

Understanding ADHD

What Every Katy Parent Needs to Know

Written by **Heather Lowrie** Photos by **Marisa Hugonnett**

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, also known as ADHD, is the most commonly diagnosed neurological disorder for children according to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Parents often struggle with whether their child is portraying typical child-like behaviors, or if there really is something going on neurologically that needs to be professionally evaluated. It's normal for children to have trouble focusing and behaving at one time or another, but children with ADHD will not outgrow these behaviors.

Know the Signs

Katy resident Laura Peddicord is the local liaison of the Attention Deficit Disorder Association, Southern Region that meets in Katy. She also has a 10-year-old son who has been diagnosed with ADHD. She states, "One of the biggest challenges facing children with ADHD is community awareness, because this is more than just a child who can't sit still or is just lazy." There are three different types of ADHD. First, there is the Predominantly Inattentive type. The strongest symptoms related to this specific diagnosis are trouble organizing or finishing a task, difficulty paying attention to specifics, or following instructions. They're also easily distracted and can forget details of a typical daily routine. The second is the Predominantly Hyperactive – Impulsive type. The signs can consist of fidgeting, noticeably talking a lot, can't sit still during a meal or while finishing homework. Younger children will often be seen running, jumping, or climbing constantly. Interrupting, grabbing things from people, and even speaking at inappropriate times are also signs. The impulsiveness can also lead to more accidents and injuries than others who don't have impulsive control issues. Lastly, there is a Combined Type. This consists of symptoms of both Predominantly Inattentive and Predominantly Hyperactive. It's important to understand and be aware that these symptoms will not just go away over time, but they will continue.

Getting a Diagnosis

There are several myths involved with what causes this disease. It's not the result of too much sugar, time in front of the television,

or poverty and family chaos. Current research proves that it can be genetics, brain injury, lead exposure, alcohol and tobacco use during pregnancy, premature delivery, and even low birth weight. There is not an ADHD "test" but there are several steps that can lead to a diagnosis. If a parent or family member suspects their child might have ADHD, the first step should be talking to your pediatrician and classroom teacher. Parents need to voice their concerns, and most importantly take good notes. What exactly does your child do and how often do they do it? Are there certain times they show specific behaviors? Deciding if a child has ADHD is multifaceted. That's why a parents' input can be crucial. One of the tools to help diagnosis this disease is The American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual – IV, Test Revision (DSM-IV-TR). The test is a list of certain behaviors that are present for at least six months and are inappropriate for their developmental level, which is why the teacher's input is so crucial.

Finding Support

Once a child is diagnosed with ADHD, the most important thing to do is find support. Peddicord hosts monthly meetings at St. Peter's United Methodist Church. "Many parents come to the meetings because their family and friends don't understand what life is like having an ADHD child and how frustrating and challenging it can be. At the meetings, everyone there knows at least some of the challenges the other attendees are experiencing and can be great resources as well." Peddicord says. There's also an email list if the meetings are not an option so that relevant material, training, and information can be communicated.

Treatment Options

Medication, behavior therapy, and parent training are all part of the ADHD treatment spectrum once the diagnosis has been made. The CDC states that between 70 and 80 percent of children with ADHD respond positively to medication. Creating a routine, getting organized, avoiding distractions, limiting choices, and using goals and rewards are just a few examples that might help with a child's



Bob and Laura Peddicord with their children Sawyer, Parker, and Carson. Laura Peddicord (pictured right) is the local liaison of the ADD Association, Southern Region that meets in Katy. She hosts monthly ADHD support group meetings at St. Peters United Methodist Church



Creating and sticking to a routine often helps kids with ADHD

behavioral therapy. CHADD (Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder) is a national program with a "Parent to Parent" program available on their website. ADDA-SR is a regional, grass roots organization, that is hands-on, and they have a more local focus with resources that are applicable to Katy residents. All of these resources are available to help take control of the diagnosis instead of letting the diagnosis take control of the child. Information is power and managing a child's well being for their future is crucial to getting answers and being aware of the behavior that is causing concern.

