



Helping post-secondary students thrive with ADHD

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Territorial Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that the land I live and work on is on the Unceded traditional territory of the K'ómoks First Nation, the traditional keepers of this land.



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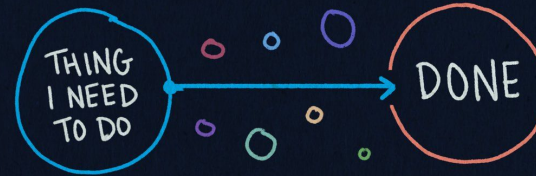
I am an ADHDer

Raising a teenager with ADHD

That awkward
moment, when
someone says
something to
you for the fifth time
and you still don't
know what they
said.

(thefamemonsterr.tumblr)

THE PLAN



THE REALITY





Why are
you
here?

Today's agenda

- ▶ Why post-secondary is such a shock to students with ADHD
- ▶ Debunk the misconceptions about ADHD
- ▶ Why Advisors are so important to these students
- ▶ How to best support students with ADHD (all students)

WHAT IS THE POMODORO TECHNIQUE?

A method for staying focused and mentally fresh

STEP 1



Pick a task

STEP 2



Set a 25-minute timer

STEP 3



Work on your task until the time is up

STEP 4



Take a 5 minute break

STEP 5

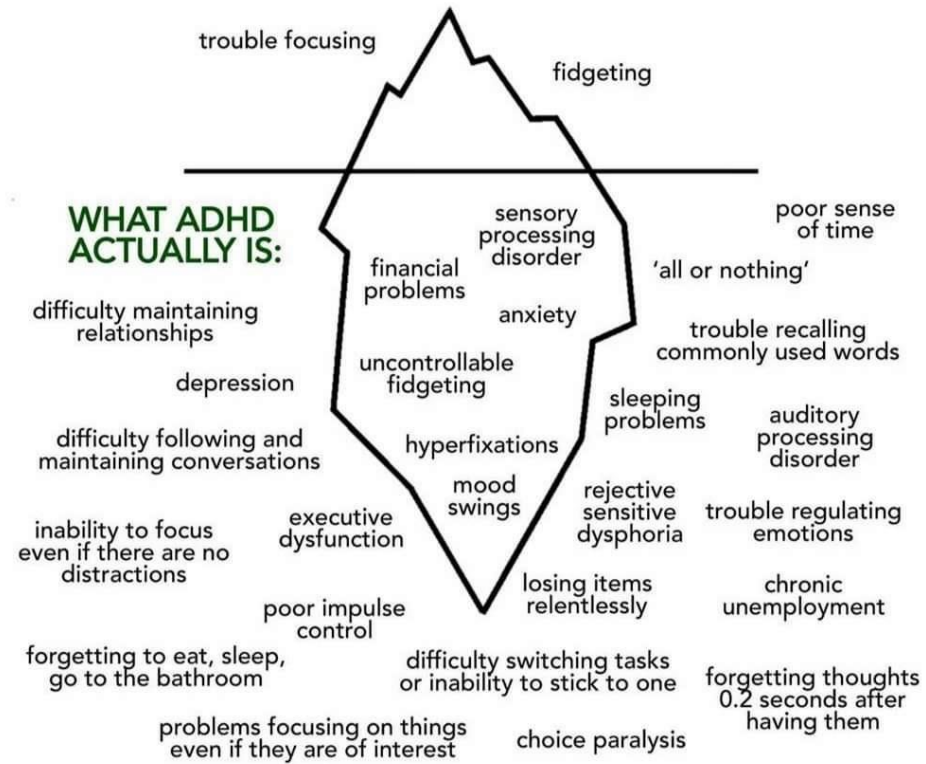


Every 4 pomodoros, take a longer 15-30 minute break

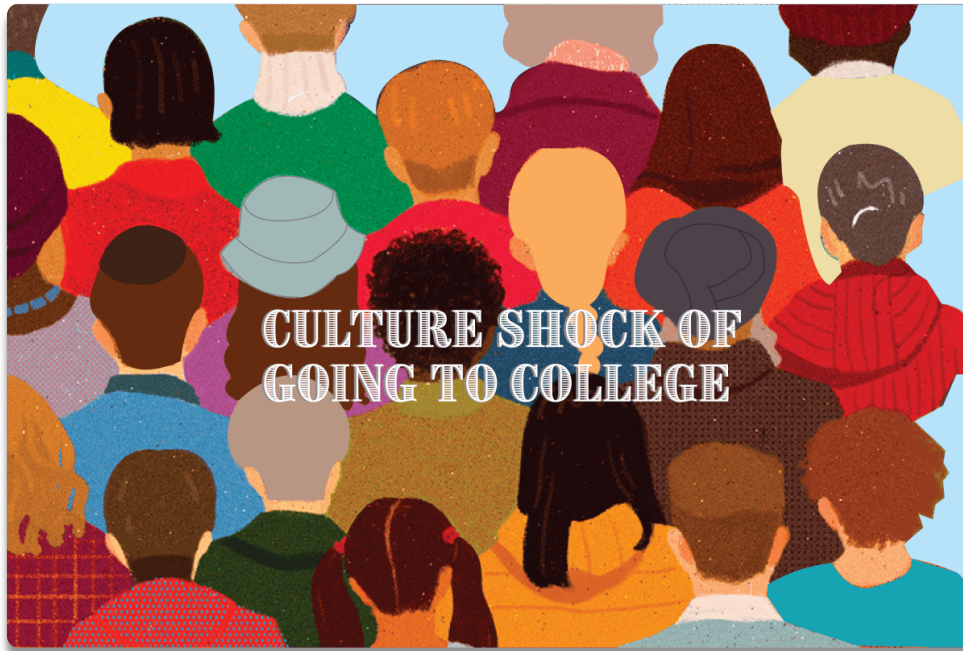
THE ADHD ICEBERG

@FINUCCINIAFREDO

WHAT PEOPLE THINK ADHD IS:



Why is post-secondary such a shock?



- ▶ Rapid change in lifestyle, independence, and responsibility
- ▶ Much less structure and support
- ▶ Significantly more demands

Some stats...

