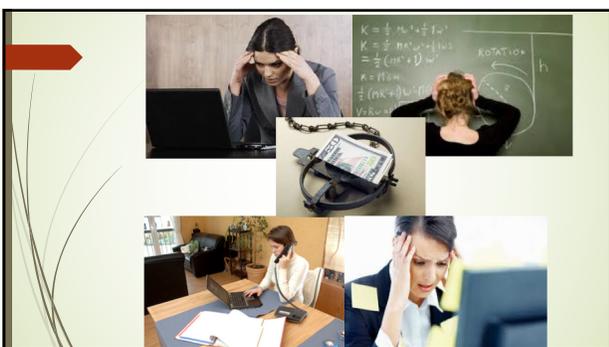
- ▀ OCD = trying to make it right
- ▀ ODD = outburst from her unfulfilled social understanding and dysfunction
- ▀ DEPRESSION = no feeling of success
- ▀ LD = Concentration and organization difficulty leading to school failure
- ▀ MOOD DISORDER
- ▀ Disabilities and difficulties extending into adulthood



- ### Available Treatments
- Optimal treatment includes:
 - Stimulant medication
 - Behavioral therapy
 - Structure in life and environment
 - Organizational skill development
 - Social skill building
 - Medication
 - Treatment for co-morbidities

- ### Coping must begin with Understanding One's self
- Understanding your own strengths and weaknesses
 - Identifying those triggers that set you off, or shut you down
 - Learning to control your moment
 - Taking baby steps toward change
 - Performing, strategizing and attaining by not always taking the road most traveled
 - Searching for a route to the end that often results in creating a newer and better solution

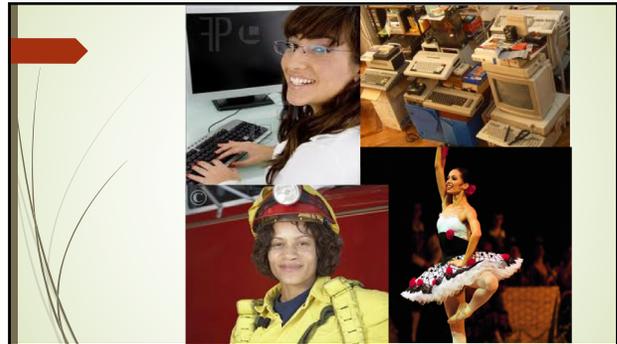
- ### The mystery may be revealed from within her
- Does she-
 - Takes longer in order to be exact
 - Needs quiet to focus and respond
 - Find she needs to come in early, leave late to avoid distractions
 - Asks many questions to be sure she's on the right track
 - Takes copious notes, draws examples, memos
 - Starts late and only barely meets the deadline
 - Appears to work harder than others, with less success
 - Finds her low opinion of herself debilitates all she does



- ### Discover her strengths Support her weaknesses
- As a Non-reader she has become a CPA, capitalizing on her strong math calculations
 - As a Dyslexic she has an earned Ph.D. by using Assistive Technology
 - Being Sensory Impaired, she became a Ballerina because someone knew how to demonstrate, rehearse and encourage precise movement through visualization, supporting and working through her sensory deficits

Capitalizing and controlling her Hyperfocus

- She finds she can concentrate
 - As she becomes a Software Whiz creating solutions to corporate management problems
 - As she becomes a Game Jockey inventing new Video game ware
 - As she becomes a First Responder Paramedic, always ready for the next crisis.



What if?

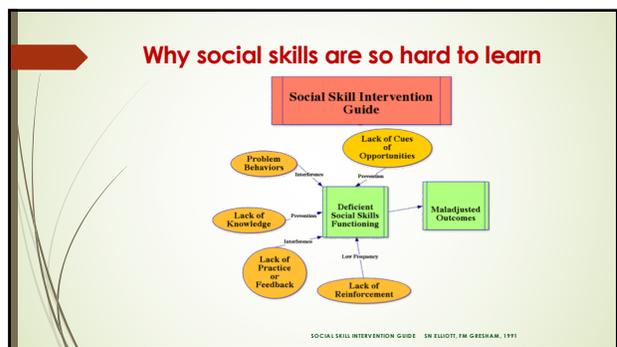
- From the LD side of things ~-
- Every calculation was a mystery
- All reading was difficult
- Processing language was impossible
- Learning new terms a mystery
- Following instructions and taking directions a quandary
- Each creating another layer of the puzzle that needs to be addressed

Her use of Social Skills are diminished

- Social skills are learned behaviors offering ways that elicit positive responses, and a need to avoid negative responses
- Cluster into: cooperation, responsibility, empathy, self control, assertiveness
- Social competence is necessary for success in adult life
 - Elliott, Gresham

Which impacts her interaction with others

- Inability to meet social expectations creates self doubt
- Early social failures impacts negative expectations of future relationships
- Natural hormonal changes and fluctuations exacerbates the intensity of social conflict
- Neediness leads to promiscuity and impulsive behavior
- Impulsivity leads to erratic driving with risks



Her Social Environment

- Does our environment actually support the ability to experience interpersonal relationships?
- School behaviors:
 - Stop light to avoid talking at lunch
 - No recess, no free play
 - Few social skill building opportunities
 - Punishment for social skill errors
 - Unfair
 - Inappropriate
 - Ineffective

She thrives with Positive Affirmation coaching

- Non-judgmental
- Supportive
- Successful with those who understand rewards and consequences
- Ongoing support for management strategies
- She must be a part of the selection and structure building
- Contracts guide expectations, frequency, progress

She needs Self Esteem Building

- Developing a Positive Self Image of herself
- She learns how to avoid Negative Press
- She learns to catch her own rainbow of skills
- She can then allow herself to be different
- She learns Journaling to track her own success
- She learns that Getting help: it's not that bad!

As a woman, she needs to be encouraged to revitalize herself

- She needs to learn how to--
 - Allow herself to enjoy
 - Find time to be alone daily
 - De-stress her environment
 - Learn less is more
 - Design a Comfort Corner
 - Do one creative, enlightening, enhancing thing each day
 - Surround herself with music, art, joy
 - Learn the mindful moment she is in

Why do we take on this fight for self esteem ?

- Mothers have less tolerance with ADHD daughters than with their sons
 - Barkley
- Higher anxiety makes all responses and treatment strategies more difficult
- Inattentive behaviors anger some of those around you:
 - Teachers
 - Peers
 - Parents and family

Inattentive Characteristics can lead us astray

- Impulsivity leads to substance abuse
- Speeding tickets, accidents
- Unwanted pregnancy and its complications
- Social conflict -
 - Not following rules
 - Going along with the gang, against society
- Isolation
 - From family
 - Toward peers who may not be the best influence
 - From activities and areas of success

Later leading to ~~

- ▶ Dropping out of school, college
- ▶ Difficulty juggling adult life
 - ▶ Can't juggle wife, mother, career
 - ▶ Single parenting
 - ▶ Chronic exhaustion
- ▶ Physiological complications
 - ▶ Hormonal fluctuation
 - ▶ Potential co-morbid issues
 - ▶ Feelings of inadequacy

Our challenge

- ▶ The Inattentive ADHD female must be identified earlier
- ▶ Teachers, counselors, pediatricians and other professionals must be trained to readily identify ADHD-I subtype symptoms
- ▶ Intervention is necessary and vital to the survival of a significant portion of our young women
- ▶ Without intervention: we are losing them as they are a valuable gift, salute their future, and ours!

We are up to the Challenge

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