

ADHD PRESENTATION IN WOMEN

An Article By Kaelee Shrewsberry

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was first recognized by British pediatrician, George Fredric Still, in 1902 and later acknowledged by the American Psychological Association in the second publication of the DSM in 1968. Nevertheless, there is still a notable gender bias in the research as the majority of the research focuses on male presentation of ADHD and its symptoms. ADHD affects many aspects of adolescent lives such as academic success and behavior, which can come off as lazy, rambunctious, talkative, or generally unfocused, varying in expression from person to person. When one thinks of ADHD, they often think of hyperactive adolescent boys specifically, with a lack of attention in school or activities that demand prolonged attention. This stereotype is an active representation of the gender gap; the stereotype drowns out the percentage of girls who find themselves struggling with symptoms of ADHD, excluding them from getting the proper diagnosis and can hinder their ability to seek professional help.

ADHD is severely underdiagnosed in young women across America. One of the biggest problems being that ADHD differs among sex in how it is presented. A prominent dissimilarity between the presentation of symptoms in boys and girls is inattentiveness versus hyperactivity. It is more commonly found that girls express symptoms of inattentiveness, meaning that they internalize their diverted behaviors, rather than being outwardly impulsive like boys with ADHD. Their symptoms are dismissed, minimized, and left undiagnosed, only worsening the symptoms as these girls are left to cope with them on their



own. Correspondingly, girls have become better at developing coping strategies than boys in order to conceal their symptoms, but researchers still find a parallel in negative results of all children who go without the diagnosis of ADHD. When initially identifying ADHD in adolescents most teachers and other adults will look for the stereotypical misbehaved boy, because of this, girls are either left undiagnosed, to cope on their own, or misdiagnosed with a comorbid psychiatric diagnosis. When left to cope with ADHD symptoms on their own, researchers have found that these girls are more susceptible to other psychiatric disorders such as depression and anxiety; These symptoms also fail to fade out into adulthood like some other adolescent disorders being why a majority of girls with undiagnosed ADHD in their childhood seek psychiatric help in their adult life. Identifying ADHD in adolescence is important for girls in order for them to seek out proper treatment and prevent worsening symptoms and other psychiatric disorders into adulthood.

SOURCES

- A Review of Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in Women and Girls: Uncovering This Hidden Diagnosis - PMC (nih.gov)

-Gender differences in ADHD: implications for - ProQuest