

Inattentive ADHD and the Twice Exceptional (2E) Child

I found my kindergarten report card the other day. I smiled when I saw the comment from my teacher: Progress (student work) good, very slow-moving, and always daydreaming. A pleasant child!

Looking back, it's easy to spot the signs of my type of ADHD, called Inattentive ADHD (formerly ADD). Students with this type are often overlooked. They don't disrupt the classroom or cause problems at home. They are the daydreamers, the ones who miss part of the directions and ask questions the teacher just answered.

Growing up with Inattentive ADHD isn't easy. It gets even more complex if you're also a gifted student. If you're identified early, you might be called "twice exceptional (2e)," meaning you have both strong abilities and challenges. You might excel at problem-solving, spotting patterns, and creative thinking, but still struggle with organization, planning, time management, prioritizing, and managing emotions like anxiety or frustration. Sometimes your strengths hide your struggles, or vice versa.

When I was a child, adults often said, "You're not living up to your potential," "You're smart, but lazy," "You're always daydreaming," "You never finish anything you start," and "I already answered that question."

I was diagnosed in my middle age. Once I learned about Inattentive ADHD, my whole life started to make sense. In elementary math classes, my teachers couldn't understand why I grasped complex problems but often forgot to carry the 1; today, they'd say I forgot to regroup. In college, my professors noticed I could analyze complex music but made simple mistakes when transposing it. In high school, I was under a doctor's care because I nearly got an ulcer from my anxiety about algebra, the first class I ever struggled with. In college, I could never sit still long enough to practice music because I got so frustrated by my mistakes, which only made things worse.

Twice exceptional students often get overlooked because their giftedness makes them seem capable, while their ADHD symptoms can look like a lack of motivation or ability. As a result, they don't get the support

they need for either their strengths or their challenges, which can lead to low self-esteem and underachievement.

If you think your child has Inattentive ADHD, talk to your child's teacher and/or their school counselor. Early detection will save your child years of hearing about their perceived "flaws" and provide tools to help them reach their potential. If this sounds like you, it's never too late to learn about your brain and how to support it.

