Tips for Improving ADHD-Related Social Skills

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How to Improve Your ADHD Social Skills

In a survey conducted by *ADDitude*, 51 percent of partners of those with ADHD stated that ADHD caused issues with their sexual lives. The study was performed on 1,256 partners, both with and without ADHD.

Although statistics regarding divorce in other studies vary, studies do indicate that divorce rates amongst people with ADHD are higher than that of the general population. The *ADDitude* study found that “38 percent of respondents with ADHD said their marriage had teetered close to divorce in the past. An additional 22 percent said divorce had “crossed my mind.”

So, if you have ADHD, here are some tips that may help you with your social skills, provided by experts in the field.

ADHD and Relationship Problems

If you’re the partner of someone with ADHD, it may be difficult. According to *ADDitude,* “Your partner can focus on things that interest him, but not on you. He never seems to follow through on what he agrees to do. He may seem to act like a child instead of an adult. You nag him, and you’ve started to dislike the person you’ve become.”

If you are the partner who has ADHD, it is likely also difficult. “you may feel your partner has become a nagging monster. The person you loved has become a control freak, trying to manage the details of your life. No matter how hard you try, you can’t meet your partner’s expectations.”

In both of these scenarios, you should know that your feelings are not your fault – they are valid. However, if neither of you are willing to work on these issues, then there your problems could worsen.

ADHD and Communication Difficulties

It is very important to understand the role that ADHD can play in a relationship. Why is this so important? Once you understand these roles, it is easier to respond, as a couple, when an issue arises – for the person with ADHD, to manage the symptoms, and for the partner without ADHD, to react, to help, and to encourage.

ADHD symptoms that may cause problems in a relationship include:

- Poor organizational skills, which can lead to difficulty finishing household tasks.
- Forgetfulness, which can lead to issues such as forgetting to pick up something on the way home from work or forgetting an anniversary.
- Trouble paying attention, which can cause the partner to feel ignored, even when this is not the intention.
- Impulsiveness, which can cause the person with ADHD to say things he or she does not mean or lead to

reckless behavior.
- Emotional behavior, which can cause an inability to control emotions.

Interventions to Improve Social Skills

One of the first things to do, most experts agree, begins treating ADHD with medications. Medication is a way to jumpstart treatment. However, it should never be the sole treatment for ADHD – especially if you are in a relationship, and especially if the relationship is floundering.

One thing that both of you can do is seek help. Therapy can be of great assistance – both cognitive behavior therapy and emotional management techniques for both partners and couple's therapy.

In addition, experts agree that putting yourself in your partner's shoes can be extremely helpful. Although it may seem that you know where they are coming from, "just because you've heard it all before doesn't mean you've truly taken in what your partner is saying. When emotions are running high, as they usually do around ADHD relationship issues, it's particularly difficult to maintain objectivity and perspective."

This can be difficult for both partners. The best time to do this is when tensions are not running high. At that time, sit down and talk – and let each person have time to speak without being interrupted. When they are done, repeat back what they have said by summarizing the main points to ensure that you've not misinterpreted what they've said. Then it is your turn.

For the partner without ADHD:

- Research ADHD. Ensure that you fully understand ADHD.
- Fully accept that your behavior has some impact on your partner as well.
- Realize that your partner has traits that are separate from ADHD.

For the partner with ADHD:

- Fully acknowledge that your ADHD is interfering with your relationship.
- Explore different treatment options – if your ADHD was well-controlled, you probably wouldn't be reading this article, correct?
- Find ways to spoil your partner. Does he or she like getting flowers, enjoy a certain sporting event, or have a favorite restaurant? I think you know what to do here.

For both partners:

- Instead of fighting, start talking.