- ▶ Between 5-8% of the population is thought to be ADHD
- ▶ Approximately 25% of students connected to disability services are ADHD
- ▶ Students with ADHD are:
 - ▶ more likely to need post-secondary supports/resources
 - ▶ more likely to drop out of college
 - ▶ more likely to have lower grade point averages
 - ▶ more likely to be on academic probation
 - ▶ if unmedicated, more likely to have issues with substances abuse/misuse

3 Subtypes of ADHD

Inattentive

- Used to be considered ADD
- Children are less likely to act out
- May sit quietly, but are not paying attention to task
- Most likely to be overlooked or not noticed

Hyperactivity

- Child demonstrates adequate attention control
- Difficult time with impulse control and activity level

Combined

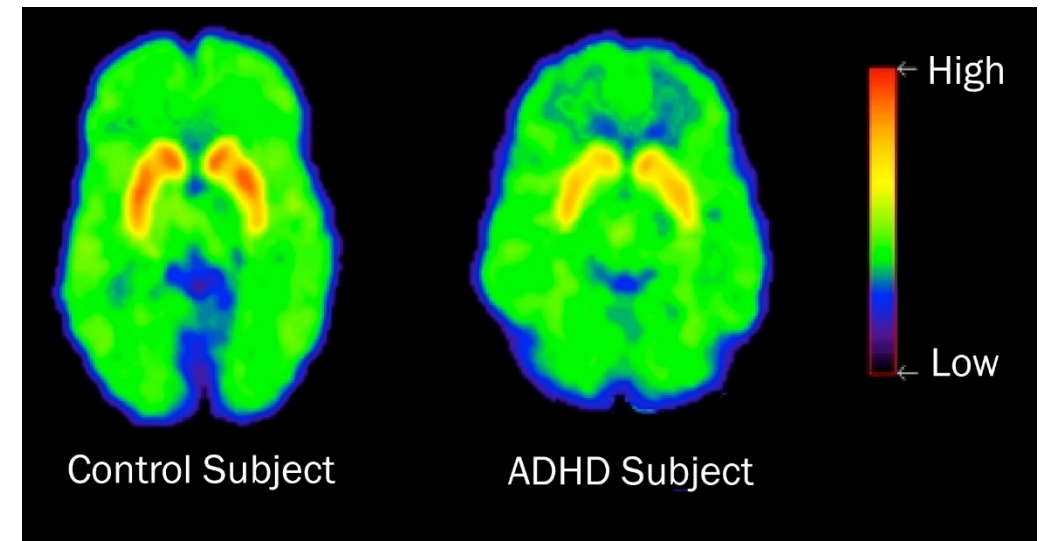
- Most common type of ADHD
- Child struggles with paying attention AND regulating behavior



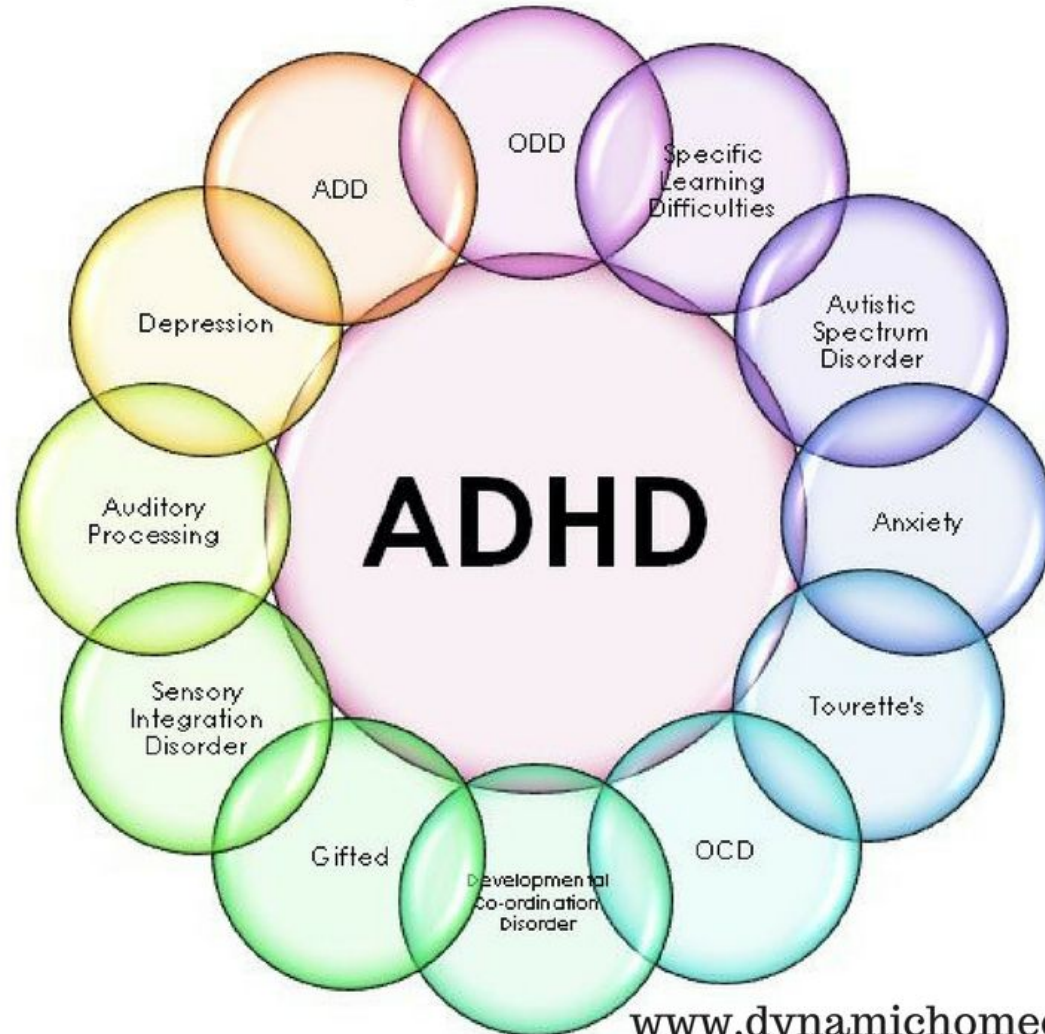
There are so many myths and misconceptions about ADHD

Top 9 ADHD myths...

