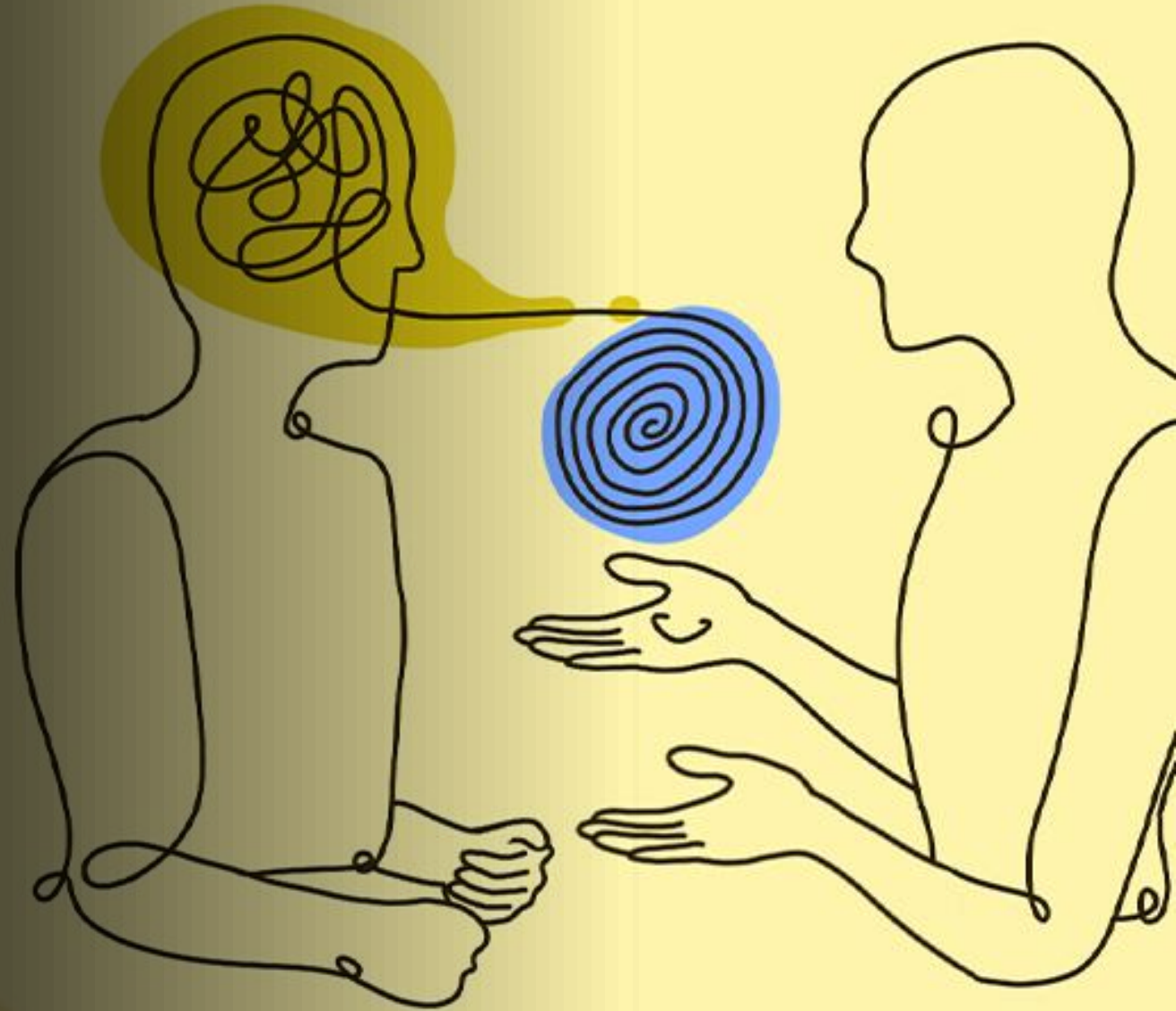
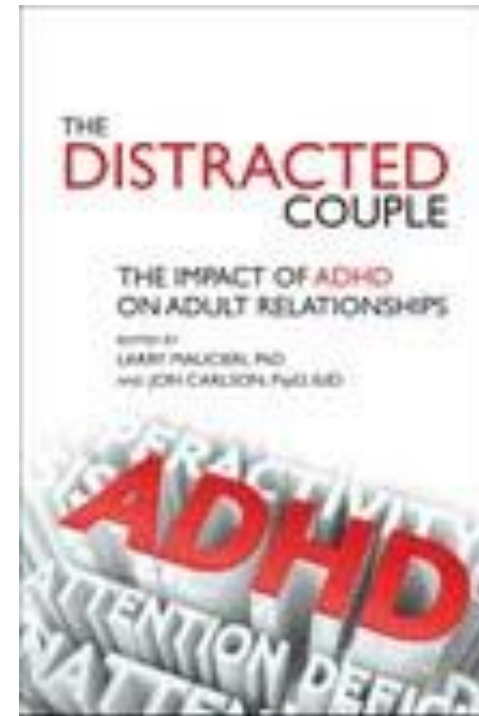
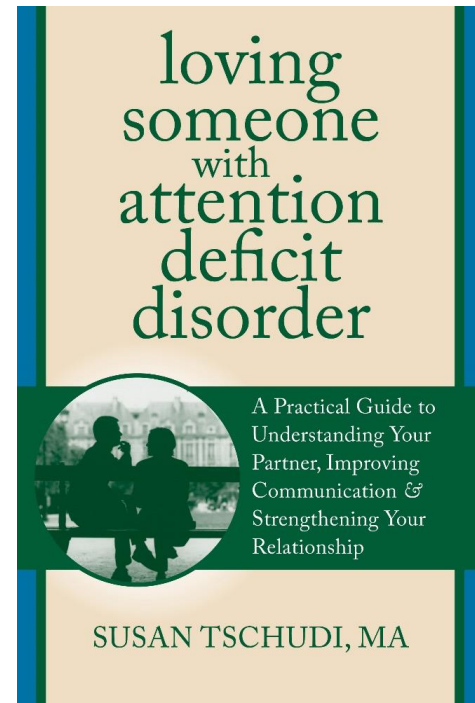


