



Medication as an Effective Treatment for AD/HD

By Jeffrey S. Katz, Ph.D.

What is AD/HD?

The National Resource Center on AD/HD defines attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder as “a common neurobiological condition affecting 5-8 percent of school age children with symptoms persisting into adulthood in as many as 60% of cases (i.e. approximately 4% of adults). It is characterized by developmentally inappropriate levels of inattention, impulsivity, and hyperactivity. Although individuals with this disorder can be very successful in life, without identification and proper treatment, ADHD may have serious consequences, including school failure, family stress and disruption, depression, problems with relationships, substance abuse, delinquency, risk for accidental injuries and job failure. Early identification and treatment are extremely important.”

AD/HD is real.

AD/HD is treatable.

And treatment is effective.

How do you treat AD/HD?

The gold standard treatment for AD/HD includes three main approaches:

1. **Therapy** for the individual to learn about AD/HD, how it is affecting them and how

to best manage treatment for their particular needs.

2. **Making accommodations** within the individual's environment to help minimize the negative consequences of AD/HD. For example: At school, children might have their teacher help them organize what they need to take home for homework. At home, parents would help create structure and routine to make sure that homework gets done without a lot of distraction.
3. **A combination of the first two PLUS medication.** Therapy and accommodations are often very helpful, but for the best possible outcome, research repeatedly demonstrates that medication - *properly prescribed by a responsible physician, taken as directed, monitored, and adjusted to obtain its best effect* - is of particular importance. This is because AD/HD is a neuro-biological disorder, not the result of poor parenting or a lack of desire or motivation on the part of the individual with AD/HD.

Medication works at improving the brain's ability to function more effectively. My experience, over and over again, is that therapy, accommodations and multitudes of other interventions can be helpful, but the



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addition of medication can provide the best benefit. It not only improves the core symptoms of AD/HD (inattention, impulsivity and overactivity), but it also allows all of the other interventions that are being used to work even better.

I have been working with a family whose youngest son I diagnosed with AD/HD. Like all my young patients with AD/HD, I made this diagnosis after a comprehensive series of evaluations, conferences with the patient's parents and input from respective teachers. He is hyperactive, impulsive, easily frustrated, receives poor grades despite being highly intelligent, and is hard to handle everywhere. Since diagnosis his parents have worked hard with his teachers to set up good structure and routines at school and home and they have come to better understand how their son with AD/HD "operates."

It was all helpful to a degree, but not until medication was introduced did everything fall into place. I am still amazed, from one week to the next, at the leaps and bounds of progress he continues to make. The boy, who once had to play with each and every toy in my office, jumping from one to another, now sits on the floor and can build a particularly creative spaceship out of Legos. When asked if he had concerns that he wanted to talk about with his parents, he shared his frustration about his brother not asking permission to play with his toys. Calmly focused and on-point, he talked, he listened, and was now able to work out things he could do to handle the situation.

If you are not familiar with AD/HD, you might think that this story is too cute, too "Pollyannaish" to be really true - but it is, and I have seen the results many times over the course of 26 years of practice. I have heard from adults whom I treated as children, or from parents of children I treated who are now in college, telling me how well they are doing, having been diagnosed and effectively treated for their AD/HD.

Make no mistake; medication is not a cure for AD/HD. However...

- when properly prescribed by a responsible physician,
- taken as directed,
- consistently monitored and adjusted if necessary, and
- used in combination with therapy and environmental accommodations as outlined in this article,

medication can be a highly effective tool in giving those with AD/HD the best chance for success in their everyday lives.





About the Author

Jeffrey Katz, Ph.D., is a child, adolescent, and adult psychologist and leading expert in the field of ADHD, learning disabilities and behavioral problems. He is also a foremost consultant and sought after speaker for numerous medical, academic, business and legal professionals and organizations. Throughout his career, Dr. Katz has been interviewed by many print, radio and TV outlets and served as a regular columnist for *Tidewater Parent* magazine. He is also co-author of the recently released book *365 +1 Ways to Succeed with ADHD*. A graduate of the California School of Professional Psychology, Dr. Katz has been in private practice in the Hampton Roads, Virginia area for more than 25 years.

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