

NEURODIVERSITY > ADHD > A YOUNG PERSON'S QUESTIONS

A Young Person's Questions

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1. A Young Person's Questions - Brain stimulation and hyperactivity

I have a couple of questions. The first question would be what are some common causes for my brain being stimulated? Yeah that's a really tricky question Toby, one of the tricky ones. So the brain is mainly stimulated by something called the reticular activating system and it's kind of a whole lot of cells at the bottom of your brain and they control things like sleep, sleepfulness and wakefulness and arousal and so that's kind of like the master switch for stimulation of the brain. They're all in council then? Yeah but then lots of other things have an impact on that. So you know there's lots of sensory things going on, if it's very noisy, a very light busy environment, it's easy to get over aroused, very stimulated.

Whether it's a quiet environment, you're much less likely to be highly aroused. And then things like feeling states, you know emotions. So if you're really anxious your brain gets quite stimulated, trying to get ready to you know run away from something, the flight fight response or maybe to fight something. And then there's kind of some substances that can lead to your brain being stimulated. So some medications can stimulate your brain. And then Then there's also some disorders or conditions which can make your brain overstimulated. So ADHD can make people look very overstimulated and another condition is bipolar disorder.

So it's often a combination of all those factors that lead to your brain being stimulated or not. So with ADHD, there's often two groups of people. So there are some people who are very, very easily overstimulated and kind of wired and really excitable. And then you have some other people with ADHD who are kind of sluggish and kind of slow. So there's a huge variety with it. So it's kind of a complicated answer. If you were the big, loud, noisy one, what do you think would be the most important thing that would most likely be likely to stimulate your brain very quickly and make it be a very strong stimulation?

Would it be noise, lights? Yeah, it can be. And it can be different for different people. So some people can tolerate a lot of noise without any difficulty and other people get really agitated by it. And the same with light, you know, some people hate going to malls because it's

so bright. Whereas other people, it doesn't have an impact on them at all. So it's quite individual for different people. It's worth thinking about, you know, what things are going on in your brain that you don't want to do. What things make me highly aroused or maybe over-aroused and try to minimise them. And people who are under-aroused, they often need more stimulation.

So it can be quite useful for them to be in environments that are more stimulating, like they might benefit from tasting a very sour lolly or something like that, that kind of gets them going. So it's quite individual. Then is there a certain reason why I am then, of why I am susceptible to making my brain be very hyperactive, which in some cases can make me loud and I'm not just similar to a nine-year-old child? Yeah, that's another good question. So being very busy, you know, people with ADHD, their minds are often very busy and they're often very busy in themselves with their body. You know, it's not always easy.

Yeah. You know, it's one of the core symptoms of ADHD. So hyperactivity and impulsivity and trouble with attention are kind of the three main areas. And it's just one of the things that goes with ADHD. Not all people have that. So some people just have inattention or problems with their concentration or very easily distracted. But other people have a lot of hyperactivity, you know, through the roof. Yeah. They have real trouble sitting still for any moment of time and that can make you look less mature, you know. Yeah.

2. A Young Person's Questions - Rushing things, staying focused

Why does my brain try to rush things? For instance, recently I've been working on a project and then it's like, I've got this other small bits of work to do, so it's like, okay, I'll probably do this work, okay, what's that, okay, great, I can get back to my original big project. And then in other cases, it's just like, I'll be having no time limits, nothing, but it's just, my brain will naturally just work faster than when I'm writing. I have very poor handwriting because I write quickly. And my brain just naturally just rushes things. Is there a certain reason for that and is there a semi-easy solution for it?

Yeah, that's a common symptom that things can happen in a real rush and people with ADHD often have three or four things going on in their mind at once and they have difficulty sort of putting something out of their mind and it keeps on sort of coming back and interfering with, you know, kind of the main task. Yeah. Well, yeah, like for instance, I'm sitting here listening to you and then at the back of my mind, and then at the very back of my mind, my brain's thinking something like, oh, yeah, I want to go for tea later tonight, or like, oh, yeah, what did I eat for lunch this morning? Yeah, having a lot of different thoughts.

Yeah, people often have trouble filtering out those sorts of things. It's just, you know, it's just one of the core issues. Yeah. And then leading back to the thing on my brain. Yeah. And it's thinking about other things at the back of my head. Is it true that my brain is able to potentially process a lot more because it's able to focus on hundreds or possibly millions of small different things in the back of my mind? I don't know about process more, but things that other people can ignore sometimes can be really hard for people with ADHD to ignore. There's a lot happening and it can be hard for people to make a decision about, you know, what's going on in their mind.