# Let's Get REAL About Your ADHD Relationship

*Susan Dillon Tschudi, LMFT*  
*CHADD Conference 2023*





[www.lovingsomeonewithadd.com](http://www.lovingsomeonewithadd.com)

# Learning Objectives

- Articulate the diagnostic components of adult ADHD
- Identify the symptoms of ADHD that may impact and interfere with a healthy partner relationship
- Define conflictual issues that are present in the relationship due to ADHD symptoms
- Help couples affected by ADHD find relational success



# Sources

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- Ersoy, M. A. and H. T. Ersoy 2019. "Gender-Role Attitudes Mediate the Effects of Adult ADHD on Marriage and Relationships." (23):40-50.
- Al-Yagon, M., M. Lachmi, L. Shalev 2020. "Coping Strategies Among Adults with ADHD: The Mediatonal Role of Attachment Relationship Patterns." (102):103657.
- Barkley, R.A., & Gordon, M. (2002) Research on comorbidity, adaptive functioning, and cognitive impairments in adults with ADHD: Implications for a clinical practice. In S. Goldstein & A.T. Ellison (Eds.), Clinician's guide to adult ADHD: Assessment and intervention. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
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# Overview of ADHD

# ADHD or ADD?

## Understanding the Subtypes

**Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder -**

Predominantly Hyperactive/Impulsive  
Presentation

Predominantly Inattentive  
Presentation

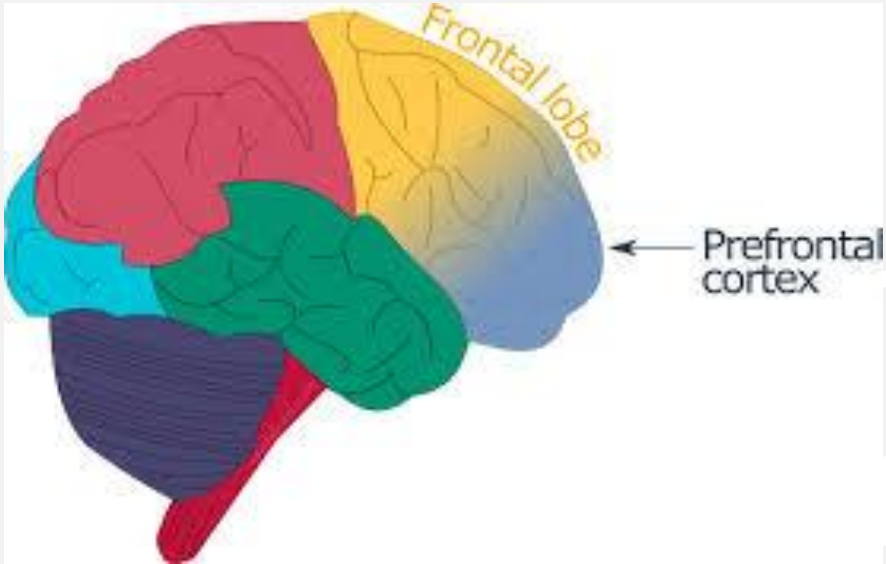
Combined Presentation



- **Neurobiological**
  - Dysregulation of dopamine and norepinephrine in **prefrontal cortex**
    - Dopamine – attention, focus, staying on task
    - Norepinephrine – attention span, impulsivity and distractibility
- **Lifespan disorder**
- **Highly heritable**
- **Affects from 5 to 7% of adult population**
  - 5% of 328 million = **16.5 MILLION**
  - 7% of 328 million = **23 MILLION**



