



WHO SAYS

“ADHD is an attention DEFICIT? Introducing AVID”

THE DEFICIT MYTH

We are taught that people with ADHD simply can't pay attention or aren't trying hard enough. The solution is to teach them to "pay attention" and eliminate distractions. But ADHD isn't simply an attention deficit. It's a difference in the structure of the brain that results in inconsistent access to the capacity to focus.



ATTENTION VARIABILITY

ADHD would be more accurately conceptualized as AVID: Attention Variability and Intensity Difference. Attention may be difficult to access in one moment, effortless the next, and, in the next, intensely hyperfocused. Rather than being based on the brain's biochemical reward centers, AVID brains are motivated by interest, stimulation, novelty, context, and urgency.

These differences in reward structure are caused by the dysregulation of neurotransmitters such as dopamine, norepinephrine, and serotonin in the ADHD brain. AVID takes the deficit out of ADHD and focuses our attention on fluctuations in the brain's ability to recruit the neural networks needed to initiate, sustain, and regulate attention.

The challenge isn't a lack of attention – it's the predictability and regulation of attention.



IMPACT OF MYTH

When ADHD is viewed only as an attention deficit, people are labeled as lazy, careless, or unmotivated.

Successes are dismissed - "If you could do it once, you can always do it!"

Inconsistent performance is mistaken for inconsistency in effort.

Supports focus on forcing attention rather than understanding what helps it emerge.

Shame replaces understanding.

MANAGING ATTENTION

Support variable attention by:

- Recognizing natural fluctuations in attention and energy.
- Building environments that increase interest, meaning, novelty, and autonomy.
- Allowing flexibility rather than expecting constant performance.
- Using external supports for executive functioning instead of relying on willpower.
- Measuring patterns over time rather than judging isolated moments.

Ready to start managing your attention?!



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