

# Attention Deficit Disorder



A Christ-Centered 12-Step Recovery Group  
addressing addictions and those affected by them

## **ADD & THE ALCOHOLIC/ADDICT**

***There is a great deal of interest about Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) among those in recovery, and for good reason.*** ADD, a genetic, neurobiological condition, affects about 5% of the general population. However, it affects as high as 42% of addicts and alcoholics, and as high as 67% of severe alcoholics or addicts with multiple addictions.\*

***In previous years many alcoholics were diagnosed with a condition called “post sobriety syndrome.”*** Diagnosis was made after the recovering alcoholic would tell the doctor that, since his sobriety, he’s noticed that he is more anxious, nervous, distracted and impulsive, among other symptoms. Doctors often told recovering alcoholics that the symptoms were “post sobriety syndrome”, a result of brain damage from alcohol abuse. Eventually, recovering alcoholics began to disagree with the diagnosis and say, “No! I was this way before I ever drank. In fact,” they’d say, “I started drinking because of these symptoms.”

***Research began to show that the alcoholic’s brain was biochemically different from a normal person’s brain.*** The brain of an alcoholic had lower levels of the natural form of morphine. Research showed that small amounts of alcohol increased the alcoholic’s natural morphine so that he felt “normal” after a few drinks. The research that eventually identified a number of “alcoholic genes” found that they were, in fact, the identical genes common in adults with ADD. Now the symptoms that were previously diagnosed as “post sobriety syndrome” were identified as the common symptoms of ADD.

***ADD is why some people can’t say “no” to drugs, alcohol, food, sex or obsessive-compulsive behaviour.*** ADD is caused by the inability of certain brain cells to effectively use dopamine – sometimes called the WD40 of the brain. The result of this ineffective neurotransmission is a malfunctioning in the frontal lobes of the brain. These frontal lobes direct such human behaviour as judgement, control, mental focus, planning and organization. Therefore, the classic ADD symptoms include impulsiveness, distractibility, hyperactivity or hypoactivity and disorganization.

***When ADD is treated, many ADDers are able to change patterns and behaviours that have plagued them for years.*** One adult remarked, “My impulsive eating has changed. I used to drive away from the store wiping chocolate from my mouth before I realized that I’d inhaled three candy bars. Now the idea comes up for a vote in my head. I’ve lost fifteen pounds.” But for some adults with ADD it isn’t just a candy bar, they impulsively use alcohol, cocaine or sex.

***Common treatments for ADD begin with a diagnosis and proceed to education, medication, structure, therapy, coaching, nutrition, exercise and the support of others.*** Adults with ADD quickly learn that medicine is not a cure-all or even an option for some, so the non-medical treatments become more important. This is why the 12 Steps are so vital. A Christian based 12-Step program provides simplicity, structure, support, sponsorship and spiritual elements missing in most treatment plans, which is the key to real hope and healing.

***The basic symptoms of ADD are only a tip of the iceberg.*** The most destructive effects of ADD are related to the secondary emotional and character issues that are deeply rooted. The Steps focus on these deeper issues of character; they address arrested development, cognitive distortion and they aid in reparenting with God’s will as the goal.

***Once treatment begins, including working a 12-Step program for ADD, all the positive qualities of adults with ADD shine through.*** Adults with ADD are creative, intelligent, intuitive, flexible, humorous and much more. The effects of life with ADD have often masked their positive qualities, but with God’s help, these qualities can become the foundation for many new and hopeful changes in their relationships, career, finances and life in general.

\* See *Overload: Attention Deficit Disorder and the Addictive Brain* by David K. Miller and Kenneth Blum; and *The Gene Bomb and Search for the Tourette Syndrome and Human Behavior Genes* by David E. Comings M.D.

