# What Does It Mean to Be ADHD?

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## What Does ADHD Mean?

Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) can be a tricky thing to describe to people who don't have it. Some say it sounds like normal things everyone experiences or feels throughout the day, while others will say it sounds like an excuse.

But what does ADHD mean? I'd be willing to bet we would all say something slightly different.

To me, ADHD means noticing every single little detail, sound, and word, but not storing it in my memory to recall it later. It's hearing everything around me all at once, and not being able to decipher the difference between background noise and what I should be listening to.

It's frustration over clutter, paper piles, lost objects, and forgetting to pay the electric bill.

ADHD means going ten months without a haircut because I can't remember to call and make an appointment.

It's feeling inadequate when I try to do things the way "normal" people do them.

ADHD means never knowing what you're truly good at because your interests change as quickly as dandelion seeds dispersing in the breeze.

A million unfinished projects define ADHD. It's hyper-focus to the point of obsession over something we love until we freak out those who care about us.

Lying awake at night thinking and over-thinking everything and nothing is a trademark of my ADHD.

ADHD means forgetting words in mid-sentence, or zoning out when your mother starts rehashing what she saw on the news. You snap to and see "that look" that lets you know she knows you haven't heard a word.

### What Else Is ADHD?

It's finding humor in your shortcomings.

It's legitimately checking the freezer when you can't find your car keys because, hey, it happens.

Not worrying when your kid gets paint on the floor, or toothpaste on the ceiling can be part of ADHD because these things can (and do!) happen. Patience for things that might be a big deal to others is something we can learn from having ADHD.

ADHD can be letting your child off the hook with a lame answer like, "I don't know," because you completely,

100 percent understand how this is a valid explanation for (almost) anything. At the same time, it's finding that balance of understanding and holding them accountable, which can be difficult.

**It's More Than a Diagnosis**

ADHD is more than a diagnosis. It's more than a disorder checked off on my daughter's or my medical records.

When you find out you have ADHD, you also find something else. You find a community of people who feel your frustrations and can celebrate your small victories.

It's finding a family; even if you never meet them in person. Knowing that other people are struggling to get to work on time and to remember to pay their bills helps you feel less alone. Hearing others' talk about their clutter, their fears, lost assignments, missed appointments, and how a ladder stood in the living room for a month after changing a light bulb, all let you know you are part of something.

The other night after dinner I was putting away the leftovers. I pulled two containers down from the cupboard to see which the spaghetti sauce would fit into.

I filled the container, then realized a while later I had put the empty one I hadn't used in the refrigerator while I put the one with the sauce in the cupboard.

Sure, this is something that can happen to anyone at any given time. This particular day though, I was already overwhelmed and frustrated, and all I could think was what an idiot I was. Having ADHD means this kind of thing happens not just every once in a while, but every single day. Often, it happens more than once a day.

Then I remembered my ADHD community, my little family of folks just like me, struggling to get things right, day after day. I remembered how necessary it is to find the humor in my situation instead of concentrating on my shortcomings.

**Looking Beyond the Negatives**

Sometimes I think ADHD can be seen through such a negative lens because of the other diagnoses that can go with it. It's not always easy to see a bright side when we watch our children struggle through their day.

When we see them not treated fairly, or looked upon as if they are lacking, while we fight the schools to uphold their IEP's, it can be hard to find a silver lining.

Yet, there can be one. These children grow up to be our problem-solvers. They grow up to be our creative thinkers, and they grow up with compassion and understanding for the struggles of others.

I look at my daughter, and I know that she will accomplish so much more in this life than I have. It might not be an easy road, but she has the tools to succeed. More importantly, she has the self-awareness that I did not have at her age.

She has an answer to why she does things the way she does, while as I teen I struggled to understand myself and to try to hide how different I was from everyone else. I hope that makes all the difference.

**This Is What ADHD Means**

What is ADHD? ADHD means random thoughts, creative spirits, understanding the ironies of life, and realizing how a person can be a contradiction.

Anxiety and worry are part of the game, but you also are aware of what an interesting adventure you are on. ADHD is messy, frustrating, and beautiful. It allows you to see things from a different perspective and gives you freedom from your own limitations.