

Magnified Intensified Amplified

Why a person with
ADHD acts the way
they do



People with ADHD are sometimes hard to handle. They are frustrating, inattentive, irresponsible space cadets. Well, that's what they might look like to you, but that's far from what they are.

If you don't have ADHD, it's hard to believe that it's real. It's perplexing and illogical. A person with ADHD is a walking paradox- a real live oxymoron. No, I didn't say moron, even though at times you probably want to call them that.

You stand there scratching your head, trying to make sense of their strange behavior. You ask yourself ...

How can someone be capable in many areas of their life and incapable in others?

There's a reason for this perplexing behavior.

The ADHD brain functions best when it's interested in whatever it's doing. You know this is true because you're seen it happen.

When they want something bad enough, they are filled with passion. An ADHDer is unstoppable. Yet, when they don't want to do something, they're unmovable.

You watch them work through something as difficult as law school and then a second later, they can't stay tuned into a simple conversation.

I'm here to tell you that there is a reason for this strange behavior, but it's going to be hard to believe. In fact, most outsiders (non-ADHD family, friends, co-workers, and even some doctors) will not accept the explanation of ADHD. "Nope, just some sort of made up excuse for laziness," they say. I know because they've said it to me.

Magnified, Intensified, Amplified

MIA- No, they're not missing in action, but sometimes they seem that way.

This perplexing behavior happens because everything is magnified, intensified, and amplified in the ADHD brain.

Here are a few questions you probably ask yourself about your ADHD loved ones:

How could they be so smart and act so dumb?

What's so hard about making a doctor's appointment?

How is it possible to forget milk at the grocery store while they're holding the shopping list in their hand?

Why do they ask me what I'm saying after I repeated it three times?

Wouldn't it be easier to keep their keys in one place so they know where they are when they need them?

Why does it take them so long to finish one simple email?

How hard is it to pay a bill on time?

How can they be so hyper and then so lazy?

How did they get through medical school if they can't answer an email?

Don't they see what's right in front of their face?

Why are they so defensive, I just asked a simple question?

Magnified, Intensified, Amplified

And the one question, you ask yourself on a daily basis is...

Why is everything such a big deal?

When you have ADHD, everything that comes into your brain and through your body is magnified, intensified, and amplified.

Sounds are louder. Fabrics are scratchier. Thoughts are stronger.

This isn't an excuse for bad behavior. It's not okay for a person with ADHD to be a mean, screaming, fire-breathing dragon.

They have to work on their behavior too. But until they get there- and throughout the process of becoming educated and aware of how ADHD is affecting your lives- it's important to understand that they aren't mean, screaming, fire-breathing dragons, they just haven't gotten a grip on their ADHD.

A person with ADHD needs treatment. It can't be ignored because it doesn't go away.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPD AND ADHD

SPD is Sensory Processing Disorder, a neurological condition in which the brain has trouble receiving and responding to information that goes through the senses.

SPD and ADHD appear to be the same. Impulsivity, hyperactivity, and distractibility could be evident with both.

The difference is that SPD is related to the physical senses. The reactions of impulsivity, hyperactivity and distractibility -that might resemble ADHD-are caused by the inability to process what the body feels.

In some cases, SPD can coexist with ADHD.



Think of it this way: SPD starts in the body and goes through the brain. ADHD starts in the brain and goes through the body.

This is how it goes: Getting into bed each night is a major production for me. If the sheets are crinkled beneath me, I can't relax or fall asleep. I squiggle and squirm trying to smooth out the bumps. I'll fluff my three pillows until they're even and smooth. When my body finally settles in, my brain wakes up. Almost every thought I had during the day comes back for a replay. Believe me, this isn't my choice or favorite activity. Through the years, I've learned how to manage my wild mind. It's an effort most people aren't willing to exert. But if they do, life is more manageable.

SOS: SENSORY OVERLOAD SYNDROME

Magnified, Intensified, Amplified

A person with ADHD is not ordinary (I guess you knew that by now). With ADHD you see, notice, and get attracted to things that others don't. Unfortunately, this has been a negative label. Actually, the opposite is true.

ADHD is described as attention deficit when in reality, ADHDers are hyper-attentive.

