



A Time of Hope

by Marie S. Paxson

PEOPLE OFTEN ASK ME WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE CHADD'S PRESIDENT and about my view of AD/HD both currently and for the future. First, the CHADD presidency is a very high honor... and second, I really didn't think it was humanly possible to receive this many emails per day! My current view of AD/HD is one of hope, and this year's CHADD conference will be packed with presentations that give reasons to have hope. I truly believe that if you have to have a hidden disability, this is the best time in history to have it. And I'm delighted that Michael Phelps highlighted in such a public way that you can be an amazing and talented person who also happens to have AD/HD—that one does not cancel out the other.

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Take a look at this issue of *Attention*, for example. We have an article by Sam Goldstein, PhD, on several different testing and evaluation measures to diagnose the disorder. "One size fits all" doesn't work for the AD/HD community, so it's reassuring to know that there are multiple tools available to diagnose the disorder and determine an individual's strengths and weaknesses.

There is also an interview with Nancy Ratey on AD/HD coaching. Ten or twelve years ago if you mentioned coaching, people asked which sport you played. Now AD/HD coaching is a popular option for people affected by the disorder.

I love the overview of Carol Dweck's research on the "malleability of intelligence," which is another way of saying you CAN teach an old dog new tricks. I know adults who feel stuck in their diagnosis and hamstrung by their AD/HD-related shortcomings. So it's wonderful to know that learning to view mistakes as growth opportunities rather than personal failures can actually help to improve performance and help counter self-defeating attitudes.

Karran Harper Royal's compelling article on how AD/HD has affected her family is both inspiring and tragic. Look at the contrast between how her brother fared due to lack of diagnosis and treatment versus how her sons are thriving and succeeding with accurate diagnosis and proper treatment. Also included in this issue is a poem that expresses how a ten-year-old boy views his AD/HD.

My hope for the future is tempered by some sobering statistics. The *New York Times*

recently reported that one in 100 Americans is incarcerated. Studies suggest that 25-50 percent of incarcerated youth have a mental disorder. In my involvement with CHADD, I have met people who don't believe that AD/HD exists. I can't help but wonder how many tragic stories of inaccurate diagnosis and insufficient treatment it would take to convince them otherwise. This refusal to believe and accept that AD/HD is real contributes heavily to the stigma that many of us face. Check out the article on how college students with mental health issues are affected by stigma. The AD/HD community has much work to do.

So while *Attention* presents stories and examples of those who are struggling and those who are succeeding, we also recognize the importance of providing you with strategies and suggestions to manage all that AD/HD brings to your life. Part two of Gina Pera's article on denial gives specific suggestions for those who are helping a partner or family member address their AD/HD issues.

What to do when experts disagree? Andrew Adesman, MD, gives us an overview of the issues regarding AD/HD medication and heart testing, as well as sound guidance on coping with mixed messages. Many of us have experienced situations in which a specialist we visit for AD/HD disagrees with our other specialist. Don't forget that CHADD is here to provide information and support to help you sift through many points of view to make the best decision possible for you or your family. ●



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