# Neurobiological Impact of Adult ADHD



## Prefrontal Cortex/Executive Function

Planning

Prioritizing

Organizing

Decision Making

Modulation of Emotion

## Dysregulation of Prefrontal Cortex will affect

Attention Span/Distractibility

Judgement

Decision Making

Impulse Control

Emotional response

Dysregulation of PFC is remedied by STIMULATION





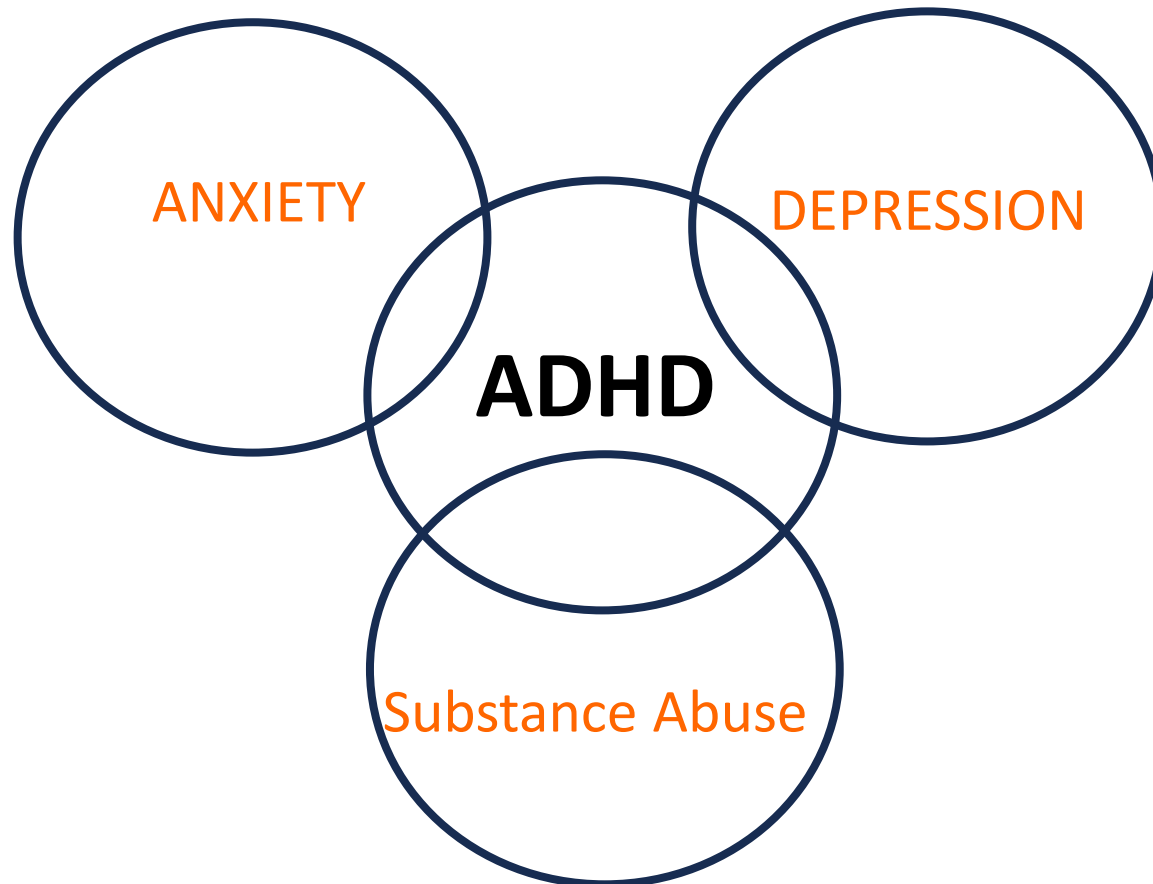
# ADHD Symptoms

(Not a one size fits all BUT. . . .)

- **Easily distracted**
  - Trouble concentrating on tasks/what others are saying
  - Problems remembering obligations or appointments
  - Misplaces/has trouble finding things
  - Problems with follow through
- **Difficulty with organization**
  - Avoids or delays getting started on tasks
  - Trouble paying attention when doing boring or repetitive work
  - Careless mistakes
- **Impulsive behavior**
  - Interrupt others
  - Reckless actions/decisions
  - Substance Use
- **Restlessness**
  - Complaints of boredom
- **Emotional dysregulation**
  - Moodiness
  - Defensiveness