1. **Myth: “ADHD is a mental health condition”**
 - ▶ **ADHD is a neurodevelopmental condition**
 - ▶ People with ADHD frequently have comorbidities like learning disabilities or mental health conditions
 - ▶ The neurodiversity movement suggests that ADHD be described as a “difference” and not a “disorder”



Interesting Facts about ADHD

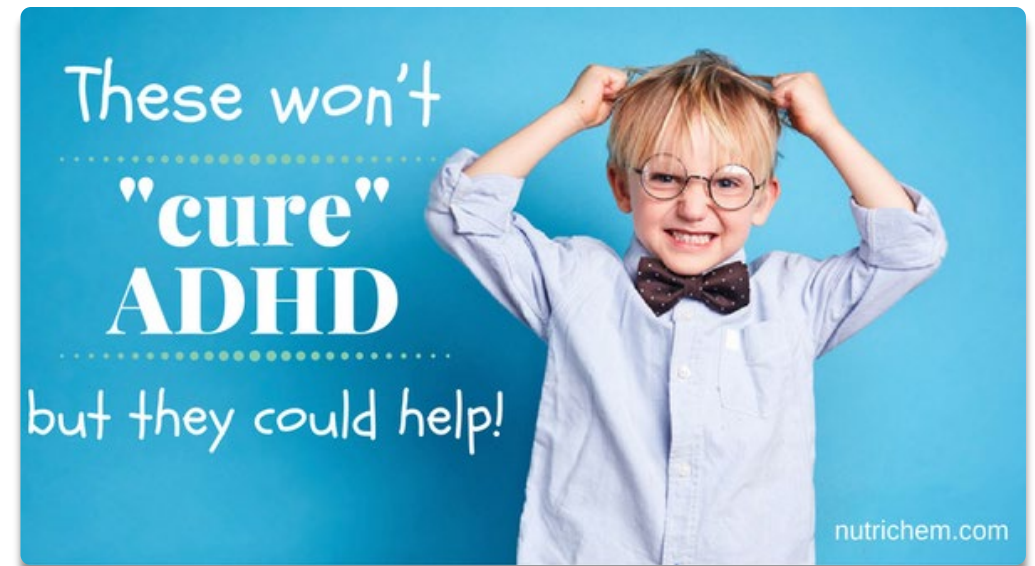


www.dynamichomeopath.com

Top 9 ADHD myths...

2. Myth: “You can be “cured” of ADHD

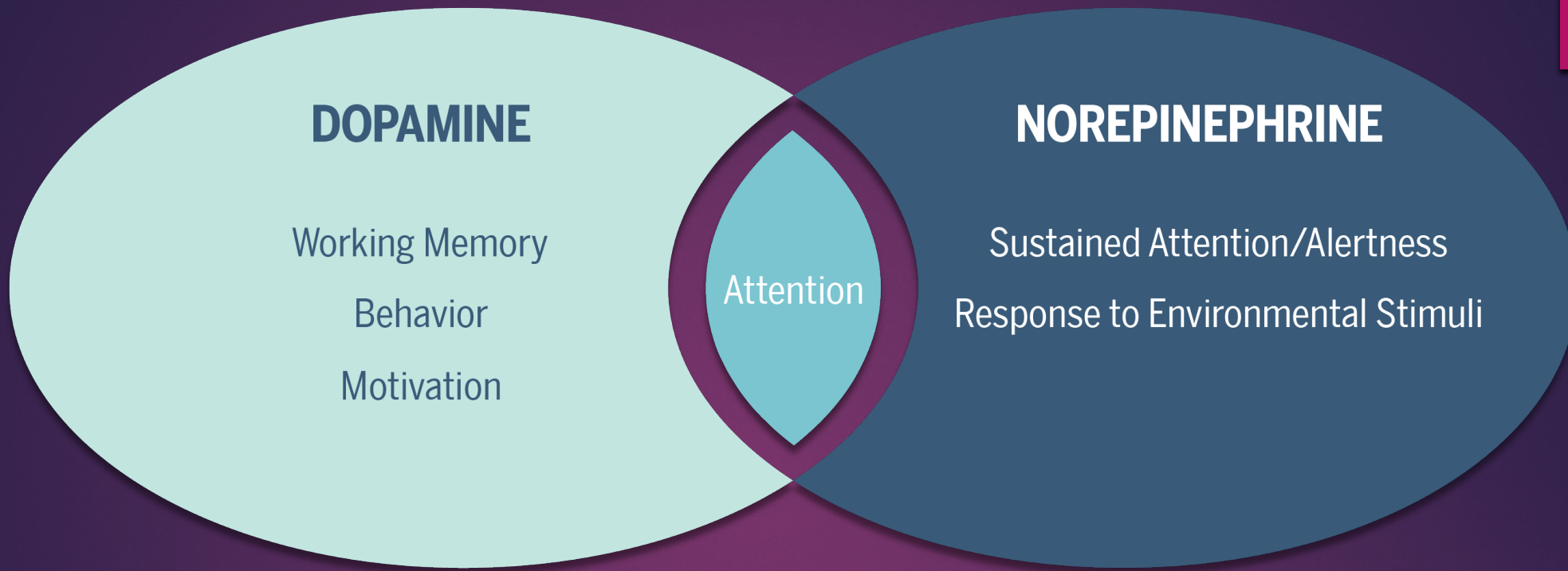
- ▶ People with ADHD are not broken
- ▶ ADHD doesn't need to be cured
- ▶ **ADHD and other conditions are just differences in thinking and being in the world**
- ▶ Challenges with ADHD come from trying to fit into a neurotypical world



Evolutionary Mismatch Theory

- ▶ From an evolutionary point of view, ADHD symptoms might be explained as an “evolutionary mismatch”
 - ▶ current environmental demands do not fit with having an ADHD brain
 - ▶ Only within the last few hundred years have children been expected to sit still and concentrate on academic tasks for many hours a day

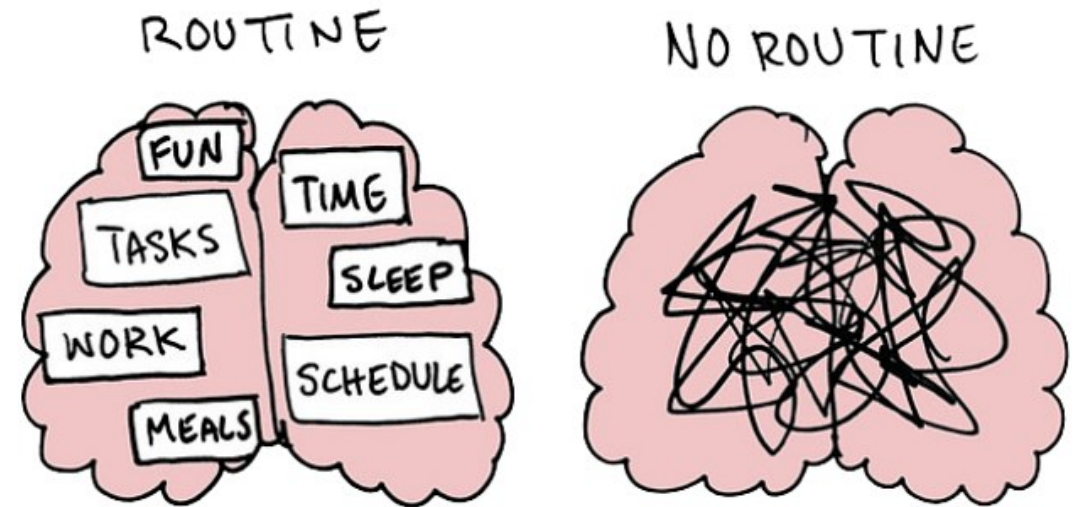




How Meds help ADHD

Things that help us manage ADHD

- ▶ Exercise
- ▶ Nutrition
- ▶ Sleep
- ▶ Stress management techniques
- ▶ Taking risks, doing something new
- ▶ Music
- ▶ Systems and strategies for planning and organization - routines



