3 Things Not to Say to Someone With ADHD

by JEFF EMMERSON

What Not to Say to Someone With ADHD

With adult ADHD, emotions can get the better of us quite quickly. When you add a lack of knowledge to the mix (which is the case for many in our current society), things can get bad very quickly, to put it bluntly.

I know just how much it burns when people say certain things – things that can be very damaging to our sense of self-worth, shame and confidence. Here are a few key examples of what not to say to an adult with ADHD.

“You’re just lazy”

While it may appear that adults with ADHD/ADD are “lazy” at times, take it from me: we aren’t. In fact, we’re some of the most passionate, driven people you’ll ever find when we like what we’re doing. The thing for non-ADHDers to realize is that our minds are very spontaneous at times, and that includes anxiety, frustration and possibly depression if we wallow for too long in our thought patterns.

Laziness has nothing to do with it – what we need is to be regularly reminded of the big-picture, the “prize” of what we’re working toward, if you will. We also need to learn that things don’t happen overnight. Anything worthwhile takes time. Uncovering ways to de-stress when moments arise is a life-changing skill to have.

“Get over it (having ADHD)!”

No one simply “gets over” a mental health condition. That type of language is infuriating and shows a real lack of human empathy, understanding and education. The sooner people open their minds to the fact that adult ADHD is not only very real but also very hard to live with at times, the fewer suicides, drug addictions and jail sentences will occur. While some manage to thrive, many are suffering. In fact, up to 25% of prisoners globally have ADHD, according to a correctional psychologist I spoke to recently. I have heard similar statistics for Canada, from ADHD advocate Pete Quily. It’s very real – very proven.

“You aren’t determined enough”

Wrong. As mentioned earlier, adults with ADHD are some fiercely driven, passionate people. Sure, we may be the easily distracted/inattentive type, or the hyper type, or somewhere in between, and many have co-occurring conditions as well, so people need to know this.

When you judge someone in a split-second, you can do some very serious damage. Yes, it’s up to each of us to be more understanding and less quick to label people without knowing the full story, but the world is how it is. That’s why we adults with ADHD need to regularly remind ourselves of a few key things, such as the fact that the past is the past, we can be very, very successful in many areas of our lives, and that we must do the work in therapy. Simply counting on a “magic pill” to do it all is setting yourself up for failure. The pill may be helping you massively, but it’s only half of the equation.