  - Unprovoked angry outbursts

# Comorbidity

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# The NON **ADHD** Partner



**Attention Surplus Syndrome**

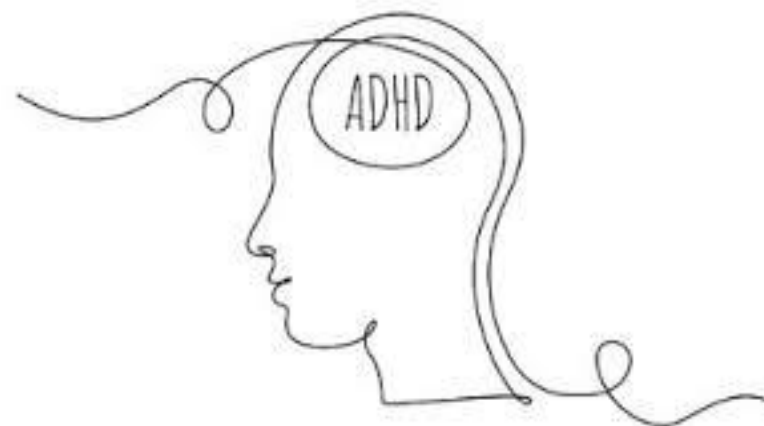
# The NON **ADHD** Partner



**Attention Surplus Syndrome**



The  
**NON**  
Partner



The  
**WITH**  
Partner

Individuals with ADHD have a harder time starting and maintaining interpersonal relationships. (Adler, 2008)

Time Management

Relationship Roles

Communication

Impulsive Actions/Words

Distractibility

Emotional Dysregulation

Several yellow curved lines of varying lengths are positioned at the bottom right of the slide, extending from the bottom of the list of challenges.



# What Can Be Done?

The With  
Partner

The Non  
Partner

The Couple

---



Before Knowing  
vs.  
After Knowing






# What Can Be Done

- For the partner WITH
  - Come to terms with the diagnosis
  - Education
  - Manage co-morbidity (anxiety/depression)
  - Limit substances
  - Consider medications
  - Good self care
  - Adjunct services