BEST DOPAMINE-BOOSTING FOODS

BANANAS



BLUEBERRIES



STRAWBERRIES



APPLES



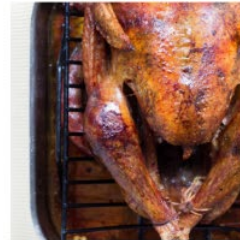
NUTS



SEEDS



CHICKEN



ONIONS & CHIVES



SALMON



CAULIFLOWER



CHICKPEAS



KALE



www.Anxiety-Gone.com



STAY POSITIVE

watch funny movies & video clips. Laughter is good for us & helps reduce stress



MEDITATE

breathe, relax, or do whatever makes us feel calm & chilled



SLEEP

I know it's hard but keep trying as it's essential for good health & the immune system



GET CREATIVE

use our creativity to help others by thinking outside the box



PLAY WITH OUR PETS

it's well known to reduce feelings of anxiety & depression



MUSIC

the songs we listen to can change our mood dramatically



NATURE

getting outside improves our mental health & well-being, & it just feels better doing stuff outside



REDUCE EXTERNAL NOISE

to give our brain a break



EXERCISE

helps burn off excess energy, produce dopamine & endorphins



SUNLIGHT

Vitamin D is essential for improved mood & a healthy immune system

ADHD CALMING IDEAS



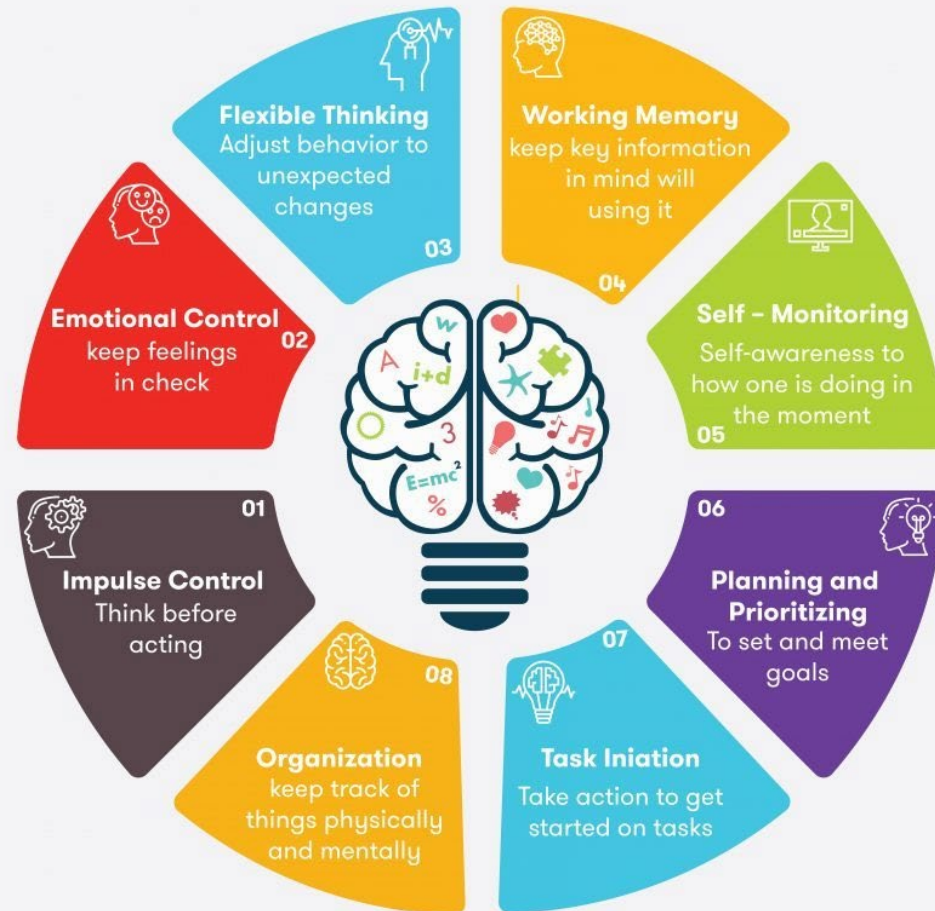
Top 9 ADHD myths...

3. Myth: “Children can outgrow ADHD”

- ▶ **We are born with ADHD**
- ▶ Symptoms might present differently in adults
- ▶ Hormonal levels will be more stable
- ▶ As we grow older, we get better at coping or masking with our symptoms
- ▶ Part of our brain that controls executive functioning finishes developing between 25-30 so will be easier to cope with ADHD challenges



EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING



www.addvantageslearningcenter.com

Pause....what
are executive
functions?

Things that impact our Executive Functioning



Emotional Dysregulation



Stress (financial, academic,
relationship, parenting)

