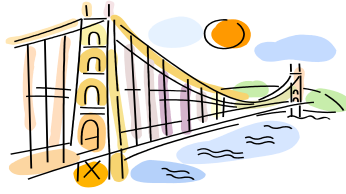




Interview about relationships and ADHD



Keath Low: ADD / ADHD can have a profound effect on peer relationships, even into adulthood. Sometimes the impact can be so great that an individual feels a tremendous sense of isolation. Once feeling isolated or alone, it can be very difficult to connect with others.

Bryan Hutchinson, author of [One Boy's Struggle: A Memoir – Surviving Life With Undiagnosed ADD](#), shares his experiences and offers some helpful strategies:

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Keath Low: What Impact Does ADD Have on Peer Relationships?

Bryan Hutchinson: People with ADHD tend to keep to themselves, we have a hard time understanding those around us and we miss many normal communication cues. We are often confused as to what people really mean, especially at a young age. Maintaining relationships is even harder and requires a great amount of effort on our part; we forget about friends and sometimes stay out of contact for too long, which upsets others and this gives the impression we just don't care about others. The impression that we don't care is a false impression; we do care, but we simply do not maintain relationships in the same manner as those without ADHD. We get along best with those who are not judgmental and do not require constant contact.

Keath: What were your own Personal Experiences as a Child and Now as an Adult?

Bryan: As a child I felt I was different and I felt outside everyone else's world. As a child I did not know why I could not get along with others. I would become distracted and lost during conversations. Other children believed I was a loner or a rebel because I did not associate with them. When I would get hyper and wild other

kids were attracted to me and we would catch a lot of attention, especially in school, but this would get me in trouble with serious consequences, and this was another reason to draw into myself and keep to myself. I couldn't get along and when I did, I got into trouble.

Many ADHD children are born leaders. They are energetic and have great ideas. Their social skills are limited, but because of their drive and ability to understand things quickly without bothering with too many details – this gives them leadership qualities. Unfortunately, this leadership trait can sometimes be squashed by teachers and parents because it is disruptive. I think it is a common mistake of parents and teachers not to recognize that a child may be a leader and go on to do great things, because at the child's young age it is a distraction and seems a bit chaotic at times. Kids who could otherwise grow to become great leaders instead grow with rejection and stunted aspirations.

As an adult, social engagement challenges followed me and still have an impact. I have become better at maintaining relationships by knowing why I have difficulties and have learned to raise my awareness of others concerns and interests. ADDers can seem self-absorbed with so many distractions and inner thoughts; therefore it is important to purposely become curious of other people's interests. For example, in relationships with females I used to fail to ask questions about their life and family. This made it seem as though I didn't care much about who they were. I have learned to purposely increase my interest in others – most people without ADHD have this curiosity of others inherently, whereas we with ADHD must pay attention to it by realizing our differences and make up for it with purpose intent to be better – more sociable.

Keath: How Did You Improve Relationships?

Bryan: First, I had to understand I had a problem communicating. I needed help and therapy was the answer to my prayers. However, before therapy I was lucky in gaining the interest of mentors who helped me see where I needed to improve. If I had not been a pool player I think my social development would have taken longer, because in sports one must engage – even in such a sport as pool. Pool also requires a lot of mental conditioning and this helped me learn where I needed to improve and also highlighted my difficulties to focus.

Keath: What Strategies Do You Think Would Be Helpful For Children In School?

Bryan: First and foremost parents and teachers must understand that kids with ADHD are different and what restrictions and discipline is placed on them will affect them their entire lives. We might not seem like it, but we are very sensitive and take things to heart quickly and we remember things which cause pain very well, because pain and suffering are stimulating, but in a negative manner. All kids need a certain amount of discipline, but for parents with ADHD children, they must be more creative and use a reward system that emphasizes good behavior and decisions.

I suggest parents get their children involved in sports to build social skills. Not necessarily physical sports, but rather sports or activities which require more mental effort. Kids with ADHD are gifted with quick strategic minds and this could help them shine in the leadership skills and if they enjoy the activity enough they will find ways to get along better, rather than lose the activity and friendships it provides. However, drawing from my own childhood experiences, it is important for the child to learn to stick with it – I was always very tentative when introduced to new things and would try to quit before ever starting for fear of rejection, failure and punishment.

Keath: What Strategies Are Helpful for Adults?

Bryan: To purposely engage, ask questions and become interested in others. Peer relationships, I believe, are part of the cause for adults to abuse substances. A quick drink can help calm the mind and rest the nerves, allowing for the adult with ADHD to become more interested and therefore social, but this isn't good for obvious reasons. Adults with ADHD need to learn to stop punishing themselves and realize that being different isn't bad, it just provides some challenges which can be overcome by learning coping skills.

By Keath Low and Bryan Hutchinson

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Originally posted on www.add.about.com

Bryan's website: www.ADDerWorld.com

Books by Bryan Hutchinson [here](#).