

# ADHD vs. Anxiety and Your Child: The Comparison

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is a diagnosis that brings on its own challenges for kids today. So, what do you do when your child exhibits and talking about symptoms of anxiety as well?

As a parent, knowing the facts is very important. Educating yourself about the differences between ADHD and anxiety will assist you in helping your child to manage and overcome the challenges associated with both.

## ADHD and Anxiety: Are They Related?

Let's compare ADHD and anxiety. The two may seem incredibly similar. But, [research has shown](#) that they are quite different and come from distinctly different areas of the brain.

What are the symptoms and how do they compare?

### The Common Connection

When a [child is diagnosed with ADHD](#), there may be a host of frustrations that follow. Your doctor may prescribe medication. Doctor visits may increase. They may be introduced to a mental health specialist. There might be more meetings with school teachers and counselors.

With all of these new additions in their life, your child may begin experiencing nervous feelings, anxiousness, and worrisome thoughts. Therefore, a level of anxiety begins to present itself simply because of all of the changes that your child has been dealt after his/her diagnosis.

#### Common Related Symptoms of ADHD and Anxiety:

- Difficulty in Social Situations
- Fidgeting
- Short Attention Span
- Failing to Complete Tasks
- Working Slowly
- Irritability
- Disruptive in the Classroom
- Excessive use of TV or Video Games
- Telling Lies or Not Taking Responsibility
- Withdrawing and Isolating

### ADHD Symptoms vs. Anxiety Symptoms

It's estimated that over [60 percent of people with ADHD](#) have comorbid, or coexisting conditions. These conditions can include anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, sleep disorders, etc.

ADHD and anxiety are actually very different.

ADHD involves [challenges for a child](#) concerning focus, concentration, and organization. Anxiety symptoms are more related to physical symptoms such as nervousness, heavy breathing, sweating, worry, and fear.

ADHD Symptoms:

- Short Attention Span
- Fidgeting
- Hyperactivity
- Impulsivity
- Restlessness

#### Anxiety Symptoms:

- Worry
- Sweaty Palms
- Rapid Breathing
- Stomachaches
- Nervousness
- Fear

## How ADHD Affects Anxiety and the Common Effects on a Child

Your child may not understand how to control or address their specific fears and worries. They may blow things out of proportion, act out in school, or retreat from social activity.

Children with anxiety disorders show signs of [compulsive or perfectionist behavior](#). However, children with ADHD will struggle more with issues such as not being organized or not being able to complete a task.

Children crave guidance from their parents, loved ones, teachers, counselors, medical professionals, etc. It is difficult for a young child, and even a teenager, to process behavioral and mental health issues. This can lead to frustration and interfere with their daily routine, relationships, and school work.

It may be challenging to treat anxiety and ADHD simultaneously. Some ADHD medications can worsen anxiety symptoms. ADHD medication can include stimulants, therefore, giving your child more energy than they can handle. Hence, the physical symptoms related to anxiety.

## The Data and Statistics

According to a [national 2016 parent survey](#), the number of children diagnosed with ADHD is an estimated 6.1 million (9.4%).

This number includes:

- Children ages 2-5 years old: 388,000
- Children ages 6-11 years old: 4 million
- Children ages 12-17 years old: 3 million

Girls are less likely to be diagnosed with ADHD than boys. Around 64% of children with ADHD also have another disorder such as depression, autism, Tourette syndrome, and other behavioral disorders. About 3 out of 10 children (33%) with ADHD also have anxiety symptoms.

## Parental Support - What Can You Do to Help?

Stay educated and research, research, research. Unlike 20 years ago, there is now ample online research defining ADHD and anxiety, and how the two are related.

As a parent, communication with your child is also imperative. Stay connected with your doctors and mental health professionals. Talk with your child about how their ADHD and anxiety affects them in their own unique way.

Open communication and providing a safe and loving environment are pivotal in helping your child overcome these challenges.

Help your child to notice their personal triggers. What frustrates them? Do they feel nervous? Where do the symptoms occur? What is your child doing at the time they begin to feel anxious or stressed? Take notice of specific instances that may recur with your child, triggering their anxiety or ADHD.

Here are a few management tips to promote within your home:

- Get enough sleep
- Create a schedule
- Keep a journal
- Form an exercise routine
- Be patient

Managing your child's diagnosis is possible. You are giving them the ability to manage their symptoms as they move into adulthood. Promote independence and they will have the confidence to manage their ADHD and anxiety as an adult.

## ADHD, Anxiety and Adulthood

Challenges with ADHD and anxiety present themselves entirely differently as adults. The roadblocks as children include not completing tasks, worrying, not playing nice with friends, lashing out at parents and/or teachers.

As adults, ADHD and anxiety can lead to major hiccups in life. The lack of organization can affect finances. Not being able to complete a task can affect job security. Retreating from people and social situations can cause relationship trauma.

Here are a few strategies that may help your child overcome their ADHD and anxiety as they move into adulthood:

- **Thought Stopping:** Kids can overthink just like anyone else. Teach your child the act of "thought stopping." Tell them to literally say out loud, "No, brain. Stop talking to me. This method rewires their thinking and jumpstarts their thought process.
- **Deep Breathing:** Oxygen. Oxygen. Oxygen. We tend to underestimate the act of breathing. Help them find a calm, quiet space where they can take five slow, deep breaths without any distractions. Breathing through a stressful or anxious situation will assist your child in resetting their busy brain. There are also apps that assist with meditation and breathing practices.
- **Psychotherapy:** Anxiety affects so many things. Once it interferes and complicates major life activities in school and at home, it may be time to seek professional help. Psychotherapy can help kids manage their emotions and work through their stress and anxiety. Ask your doctor to refer you to a licensed professional in your area.

## Everything will be Alright

Stress and anxiety are normal. A healthy dose of anxiety actually helps to motivate all of us sometimes. Remind your child that they are normal and not alone as they manage their ADHD and anxiety. Let them know that you will support them every step of the way.

*Focus on your child's talents and abilities and encourage them to never give up!*

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