

Girls and ADHD. So How Does it Feel ?

Late diagnosis, mental health and self esteem. The voices of intelligent young women

I was chatting with Alex Doig, our local Child and Adolescent Mental Health consultant on a rainy afternoon in 2018. How is it, I asked him, based on the young women I see and meet in my work as an ADHD Coach and through sessions for ADHD Richmond and Kingston, that ADHD in girls just isn't picked-up. Why is it that they have to wait until their mental health becomes the overwhelming presenting condition to get some -or any - help?

Dr Doig confirmed the number of young girls he had seen who presented with serious mental health conditions; anxiety, self harm, eating disorders, yet sitting underneath it all was undiagnosed ADHD.



“Sometimes they don't even ask who it was, they just assume it was you”

On being blamed for things they hadn't done

Many of these young women had become school refusers. Too traumatised to put themselves back into the arena, only to be knocked down as they had struggled to perform to their intellectual capability. Seen to be bright, but assumed to be lazy, they were incapable of attaining anywhere close to their potential.

We agreed that the problem is a lack of awareness of how girls present with ADHD. So completely differently to boys. Our idea was to bring together young women to talk about their experiences and create a strong local and personal video message, from them to you as teachers and parents. From a crammed meeting room where 12 girls chatted incredibly articulately about their experiences, to the video they offer to you today, they had a fun, sociable, shared experience culminating in a powerful educational message

This is the result. We are totally thrilled (and the girls had a great time too).

<https://vimeopro.com/karmavimeo/an-introduction-to-adhd> Password ADHD

We'd love your feedback bookings@adhdrichmond.org or valerieivevens@me.com

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Signs that your student /daughter might have ADHD

There are many symptoms of ADHD shared by both boys and girls. The following are examples of how they can manifest in girls:

1. Homework takes longer than it should. She forgets about it or is distracted by surfing the internet or texting her friends and ends up staying up late the night before an assignment is due to finish it.
2. She is an inefficient student. While she appears to study for tests, her performance does not seem to match the time spent studying.
3. She has weak reading comprehension. She can get facts from a text but does not make links between the ideas she reads. She misses details in instructions on assignments and tests. Yet she can be highly verbally able and expressive in class
4. She struggles with friendships because she may not read social cues or follow conversations. Peers start to reject and isolate her or make fun of her.
5. She forgets things she needs (e.g. dance shoes or soccer cleats). Agreeable girls with ADHD will often have friends or adults who compensate for them (for example sharing a pen because she doesn't have one).
6. She misplaces her things regularly (for example her phone, keys or bank card).
7. She talks, and talks and talks, getting frustrated if interrupted as she loses her thought.
8. She does not run and climb about like boys but is the classroom helper often social and chatty in class.
9. She may have friends because she is fun to be around but when she tries to organize activities she seems anxious and indecisive. Her friends help her make decisions, find her things and keep her organized. Some inattentive girls have few friends as they alienate
10. She has great ideas and wants to start acting on them right away but does not finish projects or follow through.
11. She is chronically late or is not ready when she needs to be.
12. She channels hyperactivity by being involved in many extracurricular activities like swimming, school clubs or excessive thinking and over verbalising.
13. She does not seem to learn from consequences.
14. She has wide swings in mood. One moment she is on top of the world and the next moment she is crushed because of a casual comment that is genuinely taken as harsh personal criticism.