

## Adult Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Checklist

by Daniel G. Amen, M.D.

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In conjunction with other diagnostic techniques, Dr Amen says he, "uses the following general adult ADHD checklist to help further define ADHD symptoms. No ADHD adult has all of the symptoms, but if you notice a strong presence of more than 20 of these symptoms, there is a strong likelihood of ADHD ."

Read this list of behaviors and rate yourself (or the person who has asked you to rate him or her) on each behavior listed. Use the following scale and place the appropriate number next to the item.

- 0 = never
- 1 = rarely
- 2 = occasionally
- 3 = frequently
- 4 = very frequently

**\*\*IMPORTANT:** This is not a tool for self-diagnosis. Its purpose is simply to help you determine whether ADHD may be a factor in the behavior of the person you are assessing using this checklist. An actual diagnosis can be made only by an experienced professional.

### Past History

- 1.\_\_\_\*History of ADHD symptoms in childhood, such as distractibility, short attention span, impulsivity or restlessness. ADHD doesn't start at age 30.
- 2.\_\_\_History of not living up to potential in school or work (report cards with comments such as "not living up to potential")
- 3.\_\_\_History of frequent behavior problems in school (mostly for males)
- 4.\_\_\_History of bedwetting past age 5
- 5.\_\_\_Family history of ADHD , learning problems, mood disorders or substance abuse problems

### Short Attention Span/Distractibility

- 6.\_\_\_\*Short attention span, unless very interested in something

7. \_\_\*Easily distracted, tendency to drift away (although at times can be hyperfocused)
8. \_\_Lacks attention to detail, due to distractibility
9. \_\_Trouble listening carefully to directions
10. \_\_Frequently misplaces things
11. \_\_Skips around while reading, or goes to the end first, trouble staying on track
12. \_\_Difficulty learning new games, because it is hard to stay on track during directions
13. \_\_Easily distracted during sex, causing frequent breaks or turn-offs during lovemaking
14. \_\_Poor listening skills
15. \_\_Tendency to be easily bored (tunes out)

### **Restlessness**

16. \_\_Restlessness, constant motion, legs moving, fidgeting
17. \_\_Has to be moving in order to think
18. \_\_Trouble sitting still, such as trouble sitting in one place for too long, sitting at a desk job for long periods, sitting through a movie
19. \_\_An internal sense of anxiety or nervousness

### **Impulsivity**

20. \_\_Impulsive, in words and/or actions (spending)
21. \_\_Say just what comes to mind without considering its impact (tactless)
22. \_\_Trouble going through established channels, trouble following proper procedure, an attitude of "read the directions when all else fails"
23. \_\_Impatient, low frustration tolerance
24. \_\_A prisoner of the moment
25. \_\_Frequent traffic violations
26. \_\_Frequent, impulsive job changes

27. \_\_Tendency to embarrass others

28. \_\_Lying or stealing on impulse

### **Poor Organization**

29. \_\_Poor organization and planning, trouble maintaining an organized work/living area

30. \_\_Chronically late or chronically in a hurry

31. \_\_Often have piles of stuff

32. \_\_Easily overwhelmed by tasks of daily living

33. \_\_Poor financial management (late bills, check book a mess, spending unnecessary money on late fees)

### **Problems Getting Started and Following Through**

34. \_\_Chronic procrastination or trouble getting started

35. \_\_Starting projects but not finishing them, poor follow through

36. \_\_Enthusiastic beginnings but poor endings

37. \_\_Spends excessive time at work because of inefficiencies

38. \_\_Inconsistent work performance

### **Negative Internal Feelings**

39. \_\_Chronic sense of under achievement, feeling you should be much further along in your life than you are

40. \_\_Chronic problems with self-esteem

41. \_\_Sense of impending doom

42. \_\_Mood swings

43. \_\_Negativity

44. \_\_Frequent feeling of demoralization or that things won't work out for you

### **Relational Difficulties**

- 45. \_\_Trouble sustaining friendships or intimate relationships, promiscuity
- 46. \_\_Trouble with intimacy
- 47. \_\_Tendency to be immature
- 48. \_\_Self-centered; immature interests
- 49. \_\_Failure to see others' needs or activities as important
- 50. \_\_Lack of talking in a relationship
- 51. \_\_Verbally abusive to others
- 52. \_\_Prone to hysterical outburst
- 53. \_\_Avoids group activities
- 54. \_\_Trouble with authority

### **Short Fuse**

- 55. \_\_Quick responses to slights that are real or imagined
- 56. \_\_Rage outbursts, short fuse

### **Frequent Search For High Stimulation**

- 57. \_\_Frequent search for high stimulation (bungee jumping, gambling, race track, high stress jobs, ER doctors, doing many things at once, etc.)
- 58. \_\_Tendency to seek conflict, be argumentative or to start disagreements for the fun of it

### **Tendency To Get Stuck (thoughts or behaviors)**

- 59. \_\_Tendency to worry needlessly and endlessly
- 60. \_\_Tendency toward ADHD ictions (food, alcohol, drugs, work)

### **Switches Things Around**

- 61. \_\_Switches around numbers, letters or words
- 62. \_\_Turn words around in conversations

## **Writing/Fine Motor Coordination Difficulties**

- 63. \_\_\_ Poor writing skills (hard to get information from brain to pen)
- 64. \_\_\_ Poor handwriting, often prints
- 65. \_\_\_ Coordination difficulties

## **The Harder I Try The Worse It Gets**

- 66. \_\_\_ Performance becomes worse under pressure.
- 67. \_\_\_ Test anxiety, or during tests your mind tends to go blank
- 68. \_\_\_ The harder you try, the worse it gets
- 69. \_\_\_ Work or schoolwork deteriorates under pressure
- 70. \_\_\_ Tendency to turn off or become stuck when asked questions in social situations
- 71. \_\_\_ Falls asleep or becomes tired while reading

## **Sleep/Wake Difficulties**

- 72. \_\_\_ Difficulty falling asleep, may be due to too many thoughts at night
- 73. \_\_\_ Difficulty coming awake (may need coffee or other stimulant or activity before feeling fully awake)

## **Low Energy**

- 74. \_\_\_ Periods of low energy, especially early in the morning and in the afternoon
- 75. \_\_\_ Frequently feeling tired

## **Sensitive To Noise Or Touch**

- 76. \_\_\_ Startles easily
- 77. \_\_\_ Sensitive to touch, clothes, noise and light

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When you have completed the above checklist, calculate the Total Score: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Number of Items with a score of three (3) or more: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #1: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #6: \_\_\_\_\_

Score for Item #7: \_\_\_\_\_

Dr. Amen suggests: "More than 20 items with a score of three or more indicates a strong tendency toward ADHD . Note: The three items with \* and a score above three are essential to make the diagnosis." He adds: "One of the most common ways I diagnose ADHD in adults is when parents reluctantly tell me that they have tried their child's medication and that they found it very helpful. They report it helped them concentrate for longer periods of time. They became more organized and were less impulsive. Trying your child's medication is not something I recommend!"

**Editor's Note:** If you believe your score indicates possible ADHD, then you might want to read these articles at our website: [Tips for finding an ADHD Clinician and ADHD Support](#) and [ADHD 101](#).

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