

An introduction to ADHD

What does research tell us about ADHD?



- ▶ It is a neurological disorder (brain)
- ▶ Strong evidence of hereditary link but other factors may be involved
- ▶ ADHD affects around 5 % of school population
- ▶ More boys than girls are diagnosed 3:1
- ▶ It is a lifelong condition
- ▶ Children with ADHD are up to 3 years delayed in their emotional, social and behavioural maturity
- ▶ ADHD alone does not affect IQ
- ▶ ADHD is not caused by poor parenting
- ▶ Children with ADHD are not “naughty”
- ▶ ADHD is a spectrum disorder

ADHD and other diagnoses (Comorbidities)

- ▶ ASD
- ▶ Dyslexia/dyscalculia
- ▶ Development Co-ordination Disorder (dyspraxia)
- ▶ Speech and language difficulties
- ▶ Sensory processing disorder
- ▶ Oppositional Defiance Disorder
- ▶ Obsessive Compulsive disorder
- ▶ Tic disorder/Tourette's
- ▶ Anxiety
- ▶ Depression
- ▶ Learning difficulties
- ▶ Attachment Disorder



Core Features of ADHD - What does it look like?



▶ Inattention



▶ Hyperactivity



▶ Impulsivity



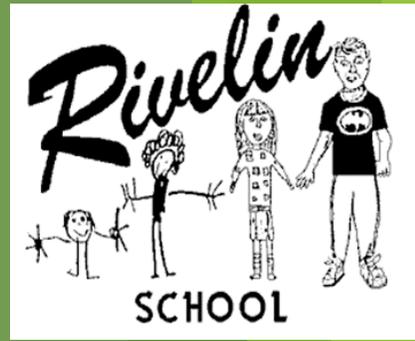
▶ Lots of children will show traits

▶ A child with a diagnosis of ADHD will consistently demonstrate all 3 features in multiple environments.

Inattention - what might we see?



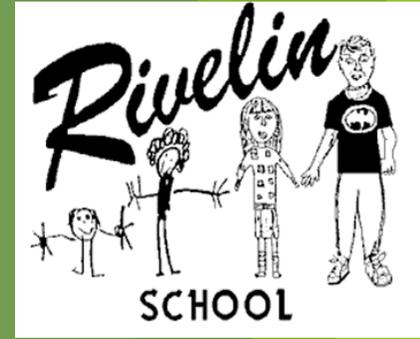
- ▶ Poor working (short term) memory
- ▶ Short concentration span
- ▶ Easily distracted
- ▶ Problems in focusing on one task at a time
- ▶ Find it hard to follow instructions (particularly more than one at a time)
- ▶ Difficulty expressing ideas onto paper - (thoughts/ideas - process)
- ▶ Find it hard to get started on tasks
- ▶ Difficulties in finishing (poor attention to detail)
- ▶ Find it hard to organise selves
- ▶ Tunnel vision
- ▶ Hyperfocus - a superpower!?



Hyperactivity - What might we see?

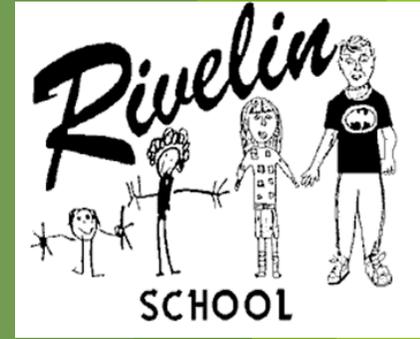
- ▶ Lots of energy
- ▶ Restlessness, difficulties sitting still
- ▶ Fidgety/squirmy
- ▶ Excessive talking
- ▶ Problems winding down (transitions)
- ▶ Sleep issues
- ▶ Spectrum disorder -don't have to present as excessively bouncy!
- ▶ Girls?
- ▶ Inattentive type?

Impulsivity - What might we see?



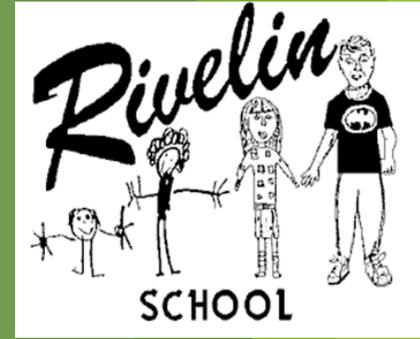
- ▶ Lack of Inhibition
- ▶ Poor sense of danger
- ▶ Risk taking
- ▶ Saying or doing without thinking of consequences
- ▶ Shouting out
- ▶ Interrupting
- ▶ Impatience
- ▶ Living in the moment
- ▶ Easily frustrated
- ▶ Difficulty sharing and taking turns

Emotional regulation issues



- ▶ Children with ADHD often find it difficult to understand and express their emotions appropriately
- ▶ This may be seen more in children with an additional diagnosis, such as ASD
- ▶ Manifests in “meltdowns”, lashing out, tearfulness, tantrum-like behaviour.
- ▶ These difficulties may be a result of a combination of issues including social and emotional immaturity, impulsivity, executive functioning difficulties, sensory processing issues.

