19 Celebrities With ADHD You May Not Know About

by ANGELA FINLAY

How Successful People Flourish With ADHD

You don't often connect attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) with overwhelming success, especially when it seems to cause so much disruption. Impulsivity, frantic behavior, acting out, and a lack of focus may not help much in the classroom, but maybe these traits aren't as bad as they seem — there *are* positive things about ADHD!

Some people have managed to make a name for themselves in Hollywood, sports, the music industry, or big business in spite of — or, in some cases, because of — their ADHD. Take a look at these 19 celebrities who have been able to rise above the challenges and make their ADHD work for them.

Howie Mandel

The prolific TV host and comedian is fairly well known for his phobia of germs, but OCD isn't the only mental health challenge he has faced. Howie Mandel claims that his ADHD keeps his thoughts racing and his body almost out of his own control.

However, he points to the right medications and a strong support network as the source of his ongoing success. "There isn't anybody alive who doesn't need counseling. We don't have that set of tools and there's a stigma."

Indeed, a sense of community has helped Howie Mandel shine a light on his mental health challenges and connect to his audience: "It's actually helpful for me to feel the connection. The biggest issue with mental health issues is that you feel very alone and nobody shares your issues."

Michael Phelps

The most decorated Olympic athlete of all time has had to overcome some serious obstacles to get to the podium, notably the distraction, lack of focus, and impulsivity of his ADHD. His mother took a central role in helping him manage his condition during childhood.

Debbie Phelps remembers Michael's diagnosis. "It made me want to prove everyone wrong. I knew that, if I collaborated with Michael, he could achieve anything he set his mind to."

There's no doubt about the importance of supportive parenting for ADHD, which can involve an equal measure of creativity and commitment. Mrs. Phelps encouraged Michael's swimming and helped him to develop self-discipline, which has provided emotional strength and determination to help him succeed.

"All kids can fail us at times," Mrs. Phelps states. "But if you work with them, nine times out of 10, they'll make you proud."

Wil.i.am

Plenty of people with ADHD have found a way to use their condition in productive ways, and the rapper wil.i.am is one shining example. The musician that gained famed in the Black Eyed Peas has actually achieved a lot more than you might think: he's a successful music producer, he leads a tech company, he's an inventor, and heads an educational scholarship foundation.

ADHD can send your attention flying in all sorts of directions, and wil.i.am sees the bright side of that. "Those traits work well for me in studios and in meetings about creative ideas."

Happily, music has also helped him manage his ADHD better, effectively keeping his thoughts in order. "It keeps my mind from wandering. I can stay in the music," he says. "Music brings control to my thoughts."

Ty Pennington

As a hyperactive child, the bubbly host of *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition* turned to creative outlets to channel his impulsivity and tendency toward distraction.

"ADHD hurts your confidence. You feel like you really can't succeed because you don't make good grades … that really kind of affects you later in life, especially when you're trying to get a job and your confidence level is low," Ty says.

However, he can now appreciate the role of medicine in ADHD control (he became a spokesman for the ADHD medication Vyvanse), and has embraced his zany side by applying himself to ambitious carpentry and design-based projects, including his cleverly named L.A. design boutique, ADHD (Art Design Home Décor).

Channing Tatum

This ever-popular Hollywood actor knows the frustration of being labeled with a disorder but growing up without helpful solutions.

"Not having early success on that one path messes with you…you're just different. The system is broken…we should be able to help kids who struggle the way I did."

Like other celebrities who turned to art and expression as a means to cope with learning challenges, Channing Tatum found refuge in acting and sculpting, but he realizes the importance of following your own path. "Some people really need [medications] to help them, and others could maybe go on a different route … whatever you do, hopefully you can use it to your benefit."

Adam Levine

The frontman for Maroon 5 and prime-time voice coach Adam Levine has not only admitted to his struggles with ADHD, but has brought the challenges into the limelight in an effort to clear away the stigma.

Levine was diagnosed in his early teens, and although he figured he would grow out of it, he struggled when ADHD symptoms began to interfere in adulthood. "I went back to the doctor to discuss my symptoms and learned that I still had ADHD and that it could affect me as a young adult or adult. Once I knew that I still had ADHD, I was able to work with my doctor to help manage my symptoms."

Although he credits his medical team when it comes to his ADHD management, Levine isn't a passive player in

his condition. He is the spokesman for the Own It campaign launched by the ADDA and CHADD to educate children who have been diagnosed with ADHD, and encourage them to take an active role in their ongoing treatment.

James Carville

With a high-stakes career and respect from his political peers, you wouldn't assume a figure like James Carville struggled with ADHD. In fact, he is a prime example of how a diagnosis in adulthood doesn't have to interfere with the life and career you've built up.

His frantic personality was the source of plenty of jokes and jabs through his on-screen career as a political consultant and host, but it wasn't until a doctor stopped him in the airport to suggest that ADHD might be at the root of his hyperactivity.

