ADHD and the Danger of Labels

by KEVIN BOLINSKY

Is ADHD a Disorder?

Attention deficit hyperactivity *disorder*; by simply putting the word ‘disorder’ in the name, you are destroying a child. You're labeling them as different, and adding to the social anxiety that already comes with ADHD. You’re making them feel as if the emotions that they want to show are wrong.

Yes, they are different, but being different isn’t necessarily a bad thing.

The simple fact of the matter is this; if more people could show the type of emotions that ADHD people do, this world would be a much better place. So tell me, is ADHD a disorder, or a gift?

Different, Handicapped, Special

Putting a label like ‘different’, ‘disorder’, ‘handicapped’ or ‘special’ on a child does nothing more than slowly destroy the person they truly are. It pushes them further into their shell, and not only that, it can also used as an excuse for bad behavior.

The fact is a person with ADHD *can* learn to control their actions. But unfortunately, more often than not more parents use the ADHD label as an excuse for bad parenting and not teaching their children right from wrong.

When their child misbehaves they simply chalk it up to the disorder, instead of using it as a learning experience. A child is not going to learn right from wrong and how to behave unless their parent explains it and, most importantly, leads by example.

This dynamic is similar to so many abusive relationships. A man gets into a relationship with a woman and calls her names and breaks her down until she actually starts believing what he says. And then she becomes that person. It hardens her, it makes her less understanding and more combative towards people who don't understand. It makes her feel like everyone else is better than her, destroys her self-esteem.

This happens in adult relationships, so how might a child be impacted when their parents, teachers, and doctors calls them names like ‘different’ or ‘handicapped’? So often it causes depression, especially as the child gets older and becomes a teenager. And then doctors label it a ‘mental disorder’.

If said you were different from all of your peers and told you had a disorder, wouldn't that be depressing to you?

Looking at Things Differently

You know it takes you longer to figure things out, but the solutions you come up with are better solutions than anyone else’s. Look at the average person's mind like a box. It's closed, and in that box is all the ideas that person has. The ADHD mind is the area outside the box; it's infinite. It's constantly pursuing new avenues. It's

constantly exploring and trying new things.

Growing up I struggled with the basic things – the more complex something was the better I did. Problem-solving has always been something I could master. If you gave me a problem and the tools I needed, I would find you the best solution.

Next page: looking at things differently continued and changing your perspective.

Looking at Things Differently

If it didn't challenge me I lost interest. If it didn't tap into the deep thinking aspect of my brain, then I couldn't focus on it. Have you noticed how teachers always tell the parents of ADHD children that the child is brilliant, but can't master the basics? It's because the basics aren't challenging them.

People with ADHD are absorbing material at a different rate because they are analyzing each part of it. Forcing an ADHD child forward only slows them down more, because their mind locks in on something and wants to figure it out. They will not move on until they are ready. You can push them on to the next subject, but in their brain they are still thinking about the previous problem and trying to find other solutions and different outcomes.

The people with this gift are the people who make the world beautiful. They may not be picking up the material as fast as the other students are, but what they are picking up is critical. They are looking harder, listening deeper, and discovering new things.

A child with ADHD can stare at a grandfather clock for hours watching the pendulum swing and the gears turn. They are trying to figure out why each moving part is connecting with the other. Growing up I loved taking things apart to see how they worked. I always wanted to know why. It was challenging to me.

I remember taking a radio apart as a 10-year-old. I was fascinated by this thing that plugged in and played music. Putting some things back together was very challenging, but as a child I got more enjoyment out of fixing something that was broken than anything else. I could come up with ideas that other people couldn't.

Different, or Better?

Do some research, look at some of the greatest writers, artists, comedians, engineers, and mathematical geniuses. So many of them exhibited the signs and symptoms of having ADHD. How might Albert Einstein have done if his whole life he was told he had a mental disorder? Do you think he would've taken the time to explain things? Or would he have locked himself in a shell?

If Michelangelo’s parents had told him his whole life he was different, do you think he would've been able to express his feelings in paintings? Every person with ADHD has a very creative side, but putting the ‘different’ title on them locks you out from ever seeing it. They become afraid to bring their creative side out of the shell and afraid to speak up when they have a solution to a problem you have been trying to solve.

These young minds are the ones that will one day solve the world’s problems. These are the young minds equipped to describe emotions on a level that you never will be able to. They write the music that brings you to tears. They write the jokes that make you laugh until you pee. They create masterpieces of art. They become engineers and scientists who discover cures for diseases and better ways to build bridges; all because they slowed down, looked harder, and listen deeper.

So think about it – are they different, or are they better?