

## **A Retrospective on A Teenager's Experience Being Diagnosed and Treated for ADHD**

*Below is a touching and inspiring reflection from a young man on his experience with being diagnosed and treated for ADHD. We hope his experience will encourage others to think about the condition and give them hope for their future.*

I have an intriguing kind of mind. As defined by the diagnostic manual, DSM-IV, I have a neurologically-based processing issue in my brain. Some people see it as a weakness or character flaw, while teachers often view it as a puzzling barrier between themselves and the afflicted student. For me it is so much more. It is a hurdle, an explanation, a blessing. But above all else it is my life, my Attention Deficit Disorder.

Looking back on my childhood, it is now apparent that I have always been affected by this learning problem. As a child I was perceived as a rambunctious and vigorous youth. While many of my elementary school teachers commented on my inconsistent focus, when confronted they simply blamed it on built-up energy!

Then in Middle School, my focus seemed to deteriorate further with the increasing homework load. Sadly, I had convinced myself that my poor grades were simply due to my lack of intelligence. I knew little of learning disabilities and did not care to know more—adolescent wisdom...

The transition into high school did not seem as emotionally scarring as I had anticipated. I was popular, predominantly through sports. It had somehow slipped my mind that the reason I was in high school was to learn. I always attended class, but seldom heard the entire lesson as I doodled in the margins of my textbook. If this wasn't a clear sign of ADD, I had to look no further than my quixotic methods of completing homework, sitting at the computer until midnight, blaring music and chatting with friends, while continuously chanting, "ok", "I'm working", or "One Sec!" to my mother. This methodology obviously proved ineffective, as my grades stayed embarrassingly low.

By the end of my sophomore year, I had reached a tipping point, and I decided to talk to my dad. With tears of confusion, I told him I was having trouble focusing on many different levels. Without hesitation, my parents had me tested, and the results revealed ADD. After being placed on Adderall, I noticed an immediate difference, but it wasn't until the beginning of my junior year that I began to own my strengths.

Up to that point, I had never so much as dreamed of earning an A on a math assignment and had even tried to persuade the dean to let me drop pre-calculus because I knew that, even with medication, math was a lost cause. The dean urged me to try it out for a while and if I hated it she would transfer me into another course. After earning my first ever B+ two weeks into the semester, I decided to stick it out. Mathematics came to me over the next few weeks. Though I had failed to listen in algebra and geometry, I was still able to solve the most complicated problems in pre-cal. I enjoyed working through the numbers and theorems in the constant struggle to find the illusive "x". After I received an A on the second test of the year, I never looked back. By the end of the first semester I was earning 100% on nearly every single test, but more importantly I was actually enjoying my time in the

classroom. Call me a nerd if you will, but I couldn't wait to learn about the new concepts each week, and try my hand at as many practice questions as I could. I continued my perfect streak to the end of the year, receiving a score of 244 out of 245 on the final exam, followed by a perfect 800 on the math section of the SAT Reasoning Test.

My newfound ability was also evident in my English III class. Being able to clearly organize my thoughts led to a newly discovered written voice. I was able to plan, structure, and create arguments coherently and convincingly. The teacher, who had taught me the year before, was utterly perplexed when I started the year with some of the best writing in the class. My writing continued to improve throughout the year as I became a model student, reading my work aloud and helping with writer workshops as our class prepared for the SAT.

In just one semester my GPA nearly doubled, but more importantly my self-image underwent a major transformation. Meager aspirations of enrolling in junior college were replaced by dreams of attending a prestigious university and finding a creative, intriguing program of study. My academic life had become a journey instead of a chore, and for that I am extremely grateful.

If you don't get help, ADD can curse you and make you wretched. But if you work it right, ADD can enhance your life and make you sparkle. There is always, always, hope. The only major regret I have is that I did not come to my parents sooner with my concerns. As a result, I spent a long time thinking I was stupid and lazy; it is a real joy to know—I'm not.

My Dreams of attending a prestigious university were answered when I had to choose between UCLA, Cal and NYU. I choose NYU Steinhardt because of my love of music at the time and interest in business. I graduated in 4 years with a degree in both!

-After studying abroad in Italy, I fell in love with food and the culinary arts.

This love of the Culinary Arts has led me to an exciting new journey at ----: a food-centric Internet start-up that is inspiring a new generation of home cooks across America.

One important lesson I have learned is that ADD is a lifelong condition I live with. I continue to use my medication on a regular basis and stay in touch with my Doctor.