They hear more, see more, and feel more than the average person.

Usually, it's hard to fight off every thought or sensation that comes into their brains. It's a feeling of overwhelm, bombardment, and exhaustion.

You know how it goes. You're talking to an ADHDer, but your words don't seem to be sinking in. It looks like they're listening to you, but they don't seem to hear what you're saying. They ask you to repeat what you clearly said, and then ask again. What happened and where do they go?

Here are some reasons why your ADHDer seems uninterested and spaced-out:

1. THEY SEE THINGS YOU DO NOT SEE.

After a few sentences into a conversation, you notice a dazed look on their face. You keep talking but notice that your ADHDer's attention is somewhere else. A picture on the wall behind you caught their attention. "What did you say," they ask. You repeat yourself, and after a few minutes, their attention comes back to the conversation. Their creative perspective is like x-ray vision that allows them to see beyond the surface. Some people see raindrops. They see sparkling, shimmering circles dancing on the window.

2. THEY HAVE A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF COLOR.

It looks as if they don't care what you have to say, they do. But the colors on your shirt are forming patterns on your shirt that grab their attention more than words do. Colors are brighter. They see what others don't see, they see so much more.

3. THEY HAVE A HEIGHTENED SENSE OF TOUCH.

Fabrics, tags, bumps in the bed, crumpled covers, tight clothes, hair that's pulled too tight, and shoes that hurt. Body parts that have no feeling to a non-ADHDer might send chills up the ADHD spine. Sometimes a hug feels great, other times it feels like a chokehold in a wrestling match.

4. THEY ARE SENSITIVE TO WORDS.

Choose the wrong words and you might trigger a conflict that could last for days. You feel like you're walking through a minefield. You tiptoe around; unsure if the next step you take will set off an explosion of emotion. Your sweet partner just turned into the Hulk.

5. THEY'RE ALL OR NOTHING.

When they're in, they're in all the way. They go from not interested or "get out of my way, I'm on a roll, don't bother me, hyper-interested." Once their engines kick in, nothing can stop them. Passion drives them to greatness, or distress.

6. THEY'RE TRYING REALLY HARD.

What's easy for you is a major effort for a person with ADHD. The simplest tasks that you breeze through cause their minds to swirl like tornadoes. Non-ADHDers exercise every day, go to work, walk the dog, and prepare lunch the night before. ADHDers function around energy cycles. They are either get-up-and-go-right-now or they can't move, and need to veg out.

7. THEIR THOUGHTS ARE BOMBARDING.

Magnified, Intensified, Amplified

ADHD thoughts are sticky like glue. They don't flow harmoniously in and out. Instead, thoughts cycle through our minds like a scratched broken record. Or they're shot like stones from a cannon, bombarding us until we crash and burn. Our thoughts are loud, temporarily taking our attention away from a conversation, which makes it seem as if we are not listening. Our attention might drift away for a bit, but if you're patient and give us time to separate our thoughts from your voice, and we will be present again.



Whether it's from anger, worry, or a sensitive reaction to a hurtful word; ADHD emotions are stronger and more intense than the average person. Combine that intensity with impulsivity and you have a volcanic reaction. With passionate urgency, words come flying out of their mouths before they have time to process what we want to say. We say words we soon regret, frequently apologizing and requesting forgiveness. We can't concentrate when we're emotional, and we can barely function when our emotions take us into a world far away.

Take control of ADHD. Don't let it control you.

HOW TO GET A GRIP ON ADHD

EDUCATION- Learn about ADHD and how it affects you or your loved ones. Most people with ADHD know they have it, but they don't realize the impact it has on their lives and the people who love them.

AWARENESS- Know when ADHD traits show up. Each person experiences ADHD traits at different levels. It's not the same for everyone. It's important to be aware of when the ADHD traits occur.

COMMUNICATION- Don't let ADHD remain invisible. Talk about it. And most of all, joke about it.

For more information on what it feels like to have ADHD, and how to control it and live with it... contact June Silny at june@junesilny.com.

I am not a psychologist or medical professional. You should always seek advice of a professional before deciding which treatment is best for you. Any advice I give is for informational purposes and is based on my personal experiences. Consult with a medical professional for a diagnosis.

