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Adult ADD can be treated with physical therapy for the brain

Exercises improve memory, attention, planning

When a child with Attention Deficit Disorder is distracted, impulsive and disorganized, though frustrating, the effects are usually limited to the child and his or her family and peers.

When that child grows up and joins the work force, however, those same symptoms can wreak havoc on a company's bottom line.



INSIDER'S VIEW

Carol Utay

In the past, adults suffering from ADD mostly combated the symptoms with medicine and supportive counseling, but researchers are now saying most can benefit by improving their executive functioning skills, as well.

While the theory has been in development for more than a decade, the trickle-down effect is just making its way to mainstream, and many adults are unaware of the options.

But the general public is now taking notice, especially when the information comes from such a well-known business icon as finance guru Charles Schwab, who also has ADD and dyslexia. An article released this week on his Web site, SchwabLearning.org, includes explanations of how executive functioning affects so many aspects of life, learning and work requirements.

Looking at executive functioning as the real area getting in the way of success at work, when learning and in relationships, helps both employers and those impacted with executive functioning deficits understand why this can make ADD so overwhelming.

The good news about the research and all the information about how the brain works is we can strengthen an individual's executive functioning and attention skills.

We (education, psychology and medical professionals) used to think once an individual was identified with executive functioning deficits or attention

issues we had one choice for effective treatment—a combination of counseling, compensating strategies, accommodations in the work/school environment and medical interventions.

Now, not only are all these still the gold standard, but we are able to add exercises that improve skills in memory, attention, planning, organization, decision making, processing and more.

This means just like using physical therapy to heal an injured muscle, we are able to actually change brain function.

Executive functioning training was very new 10 years ago, but with the plethora of research available now, more educators have a working knowledge of the concepts. Adults with ADD who think they have executive functioning deficits should look for someone who not only understands the latest research, but has research-proven programs that improve these areas.

The best news about everything mentioned here is those affected should not suffer silently. Do not give up. Do not think that you cannot overcome the challenges of ADD and executive functioning deficits. Today, there is much that you can do.

Some of the research-proven programs available are PACE Plus, The Attention Trainer and The Attention Program. Find someone who is certified in using these materials. There are also other programs that are beginning to gain credibility, and finding a support group can help, as well.

And as always, the first step in designing a course of action is a thorough evaluation. Many adults with ADD have told us the evaluation was pivotal in making changes and crucial to their success and the success of the businesses for which they worked.

CAROL UTAY is founder and executive director of Total Learning Centers LLC in Wexford. She may be contacted at Carol@TotalLearningCenters.com or (724) 940-1090.