Yeah. And it can be hard for people to make a decision about what's the main thing that they should be doing at the time and then sticking to it. It's just difficult. So, you know, people with ADHD, they're often really good in situations where you need to be alert to a whole lot of different things. Yeah, there's a fuzzy flat response. Yeah, they're great at that. And whereas someone like me, I could be reading and someone calls my name and I don't hear them, you know, which can be a problem as well. Yeah. So, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Why is it that I have a very short attention span and it's difficult to focus on one task?

I usually multitask in order to mitigate the fact that my brain's trying to do multiple things. Is there a certain reason for that then? Yeah. So that's just one of the core inattentive symptoms that it's a struggle. It's a difficult thing and can be very frustrating for people. Yeah. You know, sticking to one train of thought or doing the one thing at once. It's just, yeah, it's very frustrating. And it's just because people with ADHD, some people, their brains are working in a different way and there's a difficult thing for them. You know, it's kind of one of my core symptoms. Yeah. Yeah. My dad, who has got a similar mind to me, has had the example of someone will ask him to go and book tickets for this, this, this.

So then he'll go off and do that. And then when he's finished that, they'll ask him, oh, but what about this? Yeah. Or they'll ask him, oh, but what about Christchurch or something? But it's like, because he didn't think about that because our brains are thinking totally different to the other people. Yeah. Yeah.

3. A Young Person's Questions - Sensory things

When I was first diagnosed with ADHD, one of the things I was told is no added flavors or no added colors, such as purple, red, blue, those being the main rust ones, if yellow and green being the least rust. But what exact effects do added flavors and added colors do to me? Do they just stimulate my brain more or do they, on average, what have you noticed that they have, what have you noticed are the

effects of those? Yeah. Do you notice that those things make a difference for you? It has been quite some time since I've had any of it, but... Oh, you've done well. And when I do have it, I have it in very small quantities, so I can't tell much of the difference.

Yeah. So parents often, you know, discuss that as an important factor and researchers have tried to look at it and there probably needs to be some more work on that. And the most up-to-date kind of... Summary we had was from 2013, that a person did a summary of all the studies out there and he thought that for a small group of people with ADHD, food color additives or preservatives are important in triggering worse symptoms. But for many people with ADHD, it doesn't make any difference at all. So his guess was it's about 8% of people that would really struggle with that. And often it's obvious to parents.

You know, they give you Fanta or whatever it is and you go off and then they exclude Fanta and it's not quite so bad. Well, yeah, there's lots of preservatives in, you know, McDonald's, etc. But it's quite individual and it's probably like a sensitivity or an allergic type reaction. And so, yeah, you may be prone to that, but other people with ADHD may well not be. And we don't kind of think it's the main cause. But it can be a thing that can make it significantly worse for some people. And then we would look at what you've done, which is like an exclusion diet. We'd get a dietitian involved and if it was a strong factor, we'd get them to look at simplifying the diet and then gradually adding in some things and seeing how it went.

And I noticed you said something about a sensory thing. I'm going back to the RNM, but when I was pretty young, my grandma used to knit. They used to knit some sweaters and stuff for me. And I used to wear them. I used to wear jeans. I remember those were very uncomfortable. And whenever I went to bed, I always wore socks because for some reason, if I have socks all over my feet, I feel a little pain. Or it's just I always have a sensory thing. And just with certain clothing or certain fabrics, I wear a sensory touch thing. Is that very common or what do you think would be the reason for that?

Yeah, that is quite common in people with neurodiversity. And, you know, if... People come to our service and we're doing an assessment and it sounds like people are very sensitive to those sorts of things. Like you're saying, we look at doing something called a sensory profile, which is sort of how various sensory things affect you. And yeah, trying to look at an occupational therapist would probably meet with you and look at some strategies to kind of help with that. But they are quite common. Yeah. And some people without ADHD. Or without autism. Yeah. Also have those things, you know. Yeah.

Yeah.

4. A Young Person's Questions - Curiosity and creativity

Is my NHD the sort of main reason for why I am always very curious and why I have, as we said earlier, the very unique outlooks that my brain is pretty creative, because I've always loved building, creating things. I remember my mum telling me a story when I was just a two-year-old or a fellow or something. I had like an electric door or something and I took that apart and built it, put it back together, or mostly put it back together. So ever since I was very young, I've been building things, destroying things and putting things back together and experimenting. So is my ADHD the reason for that sort of curiosity, that sort of love of creativity and in some cases the fact that because I'm always curious, I'm always trying to learn which leads to intelligence.

