

My First ADHD Conference Changed My Life

WHEN I WAS 45 I felt like my life was falling apart. In truth, my life was not falling apart, but emotionally I was felt like it was.

Our son was finishing second grade, and we were coming up on the glorious unstructured summer months. Now, it wasn't going to be completely unstructured, because our son has this absolutely fabulous brain. Among the many labels he carries are dyslexic, sweet, dysgraphia, outgoing, rapid naming disorder, kind, ADHD, and super smart. He also needs twelve hours of sleep a night. I like to say that the only thing "average" about our son is his height and weight.

Our summer would include many therapy and tutor sessions. While the ADHD label was new to us, we had known about the others since first grade.

As the summer months approached, I tried to learn as much as I could about what to do to create the best atmosphere for our son. Structure, schedule, and consistency were new concepts.

Meanwhile, something was happening with me personally. EVERYTHING was falling apart. I wasn't getting the groceries bought, dinner fixed, the house was a wreck, I was late to everything (including getting our son to school and picking him up), everything upset me, the mail was piling up, the oil in the car needed to be changed... AND I was trying to research about our son's ADHD. To say that I was overwhelmed is the understatement of the year.

One night as I was crying and talking to my husband, I said, "I want to see a therapist. I don't know if this is a midlife crisis or menopause or something else, but something is wrong."

A couple days later I was in a therapist's office for my first visit. At the end of the hour, he said, "You have ADHD. Here is your written diagnosis. Go see your physician and start medication. Read Sari Solden's *Adult Women with Attention Deficit Disorder* and I'll see you next week." It was actually stated in a much nicer way, but what I remember is how concise and direct my therapist was.

"What?! I don't have ADHD! I've been researching ADHD for my son. I don't think I have it."

"OK. Well, read Solden's book and if it rings true to you, then go see your physician, and I'll see you next week."



I left in disbelief. I went to Barnes and Noble and bought Solden's book. I read it and OH MY... she described me and my life to a T! I started medication and showed up in my therapist's office the next week. I gave him a hug.

Through therapy and education, I learned a tremendous amount and my life is SO much better.

Solden's book talked about the benefits of going to an ADHD conference. Because I was trying to learn as much as possible, I went to the very next Annual International Conference on ADHD—and it was fabulous. It was hilarious! It was fun! The validation of being with my tribe was priceless and I learned so much. I have returned every year and continue to get a tremendous amount out of each conference. I can't recommend the conference highly enough. 🇺🇸

The mother of a son diagnosed with ADHD and co-occurring conditions, Ann Nichols was diagnosed with the disorder as an adult.