## **THE 12 STEPS of ADD ANONYMOUS\*\***

1. We admitted we were powerless over ADD – that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God as we understood Him.
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.
11. Sought, through prayer and meditation, to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these Steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

\*\*Adapted from the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous

## COMMON SYMPTOMS

- We are easily distracted, and have difficulty paying attention. We have a tendency to tune out or drift away.
- We are impulsive, and make hasty decisions without considering the consequences.
- We are restless, often hyperactive, and full of nervous energy.
- We have a strong sense of under-achievement and always feel that we fail to live up to our potential.
- We have difficulty in relationships.
- We are procrastinators and have trouble getting started or feeling motivated.
- We cannot tolerate boredom and are always looking for something to do.
- We have difficulty getting organized.
- We are impatient, and have a low tolerance for frustration.
- We have mood swings with periods of anxiety, depression or loneliness.
- We worry excessively and often have a sense of impending doom.
- We have trouble going through established channels or following proper procedure.
- We have many projects going simultaneously and have trouble following through with a project or task.
- We are poor observers of ourselves and are often unaware of our effect on others.
- We tend to say what comes to mind without considering the timing or appropriateness of the remark.
- We have a tendency toward addictive behaviour, and use mood-altering substances to medicate ourselves.
- We have difficulty in the workplace.
- We either change jobs frequently or have trouble getting along with our co-workers.
- We have a family history of ADD or other disorders of impulse control or mood.

## COMMON TRAITS

- We have feelings of low self-esteem that cause us to judge ourselves without mercy.
- We are fearful, anxious and insecure in many areas of our lives.
- We do not give proper attention to our physical well being.
- We have sudden outbursts of anger, often with loss of control.
- We are resentful and blame others for our problems and struggles.
- We are either irresponsible or overly responsible.
- We are perfectionists and put undue pressure on ourselves to perform.
- We can be indifferent and demonstrate an “I don’t care” attitude.
- We use rebellion and defiance as a way to disguise the ADD traits that make us feel “different” from others.
- We are defensive and respond poorly to personal criticism or teasing.
- We have difficulty in sexual relationships and use sex as a source of high stimulation, or we consider sex uninteresting or a bothersome distraction.
- We have a compelling need for excitement and high stimulation in our lives.
- We use codependent and caretaking behaviour to feel better about ourselves and avoid abandonment or rejection.
- We use denial as a survival tool to protect ourselves from reality.
- We use manipulation and control to manage our lives and make our ADD symptoms more tolerable.
- We tend to isolate ourselves and feel uncomfortable around other people.
- We have a strong desire to escape from the ADD characteristics that negatively affect us.

## POSITIVE QUALITIES

- We are intelligent and highly motivated by intellectual challenges.
- We are creative and highly imaginative, and can express ourselves in unique ways.
- We have high energy and meet challenges with enthusiasm.
- We are intuitive and can easily sense the needs and feelings of others.
- We are resourceful and can devise ways and means to accomplish things.
- We are warmhearted and enjoy doing things with others.
- We are humorous and have an ability to make others laugh.
- We are hardworking and have a “never-say-die” approach to life.
- We are willing to take risks and see risk-taking as a form of excitement.
- We are loyal, honest and trustworthy.
- We are flexible and adapt easily to change.
- We are change-agents and like the intrigue involved in change.
- We are good observers of the world around us and are able to find quick solutions to complicated situations.
- We are productive and effective if we like what we are doing.
- We are forgiving and rarely hold grudges.

Compiled by Jerry Seiden  
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## ABOUT THE 12 STEPS

Bill W. and Dr. Bob S., co-founders of Alcoholics Anonymous, developed an easily understood program that provides spiritual direction for managing and coping with life. Their process of recovery was centered around the 12 Steps, which they developed to improve the quality of their lives, and to spread the message to other alcoholics.

For adults with ADD, these 12 Steps can help them make a much-needed change in the management of their lives. The Steps connect them to wisdom, power, love and order through belief in a Power greater than themselves. Overcomers Outreach believes that they need to allow God, Who created order and harmony in nature and the universe, to bring order and sanity to their lives. Many exhaust themselves by trying to manage their ADD, control the unpleasant symptoms, feel good about themselves, and survive in a world made for more “normal” people. In many cases, the control, and attempts to self-manage, creates new and more troubling problems such as addictions, codependency, poor health, depression, fear and anger.

Overcomers Outreach Christian support groups meet to study God’s Word as it relates directly to the 12 Steps of AA, to study relevant subjects in the light of the Scriptures, to share with one another in strictest confidence, and to pray specifically one for another. The results are truly astonishing! OO has helped many individuals recover from various forms of addictive, compulsive or obsessive behaviour. It brings together the tested wisdom and the proven effectiveness of the 12-Step principles of AA and emphasizes the importance of relying upon a Power greater than ourselves – Jesus Christ.

For more information or to find a meeting, contact us:

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