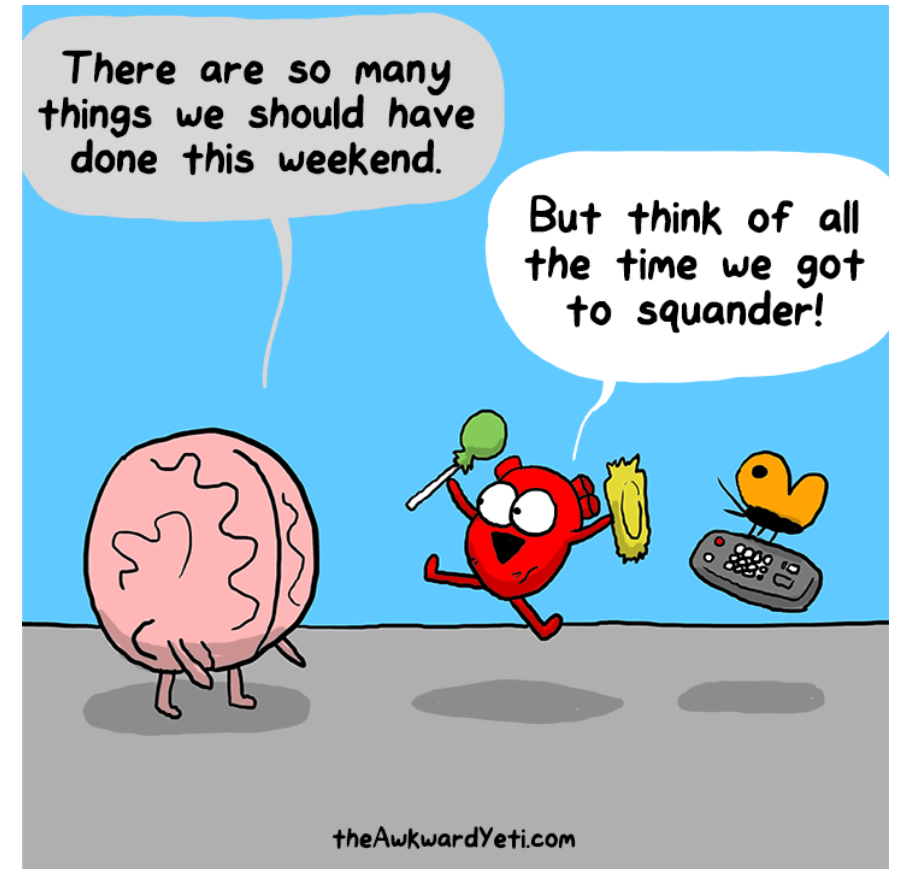


Trauma

Top 9 ADHD myths...

4. Myth: "People with ADHD just need to try harder... they're just lazy"

- ▶ People are doing the best they can with the resources they have available to them
- ▶ Support the person, don't punish the disability
- ▶ People with ADHD have an "interest-based" nervous system
- ▶ The real problem might be society's assumption that everyone should behave in the same way
- ▶ With the right strategies, a person with ADHD can adapt and get things done

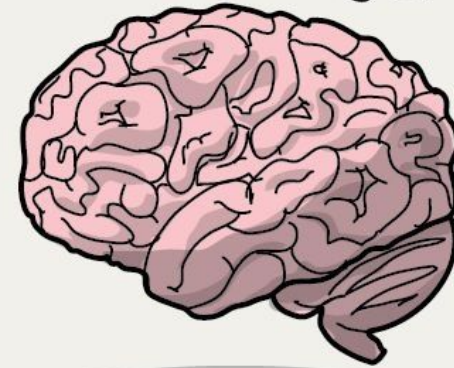


Top 9 ADHD myths...

5. Myth: “ADHD is caused by bad parenting or trauma”

- ▶ As mentioned earlier, ADHD is highly heritable
- ▶ Many undiagnosed ADHDers are raising kids with ADHD
- ▶ **Importantly, bad parenting is never going to be helpful for a child**
 - ▶ Although bad parenting is not a cause of ADHD, it could worsen a child's symptoms and lead to other problems

YOUR
BRAIN IS WEIRD



(BUT I LIKE IT)

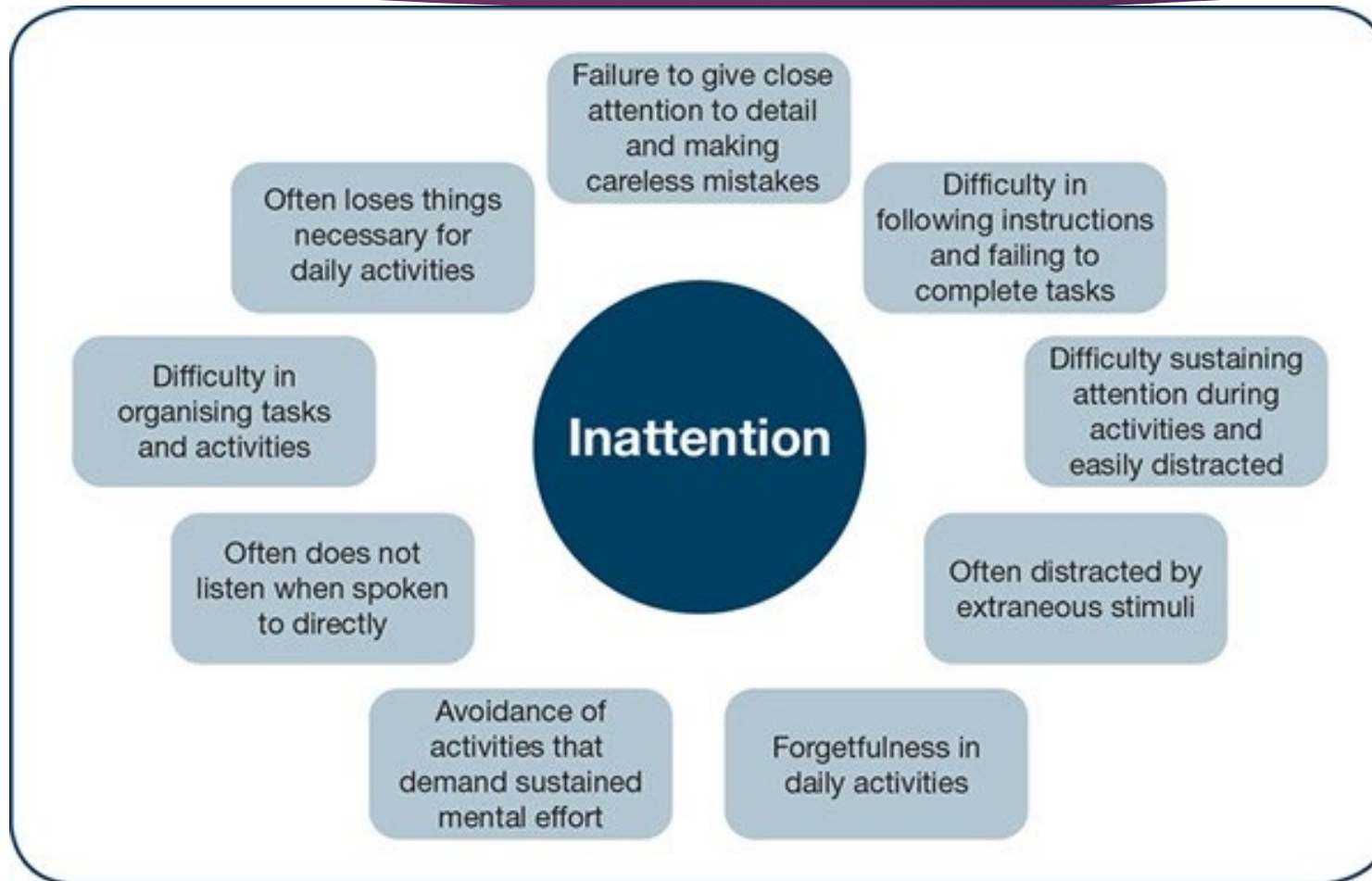
theAwkwardYeti.com

Top 9 ADHD myths...