Do you think my ADHD would be the reason for that? Maybe. Some people with ADHD and mental health problems, they don't really know what they're dealing with. They aren't very curious or aren't very creative, like I'm not a very creative person, I don't have ADHD, but you know, creativity may be a separate thing to ADHD, but for some people it can, you know, it can be linked and there are a couple of studies which have looked at problem solving from the starting point and people with ADHD traits can often generate more possible solutions, but not always. So yeah, I don't think it's due to your ADHD.

I think it's unique about you, you know, everyone has strengths and things that are a struggle for them. But yeah, ADHD, you know, people sometimes do think we're outside the box, you know, we hear of that, you know, in the clinic. Yeah. Is my ADHD one of the reasons why I happen to have the child, for instance, for the majority of my life? I have ADHD. I mean, still now, like in the afternoons, evenings, in the mornings and stuff, because on my floor I've got a bunch of Lego and stuff, and I will sit down and I'll play as if I'm a little child. Yeah, although there's Lego masters, isn't there?

You know, but like I'll sit down and I'll just, and then from the lunch I'll say, Toby, shut it! Shut off! You're too loud! Yeah, I've always wondered, is that my ADHD or is that another factor? Because I know some people also have that. Yeah. But I'm not certain if they have ADHD as well. Yeah, I think you can definitely be interested in Lego as an adult without having ADHD. You know, I mean, on TV you see people all the time. I mean, it probably serves a bit of a function for you, doing that. Yeah, because it's very calming. Yeah, well, that's what I was thinking. That might be one of those activities that just really help you stay balanced and centered.

And it's great you found it. I mean, I think it's really important. I mean, it's great you found it. I mean, it's great you found it. I think it's great you found it. Yeah, it's great you found it. Yeah, it's great you found it. Yeah, it's great you found it. Yeah, it's great you found it. I

mean, it's great you found it. I mean, it's not really like it's a worry or anything. Yeah. It's great you found it. I mean, it's not really like it's a worry or anything. But yeah, everyone has interests, don't they? Yeah, yeah. It sounds like it's quite useful for you. Yeah! Did you have any concerns before Santa Claus?

Really, just one, because there was a message in my newsletter where I was like, well, Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas. I was like, why does Santa Claus have that! Apparently, he's a little bit... So manyilah!

5. A Young Person's Questions - Why do some access services and others not _

Why is it that I have received a lot of aid yet some of my friends have not? For instance, I've got a friend in another class my same age who seems to have a much more severe case of ADHD than me, but has apparently received effectively no aid before coming to the school. Yeah, since I was seven when I was diagnosed, I've received mountains of help. Yeah, and that was something you've talked about just when we were getting to know each other, that you know it's kind of hard sometimes to get help and you wondered if you were seen at our service you might not have even got into the service, which is kind of sad isn't it?

Yeah. So we know that probably only about one in four people with various conditions or mental health difficulties, including ADHD, get assessment and help, which is pretty poor. And some of that's, you know, there aren't enough services. Yeah, there's all those things. But coming to get help requires people to identify that it could be an issue and that could be a teacher, you know, often in schools it is a teacher, but most commonly it would be a parent thinking, oh look, could this be going on or could this be a problem? Yeah, of course, why is my child such a nutcase? Like, I mean, like what the hell's wrong with them?

It's harsh. But, you know, some parents are really tuned into that and they know a lot of stuff and other parents actually don't know much about, you know, development or what things can go wrong with learning or with behaviour or anxiety or other things. And then it requires, you know, someone deciding that it's significant enough to look at some kind of assessment. And that could be through school or it could be through something like our service or your general practitioner. But it requires your parent to kind of go along and follow it up. And then for ADHD, you've got to fill in a lot of rating scales.

If we don't get rating scales, we won't see you. And so there are lots of barriers and sometimes there's cost for families, you know, which is really sad. Yeah, I mean, at least we've got better health care in America. I reckon. I shouldn't say that online. Yeah. But some people just don't believe in mental health issues. You know, they say, yeah, yeah, he's really active and really busy and really impulsive. But I think that's just, he's just a boy, you know, and he's just like me, like dad, you know, when I was growing up, often we hear parents say that, nah, it's all good. Oh yeah, it's just a phase.

