How Can I Nurture Our Marriage When My Partner has ADHD?

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ADHD and Marriage

If you are aware that your partner has ADHD, you are way ahead in the game. Many people do not know that they have this disorder, and it can cause much strain in relationships. If a non-ADHD spouse responds to an ADHD symptom of their loved one in the wrong way, this can cause a vicious circle of fights that are unlikely to resolve on their own.

Oftentimes, the non-ADHD spouse takes on the brunt of responsibility in a marriage and becomes resentful. The nagging and bossing around of the ADHD adult reflects the parent/child dynamic that inevitably occurs. The non-ADHD partner soon tires of being the parent of their spouse.

The misinterpretation of ADHD symptoms is very common. Between 80-90% of adults with ADHD do not know they have it. They enter relationships unaware that their behaviors will be the undoing of the partnership.

Thriving with ADHD and Marriage

If you suspect you have a partner with ADHD, you should encourage them to be evaluated by a mental health professional. If you are in a relationship with someone who has ADHD, you need to do a few things to help nurture that relationship.

- Be empathetic: You need to know that you and your spouse are wired much differently in how your minds work. You will have different reactions to the same type of experiences in your lives. A person with ADHD will have more “shaming” type of experiences, for example. You cannot ever truly know how your ADHD spouse experiences things and you also won’t know how to change his or her behavior. Common behavioral motivators do not work with anyone with ADHD.
- You need to make time to get “reacquainted” with your spouse, but now you need to do it with the ADHD in mind. You will need to get rid of some of the emotional baggage and deal with it openly. Emotions of denial, fear, anger, and hopelessness can come up when you are dealing with the situation of a spouse with ADHD.
- Treatment is needed for BOTH of you. This is probably something you didn’t expect, but you both will need to have treatment for your relationship to work. For the ADHD patient, there will be several aspects to his/her treatment.
    - Treatment with medication will likely be initiated.
    - Fish oil and better nutrition that is good for a person with ADHD will be given.
    - Exercise is an important component of controlling ADHD, and it would be even better if the other spouse participates with the patient.
    - Sleep is vital for everyone, including someone with ADHD. This will be encouraged with sleep techniques and possibly medication.

- There are counselling sessions that both you and your partner will need to go through so you know how to

circumvent many scenarios that can play out in the future.

- You and your spouse will need to learn specific types of conversations, verbal cues, and other effective ways to communicate. The most important thing is that your spouse with ADHD avoids making assumptions about your motives. Alternately, you may need to deal with your own set of issues and overcome them.
- You and your spouse will need to improve communication by using specific techniques tailored to use for ADHD persons.
- Setting more effective boundaries for yourself will allow you more control over your own life.
- Eventually, you will use techniques that allow you and your spouse to reignite the romance in your lives again.

ADHD and marriage can live in healthy harmony. Try implementing some of these tips and see the balance yourself.