6. “Only little boys can have ADHD”

- ▶ ADHD is more than “hyperactive little boys running around in classrooms”.
- ▶ Moreover, it can look different in people who have succeeded academically or in their careers.
- ▶ People assigned female at birth tend to get diagnosed less frequently than those assigned male, and they often have the predominantly inattentive subtype
- ▶ One can still have ADHD if one's not hyperactive or impulsive
- ▶ The tools we use to measure ADHD symptoms or traits are likely to be biased towards people identifying as males

Pause...Inattentive subtype



Top 9 ADHD myths...

6. Myth: "ADHD is a learning difference"

- ▶ ADHD is a neurodevelopmental conditions
- ▶ **ADHD is often considered a medical condition because there are changes in the body that can be addressed with medication: i.e. neurotransmitter levels.**
- ▶ Various parts of the brain are not communicating effectively or efficiently

Hey, that idea gives me another idea and five more ideas and a whole other idea and five more ideas...



Got ADHD? We're cool with that!
www.TotallyADD.com

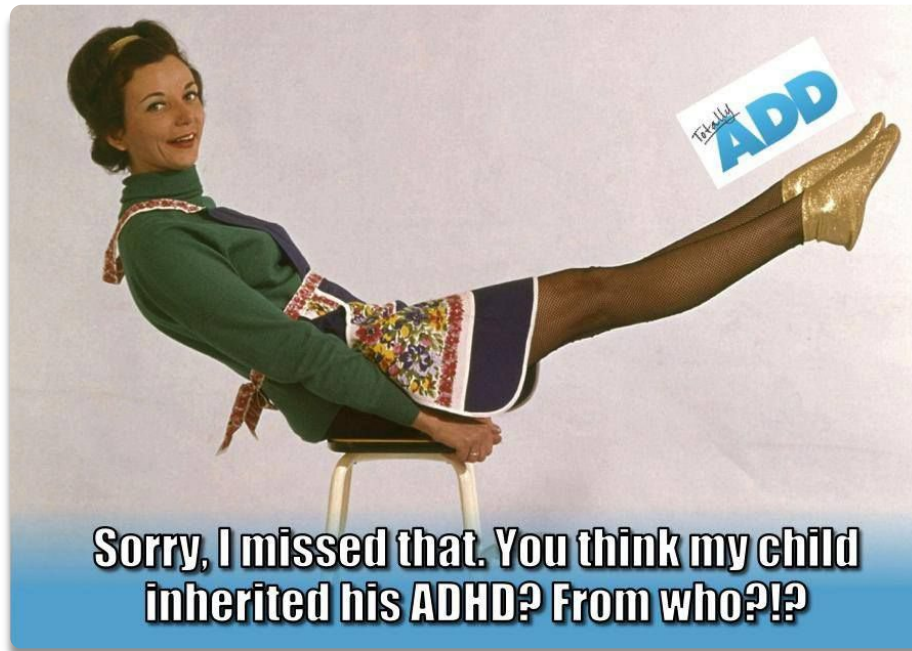
Top 9 ADHD myths...



7. Myth: “People with ADHD can’t pay attention”

- ▶ ADHD is an issue in attention regulation
- ▶ People with ADHD have a wide attentional focus: they can pay attention to many different things
- ▶ People with ADHD often “hyper-focus”
- ▶ People with ADHD feel interest rather than importance, and interest helps them to focus

Top 9 ADHD myths...



9. Myth: “People with ADHD aren’t smart”

- ▶ ADHD has no relationship with intelligence
- ▶ Dr. Stephen Faraone:

“Smart people can have ADHD. Their high IQs will help them do better than the average person with ADHD, but they may not achieve their potential without appropriate diagnosis and treatment.”

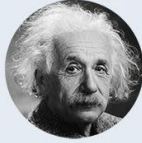
Famous People with ADHD



Abraham Lincoln
U.S. President



Agatha Christie
Author



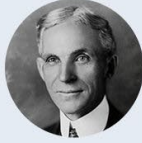
Albert Einstein
Theoretical Physicist



Bill Gates
Founder of Microsoft



Frank Lloyd Wright
Architect



Henry Ford
Founder of Ford Motor Company



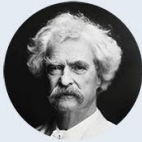
Sir Isaac Newton
Physicist



Katherine Ellison
Author



Lisa Ling
Journalist



Mark Twain
Author



Michael Jordan
Basketball Player



Richard Branson
Founder of Virgin



Robert Frost
Poet



Socrates
Philosopher



Thomas Edison
Inventor



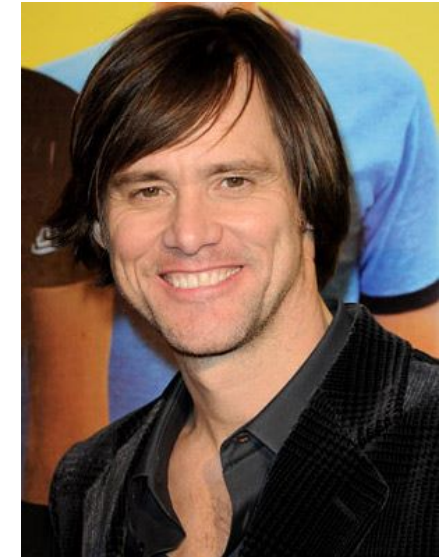
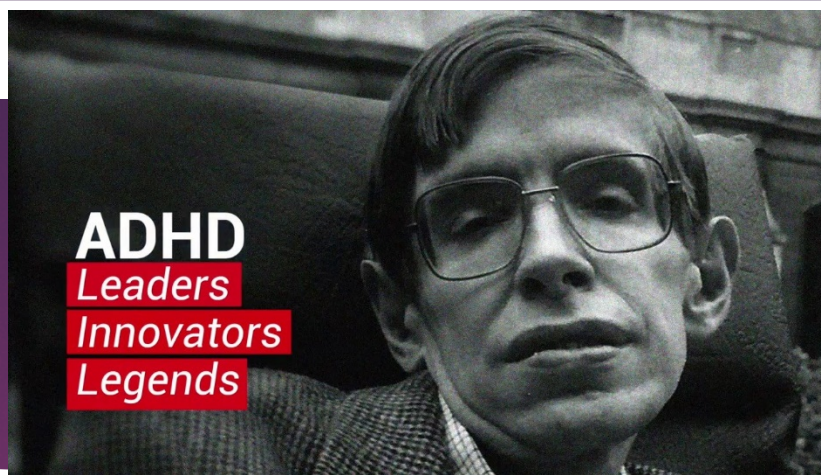
Vincent van Gogh
Artist