Yeah. That kind of thing. Grow out of it. I grew out of it. You know, that kind of thing. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That kind of stuff. So, yeah, and it's sad that it can be so chancy, you know. Yeah.

6. A Young Person's Questions - Why do I have ADHD and will symptoms change _

why do you think that i have adhd because as far as we know no one in my family that well no one in recent family at least has had adhd or my dad may have had may have dyslexia but we don't know for certain but it's but other than that no one in my family has had any like mental things is it like is it possible is it most likely just a genetic mutation or something or is it something that could hide in generations for many many centuries oh you know quite a lot of stuff as i said i get bored i look things up yeah you've done some research so you're right that adhd usually runs in families it's quite strongly heritable or inherited um but we not infrequently see um people young people in the clinic who their parents you know as far as we can see nobody's had adhd and um you know the common understanding at the moment is that about 75 percent of your chances of having adhd are due to genetic kind of factors but there are a whole lot of tiny little genes often just normal genes that combine to make it more likely or not for you um and so it doesn't always mean someone in your family has had adhd but if you have like um if you've got a um if you've got a um if you've got a um if you've got a um if you've got a um if you've got a dad with adhd or a mum with adhd about one in four of their children would be expected to have adhd so not everyone's going to get it but it does raise your chances a lot um but there's no single main gene it's just sort of how the egg and sperm get together and how it kind of works for you um apart from genes there are a couple of other causes so um they're mostly things that are that occur really early in life during pregnancy so um things like alcohol and pregnancy is not great um you can get fetal alcohol syndrome which looks like adhd has adhd features um there are some other kind of substances that um that may happen in pregnancy that that can increase your chances and then if you're born premature or yeah yeah yeah my brother was born premature yeah that yeah yeah we were supposed to be born like december we were born in july right and you're a twin yep oh well identical ah no yeah yeah yeah so so prematurity um increases your chances and also if you're a really low birth weight and sometimes if you're a twin your birth weight's lower than it would be for just a single kid yeah yeah apparently my mum could put both of us on her arms and she would just carry us around like this yeah so for you that might you know that might be one of the risk factors um and then growing

up uh if you have head injuries and things we think that kind of increases the chances of you having adhd twos which is you know become for an assessment we always ask about whether you've had injuries but people with adhd are more likely to have head injuries and then people that have had head injuries are more likely to eventually serve some adhd features yeah but for you it sounds like maybe you know born premature or in a twin and feel like birth weight that kind of it's probably a factor yeah do the signs of adhd change over time like for now currently i've got hyperactivity loudness a bunch of energy but also career of this and intelligent but good something that could some of those chain signs change over time yeah absolutely yeah so um if you look at four to five year old boys in particular they all almost all of them are really very active and they're very active and they're very active and they're very active and they're very active and they're very active and they're very active really busy and quite impulsive and you know when they get to school at five six someone don't look too ready so those symptoms are really common then and as you grow up in general people become less active and less impulsive um so for people with adhd those things tend to improve over time and we can't really tell who's going to improve at what point um by the time you get to be an adult um we kind of expect about half of people not to have significant adhd symptoms um or not not to have impairment from from symptoms that they might have but the symptom that kind of is most persistent as an attention or difficulties with concentration that or organization or forgetfulness those sort of symptoms they they often continue you know more strongly than active and impulsive symptoms so you're you're kind of busy excitedly you're kind of you're kind of you're kind of busy excitedly you're kind of you're kind of busy excitedly with the excitableness that may well improve yeah but some of the inattention you know can be a bit persistent but for some people not yeah

