

ADHD A to Z

LIVE VIDEO CONFERENCE WITH DR. RUSSELL BARKLEY

November 7, 2011-11-08, Heather Abbott, Counsellor, BVC

If you didn't have a chance to attend the free video conference in N232 on November 7, with one of the world's leading experts on ADHD, Dr. Russell Barkley, then read this for some of the highlights!

WHAT IS ADHD?

There are about 5% of adults in Canada who have been diagnosed with ADHD and related subtypes. Barkley cites research that states ADHD and its related subtypes in the DSM - IV, is a neurogenetic disorder which occurs in the frontal lobe region of the brain. 2/3 of the cases of ADHD are completely polygenetic (there are about 7 genes involved in the development and expression of ADHD in some form) and 1/3 of the cases are acquired (injury or infection at birth or shortly after).

The 3 main issues with ADHD are persistence, reaction to distraction and task re-engagement or working memory. ADHD is an executive function deficit in the brain. The executive functioning of brain enables us to problem solve, get organized, plan ahead, engage in self-directed purposeful and goal directed behaviour and regulate our emotions. This area doesn't work as well in people with ADHD and as such they have problems in the areas of inhibition and self restraint, interference monitoring, self awareness and self monitoring, non verbal working memory; verbal working memory; planning and problem solving; anticipation and preparation to act; self regulation across time and emotional self control. There is knowledge and ability but less ability to perform or execute the knowledge - a disconnect. That is why people with this condition can be very brilliant, but they just can't seem to persist successfully in any goal completion. One can easily imagine how such a condition could negatively impact and affect all dimensions of one's life: social, relationships (few friends, hard to maintain relationships), school (poor academic performance) work (inability to maintain employment), and health and medical areas (eg: more accidents, more addictions and poor lifestyle issues). Not many employers, friends or mates easily tolerate someone who is never on time, forgets to do things, can't finish what they started and can't seem to control their emotions - acting on them impulsively. Yet it is not intentional inconsideration; people with ADHD cannot help it because this area of the brain just doesn't work well.

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

Dr. Barkley recommends the full treatment package in treating ADHD: Evaluation (diagnosis) and he recommends early screening in kindergarten; Education (Counselling); Medication (managed by a Doctor); Behaviour modification and accommodations at home, school and work. Dr. Barkley highly recommends medication as it is the most effective way to deal with ADHD. The other strategies are helpful but he states that medication for ADHD is like insulin is to a diabetic - necessary for survival. There are stimulants (Methylphenidate (Ritalin) and amphetamines) and one non-stimulant type drug (Atomoxetine or Straterra) available in Canada which of course needs to be prescribed and monitored by a doctor or psychiatrist.

Some of the other strategies for supporting people with ADHD and strategies for those in helping themselves are: externalizing and making everything visual to remind people/self of what they need to do and where they need to be every day (notes on doors at home, large visual calendars with dates of assignments and tests, setting phones for alarms reminders); allowing lots of breaks in class and even during exams; buddy systems for homework and check ins, getting lots of physical exercise, lots of praise and rewards for productivity, using immediate feedback, allowing music while doing homework, taking small breaks during homework using the 10 minute rule (work for 10 minutes, break, work for 10 minutes, break), learning study strategies such as the SQ4 method, and referring them to counsellors, doctors and specialized support people. There are many, many strategies to help support people with ADHD. Too many to list.

If you think you may have students who have ADHD, please refer them to counselling and specialized support so we can assess and implement plans. We do have the Barkley screening assessment for ADHD and/or we can refer out. If you are interested in learning more about ADHD check out these Canadian and Albertan websites: www.help4adhd.org, , www.caddac.org and www.ladaa.ca . If you are interested in viewing Dr. Barkley's information and have \$9.95 and up go to <http://Adhdlectures.com> and for \$25 you can purchase other presentations from Dr. Barkley at <http://www.ldalberta.ca/barkley-session>.