Virginia Woolf
Author



Whoopi Goldberg
Actress





Thirty good things About ADHD

- 1) Unlimited energy
 - 2) Will try any thing
 - 3) Good conversationalist
 - 4) Needs less sleep
 - 5) Good sense of humour
 - 6) Very caring
 - 7) Do spontaneous things
 - 8) Notice things that other people don't
 - 9) Understanding of other kids
 - 10) Can think of new ways of doing things
 - 11) Likes to help others
 - 12) Happy and enthusiastic
 - 13) Imaginative - creative
 - 14) Sensitive - compassionate
 - 15) Eager to make new friends
 - 16) Great long-term memory
 - 17) Life and soul of any party
 - 18) Charming
 - 19) Warm and loving
 - 20) Protective about families
 - 21) Inquisitive
 - 22) Doesn't hold a grudge
 - 23) Quick to forgive
 - 24) Genuine
 - 25) Never boring
 - 26) Perceptive ways to do things
 - 27) Playful
 - 28) Honest
 - 29) Optimistic
 - 30) Inventive
- 



How do you know if someone is ADHD?

You don't, unless they tell you

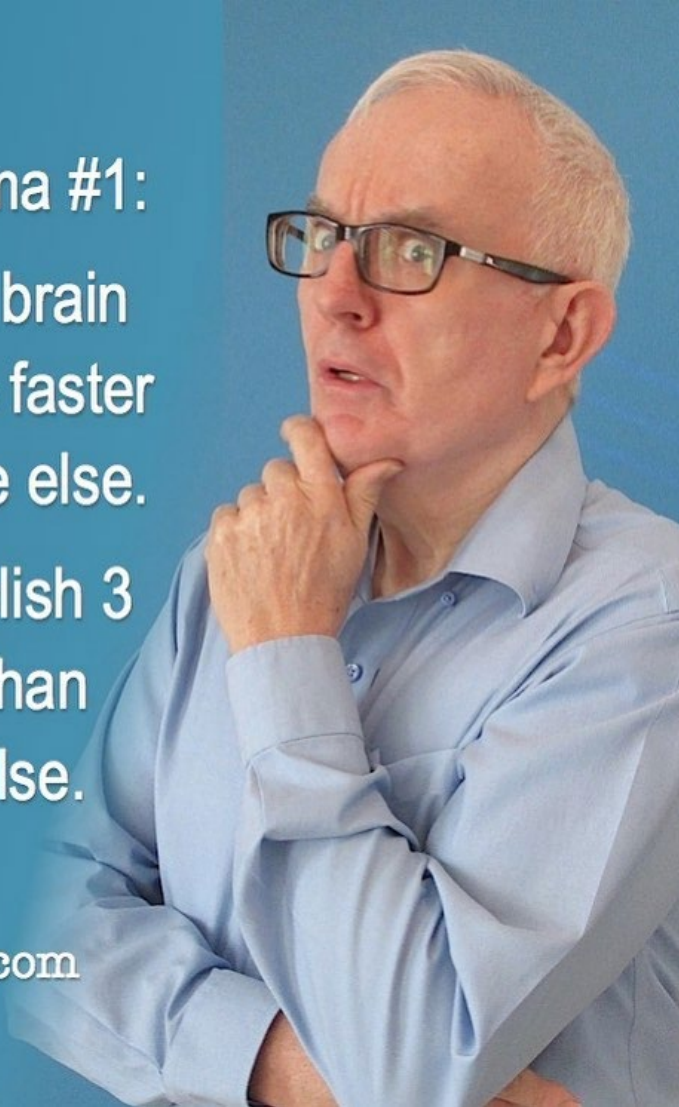
- I would ask “is there anything about you as a learner that would be helpful for me to know?”

ADHD Dilemma #1:

I feel like my brain works 3 times faster than everyone else.

But I accomplish 3 times less than everyone else.

TotallyADD.com



Truth is:

- ▶ ADHD looks very different for each person
- ▶ We all have significantly different strengths and challenges
- ▶ We have different levels of executive functioning challenges
- ▶ We all need some type of support

A sketch of a person with long, messy hair, possibly a student, sitting at a desk. The person is wearing a blue shirt. On the desk, there are several books, a pencil, and some papers. The background is a simple sketch of a wall and a chair. The overall style is a loose, expressive drawing.

Unsupported students with ADHD are notoriously dysregulated

They present with:

- Distress
- Anxiety
- Overwhelm
- Disorganization
- Low frustration tolerance
- Low decision-making ability
- Low planning skills

Emotional Dysregulation

- ▶ Occurs at the nervous system level
- ▶ Emotional dysregulation is a complex collection of processes that are thought to include the following four main aspects (Gratz & Roemer, 2004)
 - ▶ A lack of awareness, understanding, and acceptance of emotions
 - ▶ A lack of adaptive strategies for regulating emotions
 - ▶ Pushing down unwanted emotions
 - ▶ Shutting down when experiencing emotions

WINDOW OF TOLERANCE (IN RAINBOW FORM!)