"We went through the whole thing and then diagnosed me as being ADHD," Carville stated in an interview with CBS news. He added that, while he was reluctant to try medication to control the condition, "Having something confirmed, I guess, was to some extent exhilarating."

Sir Richard Branson

After struggling with learning throughout childhood, the unbelievably successful entrepreneur left school at age 15.

"If I'm not interested in something, I don't grasp it," Branson said in a TED interview. He claims that his dyslexia and ADHD kept him from understanding some smaller details through the course of his career, but evidently his varied interests, impulsivity, and risk-taking personality has led him to great success in business and enviable personal accomplishments.

Justin Timberlake

Singer and actor Justin Timberlake revealed he has ADHD and obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). Having both, according to the actor, isn't easy.

Justin knows despite his struggles; he can thrive, succeed and have a full and productive life, as so many others do with one or both of these conditions.

Jamie Oliver

British celebrity chef Jamie Oliver was diagnosed with ADHD as a child. He believes the best way to manage ADHD is with a healthy diet and practices what he preaches.

These days, Oliver is working to help children and teens with ADHD do better in school through healthy eating habits. Studies have shown that additives and artificial coloring in foods make ADHD symptoms worse, so it is no surprise eating healthier controls symptoms.

Will Smith

Will Smith has done it all – acting, singing, songwriting, and directing – so you may find it hard to believe that he has ADHD. He does, and his impressive career is proof he has never let it get in his way.

Smith has been vocal that while having ADHD has been a struggle; it has made him strive harder throughout his career.

Jim Carrey

Funnyman Jim Carrey struggled from restlessness as a child and with focusing in the classroom. At times, he would finish his classwork and start bothering other students who were yet to complete their work.

These days, Carrey is very vocal about his ADHD and works towards bringing attention to this health condition. Carrey has been treating for ADHD since childhood, and as an adult, he has learned to use his symptoms to his advantage, especially as a comedian.

Paris Hilton

In a 2007 interview with Larry King, Paris Hilton admitted to having ADHD since childhood and, as an adult, takes medication daily to manage her symptoms.

The model, actress, reality-television star, singer, and producer treats her ADHD symptoms with Adderall, which is designed to help with focus and concentration.

Christopher Knight

Christopher Knight is best known for his role as Peter Brady on the popular 70s show, *The Brady Bunch*. As the middle son of the Brady family, you probably never noticed him experiencing symptoms of ADHD while acting, but as an adult, he has become a spokesperson for ADHD awareness.

He has shared his struggles of childhood with ADHD. Knight was not officially diagnosed until he was an adult treating for depression after the death of his brother.

Bex Taylor-Klaus

Known for her roles on *Arrow, The Killing and House of Lies,* 23-year-old actress Bex Taylor-Klaus was diagnosed with ADHD as a child. Growing up, she attended many schools, none of which were able to accommodate her learning and attention struggles.

ADHD medication didn’t help when she was a child, so Bex’s mother tried a gluten-free diet with fish oil supplements. Her mother, now an ADHD coach and founder of Impact ADHD, has shared that diet changes and supplements worked better than medication for Bex.

Bill Gates

One of the wealthiest men in the world also has ADHD. Even though Bill Gates suffers from this condition, he still found ways to overcome and use his creative mind to change the way the world uses computers.

As a child, he was often getting in trouble by interrupting class and speaking over people. He is also a Harvard dropout who struggled to keep up with the curriculum.

But ADHD has never stopped Bill Gates from using his mind to persevere, succeed and make lots of money.

Emma Watson

Actress Emma Watson, well-known for starring in all of the *Harry Potter* films, was diagnosed with ADHD as a child. Few people know this, and most people are surprised to hear about it.

Emma also has a degree in English from Brown University and serves as a United Nations ambassador.

Mary-Kate Olsen

Wikipedia lists Mary-Kate Olsen as a “former American actress, fashion designer, producer, author, businesswoman, and equestrian” (avid horseback rider). What the informational website doesn’t share is that Olsen was diagnosed with ADHD while attending college at New York University.

Research shows that ADHD puts people at higher risk for mental and emotional disorders. Olsen, herself, has previously suffered from anorexia nervosa, an eating disorder that causes people to obsess about weight and what they are eating.

Lisa Ling

Lisa Ling, an award-winning journalist, has covered war zones and a variety of global events. But the most important event in her life was being diagnosed with ADHD at age 40.

Interestingly, Ling made the diagnosis herself after reporting on the rise of ADHD. She found herself looking back her lifelong attention issues and hyperactivity.

While ADHD has been challenging for Ling, she admits that it has helped her to create a very successful media career.

ADHD can throw a lot of obstacles in your path, but plenty of people have found a way to get over them gracefully and comfortably. Naturally, it takes practice to harness your ADHD powers, but it’s important to consider the positive ways you can use your unique mental habits and to your advantage. Take a cue from these successful celebrities, and draw upon all the supportive resources around you while you work with your doctors to find a therapy to suit you.