When a Loved One Won’t Consider ADHD Treatment

by ANGELA FINLAY

Refusal to Treat ADHD

ADHD can be a very difficult condition to treat, partly because there’s often no immediate physical danger to counter and no acute symptoms that threaten health and safety. Instead, ADHD brings a load of questions, doubts, and emotional hurdles alongside the classic cognitive difficulties and behavioural issues, and that can make patients of any age shy away from the treatment options at their disposal.

Whether you struggle with convincing your partner, family member, or child to acknowledge their needs and get the help they deserve, one thing is very clear: the longer they go without treatment, the more wear and tear on your relationship, and the sooner your own confidence and happiness will begin to suffer.

Conflict is frustrating and destructive – learn some ways to help an ADHD person see the silver lining and make the choice to get help, without having to force them against their will.

Breaking Through a Problematic Perspective

There are several ways that attitude and perspective can get in the way of healthy ADHD management, so it’s important to understand the root of your loved one’s reaction. Anger, sadness, and fear are common emotional symptoms, but there can be more complex psychological reactions to the prospect of ADHD treatment, too.

The better you can grasp what an ADHD person is feeling and internalizing, the better you can work with them to broaden their perspective.

Controlling Symptoms vs Protecting Symptoms

Some ADHD people decide that their symptoms are who they are, rather than something they must learn to live with. It’s true that ADHD symptoms cannot be ignored – nor should they be – but there’s a big difference between allowing them to dictate your daily routine and finding a way to use them to your advantage (or overcome their hold on you).

As a friend, spouse, or parent, you may need to encourage the ADHD person to consider their potential, and help find activities or information to empower them.

Sorting out Priorities

Sometimes, starting treatment with ADHD is hard because it’s difficult to imagine what you will get out of it. The outside world seems to have clear expectations of you, but everything from fear of failure to simple disinterest can lead an ADHD mind to distraction – or combat.

Helping a person with ADHD outline their own priorities is a good start; it’s easier for them to stay motivated in

treatment when they work towards personal goals, and see personal rewards.

Raising Awareness

In many cases, it takes a good deal of time and effort to help a person with ADHD realize how their thoughts, feelings, and actions are intimately connected. After all, until you get a handle on the inner workings of your mind and behaviour, it's near impossible to develop effective coping mechanisms.

In many cases, cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) techniques can help a patient understand the fallout of their uncontrolled symptoms, and how they can change that response for the better.

Next page: working towards a balanced relationship and focus on resolution

Working Towards a Balanced Relationship

When you live with ADHD, it can feel like you're all alone most of the time. That can drive some ADHD people to do things without thinking of others, and continue to put themselves above and beyond anyone else, regardless of the strength of their love or fondness for other people in their lives.

Unfortunately, this can lead straight to the end of a relationship. On the other hand, there are things you can do to repair, rebound, and revitalize your relationship with an ADHD partner or family member as they start (or continue with) treatment:

Focus on Conflict Resolution

No matter what happens, you'll need to be able to resolve arguments fairly well (and regularly) if the relationship is going to last. Accept that there will be spats, fights, and disagreements, but commit to overcoming them as calmly and rationally as you can.

It can take a lot of patience and perseverance, but don't give up – research shows that conflict resolution is at the heart of any enduring relationship.

Reinforce Good Behaviour

It may seem like a small gesture, but positive reinforcement is powerful. When your loved one begins to attend therapy sessions, speak to their therapist about how best to reinforce the progress they've made at home.

Keep a positive attitude when you see that they're trying to incorporate new techniques, and focus on the small gains. Since ADHD affects everyone in the household, every member should be involved in treatment and motivating improvement.

Don't Enable

Allowing ADHD symptoms to prevail and brushing the consequences under the rug can be the easiest way out, even when you love and respect your partner. However, many failed relationships fail not because of ADHD symptoms, but because those symptoms were allowed to run amok. And although every ADHD person must eventually take responsibility for their condition and their actions, you also have an obligation to challenge your partner and stand up for your own interests.

Many people with ADHD feel like there's something wrong with them, and that can breed resentment and defensive behaviour. The sooner they can begin treatment, the sooner they can build a more accurate portrait of their lifestyle and limitations, but it's important to remember that the first step is usually the hardest.

The more patience you have, the better you'll deal with the struggle, but don't neglect your own needs. Sometimes seeing a counselor yourself can shed new light on how you are approaching the situation, and what you could be doing differently for better progress, and a better relationship.