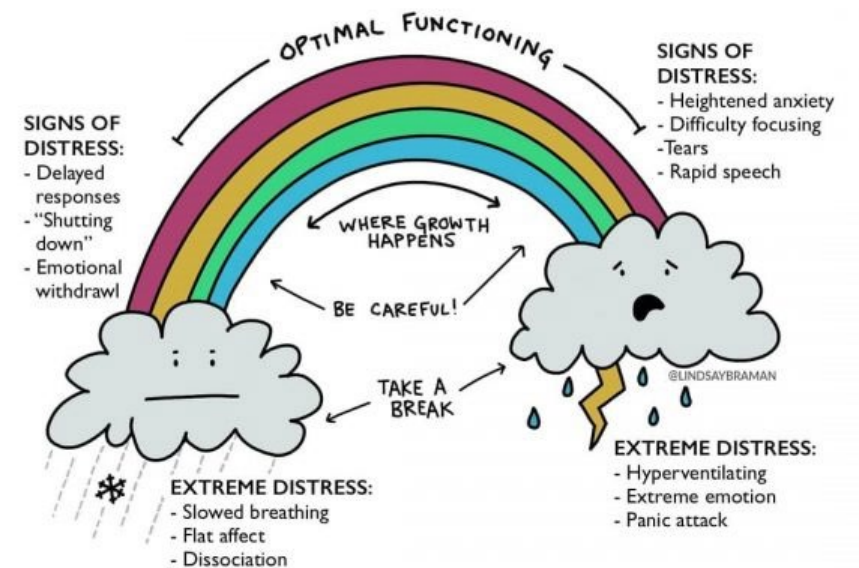
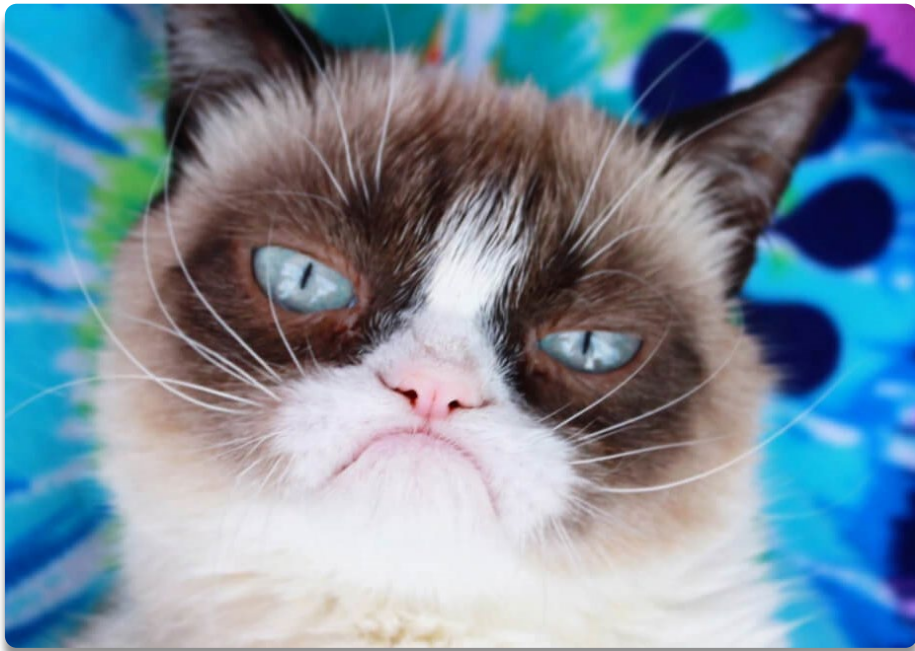


Photo: @Lindsaybraman

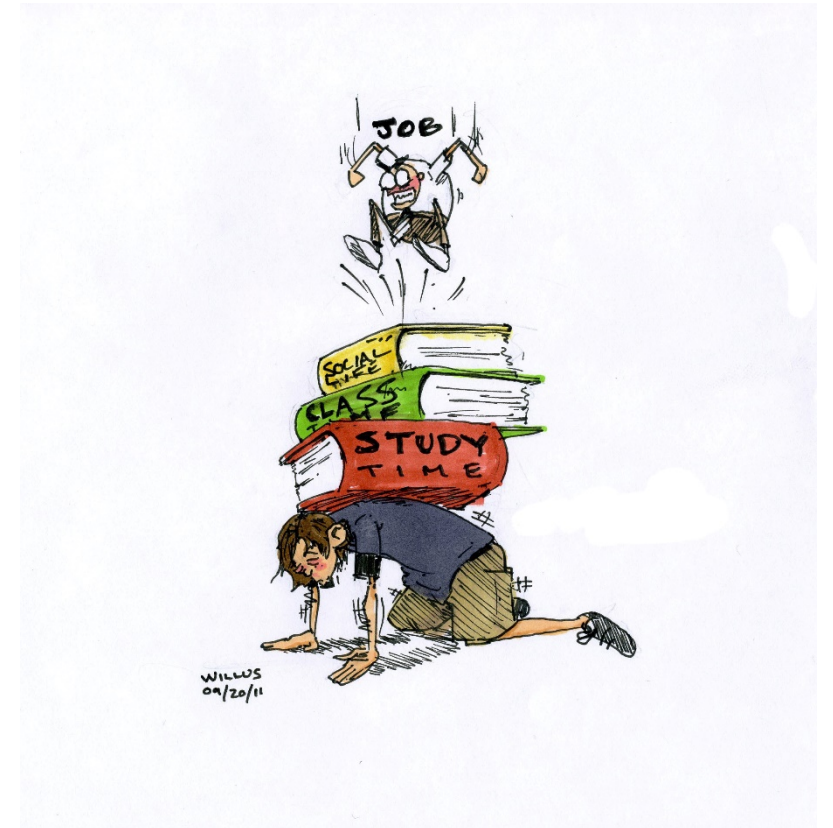
Emotionally Dysregulated students...



- ▶ Can't make decisions
- ▶ Can't problem solve
- ▶ Can't study effectively or efficiently
- ▶ Can't take care of themselves (or others) very well

Consequences of this dysregulation...

- ▶ Academic probation
- ▶ Learning contracts
- ▶ Pattern of taking too many classes per semester
- ▶ Pattern of withdrawing from classes, so they don't fail
- ▶ Failing classes because they stop going
- ▶ Conflict with instructors
- ▶ Disappearing



Why advisors are so important...



- ▶ You are often the first point of contact for students
- ▶ You might see students multiple times per year
- ▶ Encourage students to take fewer classes to begin with
- ▶ You can help refer students to school supports
 - ▶ Disability services
 - ▶ Counselling
 - ▶ Tutoring/academic supports
 - ▶ Financial Aid/Crisis support
 - ▶ Students' Union
 - ▶ Elders

If a student comes in dysregulated



- ▶ Do your best to self-regulate and see if you can influence their energy/mood (breathe and stay calm)
- ▶ Acknowledge what's going on for them
 - ▶ "I can see you are frustrated"
 - ▶ "I can see you are really upset"
- ▶ Give them the option to come back at another time

Other ways
we can
help
students
regulate

Eat or
drink

Eat or drink something together

Offer

Offer a calm, quiet tone of voice

Model

Model behaviors that decrease nervous system arousal/breathe with them/stretch

Structure


Structure the environment so it is emotionally and physical safe

When the student is regulated...

- ▶ Ask how they are managing: check-in on eating, sleep, grades
- ▶ Make notes for the student to take away with clear “action items”
- ▶ Put firm timelines on “action items” (dates and times)
- ▶ Help them make appointments to other school resources (counsellors, tutors, disability services)
- ▶ Make a follow-up appointment to help ensure “action items” were achieved
- ▶ Be patient and believe that the student is doing the best they can with the resources they have available

In Summary

- ▶ You are important to student success and planning
- ▶ You can help students thrive by being:
 - ▶ Student-centered
 - ▶ Open
 - ▶ Curious
 - ▶ Patient
 - ▶ Kind
 - ▶ Compassionate



**YOU NEVER KNOW
WHEN A MOMENT
AND A FEW SINCERE WORDS
CAN IMPACT A LIFE
FOREVER.**

-ZIG ZIGLAR

ZIGLAR.COM

Questions?



THANK YOU



GET IN TOUCH:
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