With support, awareness, and information, ADHD is a manageable diagnosis. Children who have ADHD are young, vibrant, and full of life. They're successful and a wonderful part of our community. Peddicord states, "I strongly reinforce to my son that there is nothing wrong with him, his brain just works differently than others." This is a disease that affects the brain, not the heart. Each child who walks this path along with their parents will have struggles, but together they will be stronger because of the journey. **KM**

HEATHER LOWRIE is a kindergarten teacher and mother of two. She is married to her high school sweetheart, James. She is a freelance writer and author of The Inspired Wife who enjoys the opportunity to encourage people through her writing.

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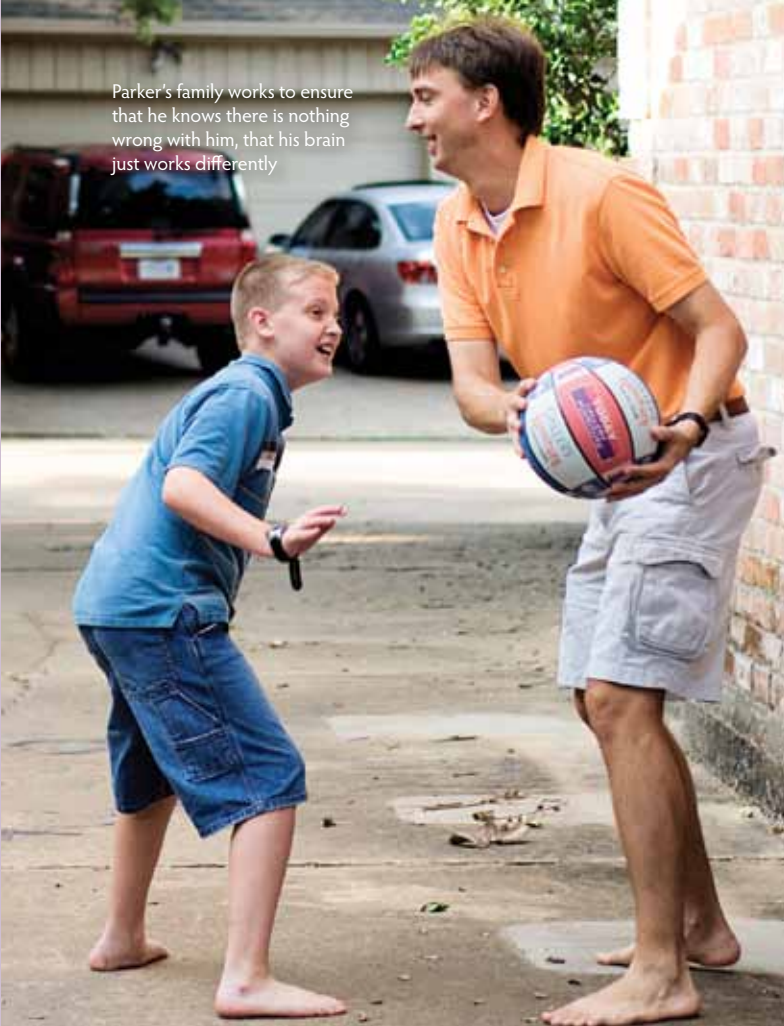
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Parker's family works to ensure that he knows there is nothing wrong with him, that his brain just works differently



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ADHD FAST FACTS

- ADHD may not become apparent until a child enters a school environment.
- It's diagnosed after children display symptoms in at least two settings for at least six months.
- The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) estimates that 3 to 5% of children have ADHD.
- It's more common in boys than in girls.
- When treated, between 70% and 80% of people experience at least some relief of symptoms.
- Many of the symptoms of ADHD diminish by early adulthood.
- Up to 50% of people with ADHD as children continue to have problems as adults

Source: webmd.com

WWW.DRBRADBARKER.COM



Bob and Laura enjoy playing games that require focusing with their sons Sawyer and Parker

Get **CONNECTED** ADHD Support Systems

Children and Adults with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder
chadd.org

National Resource Center
help4adhd.org

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