What's happening in the brain?



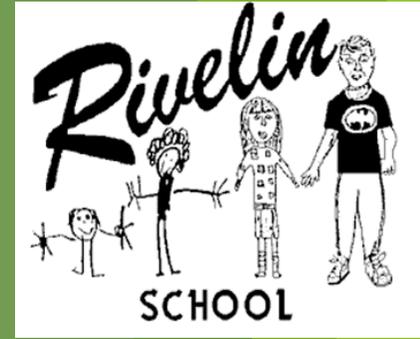
- ▶ Things look super fast on the outside but are super slowed down on the inside
- ▶ Thought to be due to reduced uptake of the neurotransmitter Dopamine which is essential for smooth transmission of messages across the brain.
- ▶ Affects the cortices (front lobes) of the brain which is responsible for emotional regulation/decision making/executive functions (multi-tasking!).

Wider impact of ADHD on children and their families



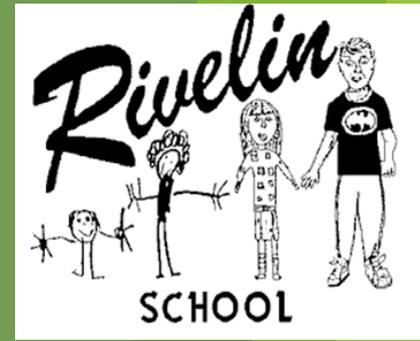
- ▶ Labelled as naughty child
- ▶ Seen as class clown
- ▶ Not invited to parties/play dates
- ▶ Hears constant criticism of self - ("stop, don't do, why do you always..")
- ▶ Impact on self esteem and identity
- ▶ Impact on siblings
- ▶ Parents/carers feel isolated by child's behaviour and resulting judgement
- ▶ Resulting mental health issues for parents/carers
- ▶ Parents may have ADHD

Medication



- ▶ Not all children with ADHD take medication.
- ▶ The NICE guidelines recommend that medication and various strategies at home and at School is the best treatment for children with moderate/severe ADHD.
- ▶ Medication can often change for a variety of reasons.
- ▶ The communication between School and home is vital whilst the child is taking medication during the School.
- ▶ Snap questionnaires

Strategies within school - Communication



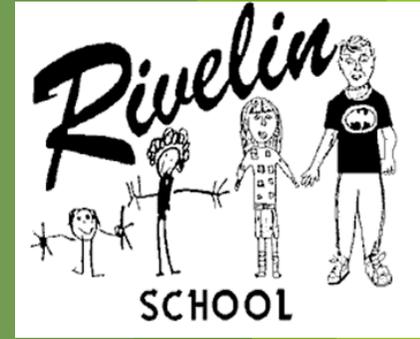
- ▶ Always consider the individual
- ▶ Breaking tasks down into small chunks.
- ▶ Make things visual, use visual aids/calendars/timers.
- ▶ Check instructions have been understood.
- ▶ Give eye contact (if child is comfortable with this)
- ▶ Keep checking that they are on task (these children are very easily distracted)
- ▶ Processing - laptop? Record verbal responses? Scribe? Reader?
- ▶ SATS - adaptations and adjustments
- ▶ Positive reinforcement. (Remember that they live in the moment!)
- ▶ Offer a familiar face/place for support - it might not be you!

Strategies within School: Behaviour



- ▶ Recognizing the difference between bad behaviour and ADHD behaviour.
- ▶ Accept that these children have a lot of energy therefore they will be fidgety - provide a means of channelling that energy!
- ▶ “Here and now brains” - consequences and rewards
- ▶ Appropriate sanctions and rewards
- ▶ Transitions can be tricky for children with ADHD, As teachers you are likely to identify when transitions are difficult for a child and how to manage this (this can be individualised for each child)
- ▶ Fiddle toys/tools - the great debate!
- ▶ Use reward and incentive.
- ▶ Offering positive time out.

Strategies within School Environment



- ▶ Think about the child's position in the classroom (make sure they “buy into it”)
- ▶ Carpet time/assembly are particularly difficult times for children with ADHD.
- ▶ How distracting is your classroom?
- ▶ Unstructured times of the day can be difficult for children with ADHD (be creative)
- ▶ Offering a safe place to calm down/reflect.

Positives of ADHD

- ▶ They are often very creative.
- ▶ Think out of the box.
- ▶ Lots of energy.
- ▶ Have an ability to hyper focus.
- ▶ Very charismatic!
- ▶ Develop coping mechanisms.
- ▶ Some of the brightest and most successful people in the world are non-neurotypical.
- ▶ Famous people with ADHD - Michael Phelps, Jamie Oliver, Sir Richard Branson, Adam Levine, Louis Smith, Erin Brockovich

“I had a teacher tell me that I would never amount to anything and I would never be successful.”

– Michael Phelps



speakupforkids.org



Important things to remember:

- ▶ They are not doing it on purpose!
- ▶ Work with their strengths
- ▶ Pick your battles
- ▶ Think outside the box
- ▶ Avoid confrontation
- ▶ Remember these children are a third behind their peer group in maturity