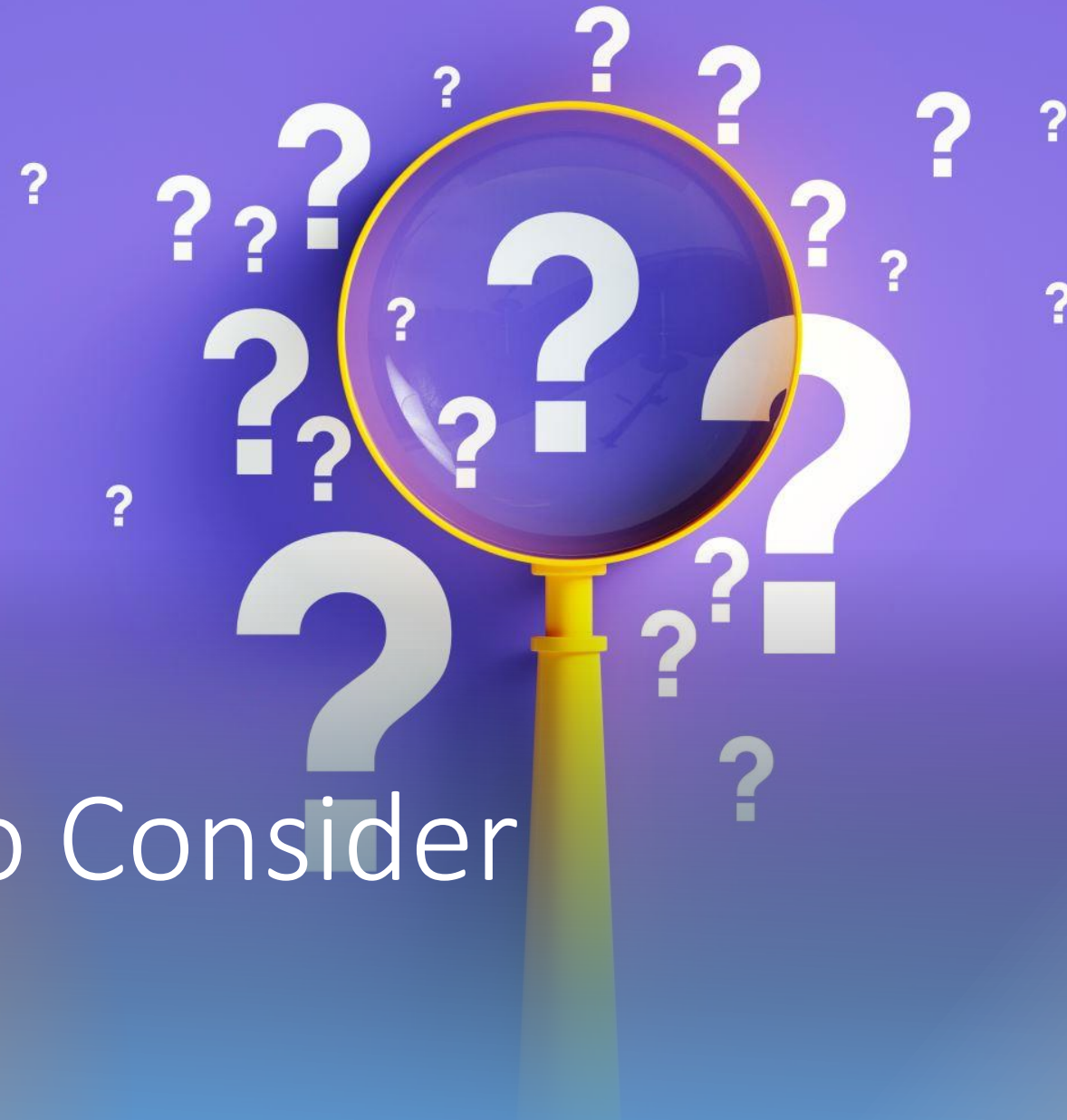
# What Can Be Done?

- For the Non partner
    - Education
    - Come to terms with the diagnosis
    - Relearn communication
    - Good self care
    - Establish boundaries
    - Empathy
- 



# What Can Be Done?

- For the Couple
  - Couples therapy with an expert
    - Communication
    - Conflict resolution



Things to Consider

# Motivators

- The **With** Partner
  - Novelty
  - Interest
  - Challenge
  - Urgency
  - Passion
- The **Non** Partner
  - Importance
  - Reward/Consequences

**SHAME  
FACTOR**

**“By [the age of] 12, children with ADHD receive twenty thousand more negative comments than their peers who do not have ADHD.”**

**William Dodson, M.D.**



# Q&A

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