7. A Young Person's Questions - Controlling ADHD

the final one of my questions is why is it very difficult or at least why is it for me very difficult to control like at the moment I'm on a couple I've tried different kinds of pills but at the moment I'm on a kind of pill that's supposed to help me focus and for instance if I'm on if I'm doing work or if I'm hanging with friends it for me like it's very difficult and honestly painful because I could be trying to because I'm just trying to hang out with my friends but then suddenly big noisy loud childish man comes out and starts annoying my friends but then just seeing their emotional pain it's just it hurts me and then I'm trying to focus on work but then it's just oh yeah I need to be loud now or I need to try and crack crack crappy jokes but it's just I want to focus on this work I'm running out of time why is that a big thing and this and what can you think of ways I can fix that yeah so it's a common thing that people that have ADHD can be very excitable and can be quite impulsive and they can sometimes say the first thing that kind of comes into their mind which sometimes with friends make things a little bit difficult yeah but apologies can go a long way yeah yeah and it is it's just like one of the key difficulties that they can have medication can sometimes make you know a good difference it doesn't usually in my experience normalize symptoms you know often these still some excitability and some other things that it's difficult to control um but yeah we kind of sometimes think you know having an ADHD label can be helpful in helping people understand that rather than that you're just a really annoying person or you know it's not like you're intending to be excitable and sometimes a little bit over the top it's something that is difficult for you I don't know I think as you get older sometimes you get quite good at recognizing look I'm seem to be talking a lot or yeah oh I'm getting a little bit carried away yeah um you know those kind of high risk situations and just going into it thinking how might I manage this I think it's a bit tricky you know what's my exit plan for a minute to catch my breath or yeah sometimes people um I had a colleague who had ADHD symptoms and she was quite impulsive and she asked me sometimes to let her know when she was starting to get carried away yeah I tell my friends to do that and still yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah it's just usually her response of either sitting there because they're either not annoyed or either they get too annoyed and they forget to politely say yeah yeah and having a signal that's not obvious to everybody is sometimes quite helpful yeah exactly yeah yeah but it is it's just one of the difficulties you know just and it can make social things quite challenging eh yeah

8. A Young Person's Questions - Mild paranoia and stuttering

Yeah, just slightly branching off of that, like on the anxiety thing, I've got something that I like to call mild, mild paranoia, kind of like one of those things about, as I was talking about earlier, in the back of my mind, one of those things, and this is probably just because I've noticed this in the past few years, but because of my studies on history of warfare and lots of other stuff, but every time I walk into a room, the first thing that happens is, okay, who's there, who's there, who's there, what's in the head, what's in the room, where is the exits, where's the windows, things like that.

And everybody just quickly calculates, I get a couple of different plans, it's just, okay, if this happens, I'm going to do this, this, this, or if that happens, this, this, this, and then it's sort of just planning of being, always wanting to be prepared and always trying to be efficient as possible against, but then it's just, okay, done that, great, okay, great, okay, okay, guys, okay, guys, okay, okay, guys, time to be big, loud, Toby. And then that just stays in the back of my mind. It's good, though. I mean, you know, part, one of the good things about anxiety is it can prepare you for potential danger and get you ready to do whatever you need to do.

Yeah, yeah. And, I mean, it's good, it's probably not a bad thing that you're doing there, going into a situation and thinking, what could go wrong here? People with ADHD, they often get a little bit sort of paranoid because often they have been bullied, you know, they're more likely to get bullied and then go into a situation and think, well, who's going to be horrible to me? Well, sometimes people with ADHD, they can be a bit more likely to have some negative experiences, like you're a bit more likely to get exposed to trauma. Yeah. Yeah. So, there's some other things that, you know, that can build into that.

Why is it more likely? Could be a couple of things. One could be that because you're very impulsive, you get into dangerous situations, like you might go out at night and not think. This is risky, or you might take risks on your mountain bike that other people will think, no way, I'm going to go over that jump. Or you could just see it, or you could just see a giant electrical spark. You think, I want to touch it, I must go into the light. Like that sort of thing. And then there's possibly the, you know, people recognise that you're a bit vulnerable and that can make bad things happen to you more likely.

So, people that aren't very good at assessing danger, they often end up in more dangerous situations because horrible people can recognise that a little bit. Yeah. So, there's a whole raft of things potentially. Yeah, but mild paranoia, we wouldn't worry about that. If you really thought someone was trying to kill you, then you might be quite worried. Did that answer your question? Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I had another question. Oh, yeah. Would the stuttering be just my brain just trying to rush things, or do you think there's a second reason that you can think of? Yeah, we think stuttering is a little separate from ADHD or even learning issues.

And so, some professors of philosophy or whatever can stutter. Yeah. Your one man names, I want to say Dionysus, but that was someone else. It was someone began. It was someone began with a D. He lived in the time of, he lived in the time after Alexander in Greece, and he was a great, he was able to do it, he was teased because he stuttered, so he fixed it by putting pebbles into his mouth somehow before speech, and that somehow solved his stutter. I don't understand how, but it worked. Yeah. And some speech and language therapists use a program, I think, I can't quite remember, but it might be something called smooth talking or something, smooth speech.

So, something like that. There are some, there are some interventions that can sometimes help with stuttering, but we don't think it's tied up with ADHD. We don't think it's even more likely. Hmm. Yeah.