

## ADHD in College Students: The Curses and Blessings

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April 13, 2018

### The Best Label for ADHD may be....?

- "Delayed Focusing Syndrome"
- "Pervasive Procrastination Trait"
- "Attention Expansiveness Phenomenon"

def.: A curious and wide open attention that resists focusing on demand.

### Who I am and am not:

- I am the Director of Counseling at Bowdoin College
- I am a licensed psychologist
- I have worked at Bowdoin for 21 years
- I have worked at a psychiatric hospital for seven years (Jackson Brook Institute) prior to Bowdoin
- I am not a physician
- I am not a neuroscientist
- I am not an expert



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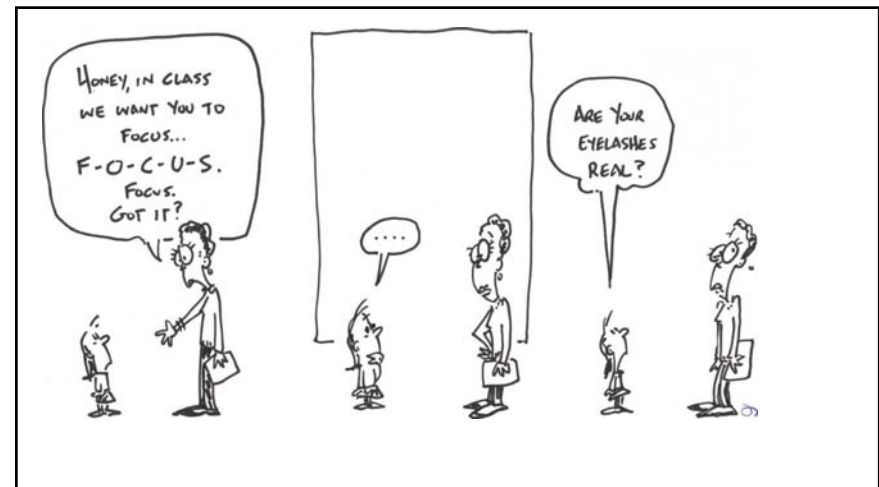
*"It keeps me from looking at my phone every two seconds."*

## The Curses of ADHD

- Procrastination
- Habitual, pervasive, and underlying anxiety
- Chronic sense of under performance
- Diminished self-acceptance
- Painful guilt about disappointing other people
- Impulsivity in speech and actions
- Overestimating one's capacity to complete tasks
- Having to adapt to a "foreign" culture

## Why have college students not been diagnosed?

- They are smart and can get good grades even while doing work at the last moment.
- They have had a significant amount of structure in their middle and high school experiences
- They have had parents looking over their shoulders and helping them get their work done.



## Blessings of ADHD

- Originality of thought, Creativity, Able to think outside the box
- Charisma – ability to advocate and sell
- Fluidity with multi-tasking
- Liveliness, spunk, spontaneity
- Sense of humor
- Persistence and hard work for a cause that is important
- Areas of intellectual brilliance
- Non-judgmental-ness toward other people
- Spiritually open
- Ease with non-conceptual thought

## Why ADHD rears its Head in College?

- Minimal structure in college in comparison to high school.
- Academic schedule where there are no classes some days.
- Many assignments (apart from math, econ, and science classes) come every 4-5 weeks.
- Assignments are bigger, more complex, and require critical thinking. You cannot write a thoughtful paper with sources at the very last minute.
- No parents available to provide oversight.
- Lots of distractions (communal living; gaming, noise, parties, relationships, FOMO).
- Resistance to getting help. Everyone is smart and it is humiliating to confess to be overwhelmed.



Interest Deficit Disorder - it's overrated

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## How ADHD Manifests in College?

- Procrastination problems
- Working very slowly
- Getting overwhelmed at every deadline period during the semester
- Underperformance
- Sleep problems
- Professors giving repeated extensions and sometimes over functioning to help out.
- Academic Suspension due to cumulative poor grades.
- Anxiety and depression
- Impulsivity (behaviorally, with substances, in relationships)

## How to Survive and Thrive with ADHD?

- Get help from the Counseling Center with both diagnosis and a plan
- If possible get a neuropsychological evaluation.
- Get connected with the Learning Center on campus.
- Work with a psychiatrist or other medical provider.
- Find an academic coach.
- Meet with a counselor till some stability is achieved.
- Connect with the Office of Disability Services to explore accommodations.
- Have parents and treatment team talk.
- Develop a steady exercise and sleep regimen.
- Find a mind/body practice to lower stress and anxiety (yoga, meditation, Qigong, climbing, dancing, etc.).
- Make sure you have a balance of work and play.
- Volunteer, help other people, find a cause that matters and gives perspective.

