

Open Letter to Family Doctors and Mental Health Practitioners... From an Average Kid Who Just Acts Like a Kid

Please Note: The color coordinated comments represent the 18 "symptoms" used to diagnose kids ADHD. According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) children 16 years old or younger need only exhibit 6 to be diagnosed. Even children who do not exhibit any of these symptoms can still be diagnosed ADHD-Unspecified. The symptoms are a collection of common normal childhood behaviors; ADHD could more fittingly be called the All Do Have Disorder.

Hey Doc,

I was wondering if before you see me the next time and tell my parents that I still need to be medicated for ADHD, you might consider a few things about me that you might not know. You see as a kid who can barely pick out an outfit that matches, make my bed, or wake up not hoping it's Saturday, I kind of have an active imagination. Like nearly all of my friends, I hate taking baths and I like to daydream. And when I daydream, I seem to not pay attention to what others are talking about. I kind of get lost in my own little world where rainbows lead to pots of gold, leprechauns are real, life often feels like my favorite video game, and fart jokes never get old.

I try not to, but I can't seem to stop. (I said "butt.") To me being outside and playing is so much more fun to think about than listening to my teachers and parents asking me to do things that are no fun at all. I have so many ideas, and things I want to do, that my brain just seems to automatically take over when an adult starts to talk to me. And, when one of my friends says something funny, I get excited and distracted. I guess this kind of causes a bit of a problem when it comes to paying attention in school for seven long hours each day, which seems like forever. I don't know if any other kids have told you, but (oops I said "butt" again) ADHD drugs seem to not let me think at all. They take my imagination away. It sure seems strange they call this stuff "medicine."

I also have a lot of energy. My mom says I get it from sucking every last ounce of it out of her. I think it might come from what is called the "last nerve." Because normally right before she freaks out, she says I am getting on that nerve. I am not sure how that works scientifically, but she does seem to be rather low on energy quite often when we spend time together. Now it might be possible I'm producing the energy, because my school counselor asked my Mom if I act as if I am driven by a motor. Which would be pretty cool. Then I would be like a robot.

So I'm not sure if it is my robot motor, or my awesome imagination and endless energy, or maybe that I find school to be boring... (Don't tell my teacher ok? She's real nice and I don't want to hurt her feelings), but I often fidget, tap my feet and squirm in my seat. My desk chair is really uncomfortable and I can't help but get up and move around. I find myself wanting to run and climb. I find being quiet and paying attention at school to be even harder than listening to one of my minister's sermons! At least those are short and then I get cookies.

I talk a lot, and I can't understand why I am not allowed to share my answers and thoughts when I think of them. It's as if they think I can remember what I am thinking and save it for later. The whole "waiting your turn" thing and playing quietly doesn't make a lick of sense. Besides the old people at my grandma's group home, who plays quietly? It's like adults forget how to play.

I really don't think I am that different from any of the other kids in the class, but for some reason my teacher doesn't seem to find my behavior as enjoyable as she does Robert's and Reagan's. They act the same way I do, but my teacher calls them "gifted" and says that I have "special needs." I don't think I am special, or need stuff that my classmates don't need as well. I think I am just a normal kid who gets tired of learning things that I can't imagine ever needing to learn.

So before you make me take more ADHD pills that will keep me from being as tall and gifted as Robert, possibly make my face twitch like Tommy's, or make me act like Brandon, (I think he's a zombie, really, you should see him, it's scary) maybe you could read one of those books on how kids act when they are young. My aunt told my mom these books are about "normal childhood development," whatever that is.

Or maybe you could read the booklet the pharmacist gave my mom. I think he called it a "medication guide." He looked worried when he told her she might want to read it very carefully before making me take the pills. Maybe you don't realize, but the pills can cause all kinds of things that sound worse than me being me. The pharmacist called them "serious health risks and side effects." He pointed out in the booklet that the people who make the pills claim to not even know how the pills work.

If you don't mind me asking, maybe you could also just tell my parents that these things they call "symptoms of ADHD" are just normal ways that all kids act. Maybe you could remind my mom that she is a great mom, and that I am a great kid. Maybe remind my parents and my teachers that my behaving like a young man will happen when I am no longer a young boy! I think it's possible. Yesterday I actually brushed my teeth twice and used a tissue to pick my nose. I did all of these things without being told to. By the way, those tissue things actually work, and provide a good place to hide your boogers. You should keep some in your office. Oh, and don't look under your waiting room chairs.

Every day I try not to let my parents and teachers down, or to make them mad.. But it turns out I am really good at it. Doc, I think it is going to take a bit more than the few months I have been on this planet to figure out everything you adults want us kids to do... (I know, I said "butt" again, and, here comes another one)... But if you could do this for me, I swear I will try my best. See you soon. Yours Truly, Me

SYMPTOM: Is often forgetful in daily activities.

SYMPTOM: Often does not seem to listen when spoken to directly.

SYMPTOM: Often avoids, dislikes, or is reluctant to engage in tasks that require sustained mental effort.

SYMPTOM: Is often easily distracted by extraneous stimuli.

SYMPTOMS:
1. Often fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes in schoolwork...
2. Often does not follow through on instructions and fails to finish schoolwork...
3. Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.

SYMPTOM: Is often "on the go," acting as if "driven by a motor"

SYMPTOM: Often runs about or climbs in situations where it is inappropriate

SYMPTOM: Often fidgets with or taps hands or feet or squirms in seat.

SYMPTOM: Often has difficulty sustaining attention in tasks or play activities.

SYMPTOM: Often leaves seat in situations when remaining seated is expected.

SYMPTOMS:
1. Often has difficulty waiting his or her turn.
2. Often interrupts or intrudes on others.

SYMPTOM: Often talks excessively.

SYMPTOM: Often blurts out the answer before a question has been completed.

SYMPTOM: Often unable to play or engage in leisure activities quietly.

Child development research and theory show that what some want you to believe are signs supporting an ADHD diagnosis quite possibly are just signs of a developmental delay.

When we move beyond identifying gifted as only the wonder kids who are already high achieving, cooperative, and incredible in the classroom, performing grade levels above their peers, we find that many gifted children are waiting to blossom even if they aren't yet showing obvious signs of blooming. Young gifted children (still developing) also are often unorganized, distractible, and inattentive, challenged socially, and challenged behaviorally. They sometimes have trouble fitting in and might be highly focused on unusual interests.

Nearly all child-development theory agrees that children develop gradually and sequentially on a similar but unique time line dictated by an array of issues, with some of them being to some extent out of our control. Stage theory tells us that children progress through developmental stages. Kids labeled with ADHD are probably just one stage away from being considered normal once again. Much of the developmental process cannot be rushed, but it can be nurtured at home and at school.

The medication guides admit the pharmaceutical companies don't know exactly how the stimulants interact in the brain to reduce the behaviors associated with ADHD symptoms, the extent to long term effects, or how stimulants impact a child's central nervous system.

ADHD drug manufacturers all have medication guides readily accessible in which they admit the drugs they're selling are associated with many dangers. The dangers of ADHD drugs range from sudden death related to heart problems to the development of more serious mental problems.