



Beverly H. Rohman



Special Issues for Women with ADD

Most of us are familiar with hyperactivity and attentional problems in children, but chances are you haven't read much about girls or women with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Why not? Because ADD has long been considered a male problem that affects only a few girls and women.

Dr. Patricia Quinn, recently a guest speaker at an ADD Seminar at the Avalon Theatre, spoke so effectively about the challenges of ADD for adults as well as for families. She has spent many years exploring, documenting and treating children and adults with ADD knows first hand about women with ADD. In recent years she has focused most of her time and energy on women's issues. Along with Kathleen Nadeau, Ph.D., Dr. Quinn offers some of the best advice for the *many* women who struggle with ADD.

Drs. Nadeau and Quinn help us to understand how having ADD is particularly challenging for women as they struggle to cope with the demands of managing their own lives, working, and, for many, balancing the roles of wife and mother. While both men and women with ADD must face these challenges, the impact of ADD upon women is sometimes greater due to differences in social expectations as well as hormonal differences between males and females. They offer the following wisdom.....

What can Women with ADD do to Improve Their Daily Lives?

Give yourself a break!

Often the biggest struggle is an internal one. Societal expectations have been deeply ingrained in many women. Even when a loving husband says, "Don't worry about it," they continue to place demands upon themselves. Breaking out of a mold that doesn't fit can take time and effort.

Educate your partner about ADD and how it affects you.

Your partner may feel anger and resentment toward an ill-kept house or badly-behaved children, assuming that you "just don't care." They need to appreciate the full brunt of the impact of ADD in your life. Get your partner on your side, strategizing about ways to make your life at home more ADD-accommodating, and ADD-friendly.

It's only spilled milk!

Try to create an "ADD-Friendly" environment in your home. If you can approach your ADD, and that of your children, with acceptance and good humor, explosions will decrease, and you'll save more energy for the positive side of things.

Simplify your life.

You are probably overbooked and chances are your children are too. Look for ways to reduce commitments so that you're not always pressed and hurried.

Don't hang around women who can't understand your problems.

So many women describe that they feel terrible by comparisons to friends or neighbors whose houses are immaculate and whose children are always clean, neat and well-behaved. Don't put yourself in situations that will send you back toward impossible expectations and negative comparisons.

Build in "time-outs" daily.

Time-out's are essential when you have ADD and are raising children. Make them routine so that you don't have to keep planning and juggling.

Eliminate and delegate.

Look at things that you require of yourself at home. Can some of these things be eliminated? Can you hire someone to help you? Turn over certain tasks or activities to other family members.

Learn ADD-friendly child-management techniques.

On the outside looking in it may be easy for other parents to judge you if your children misbehave. But what any parent of a child with ADD knows is that they don't respond to the usual admonishments and limits in the same way that non-ADD kids do. If you're raising a child with ADD – and you have ADD yourself -- you've got a super-challenging job. Get the best training you can find. Most importantly, look for a family therapist or coach who understands how mothers with ADD are impacted.

Get help for PMS or Menopausal Symptoms.

They are likely to be more severe than in other women. Managing the destabilizing effect of your hormonal fluctuations is a critical part of managing your ADD.

Focus more on the things you love.

There are many aspects of keeping a house and raising children which are rewarding and creative. Look for positive experiences to share with your children.

Look for people who appreciate the best in you.

Your world is probably full of people who are quick to judge you for your ADD struggles with disorganization and poor time management. It's important to actively seek out people who appreciate the best in you and who encourage you to be your best.

Don't measure your worth using someone else's yardstick!

When you march to the beat of a different drummer, others may think you're out of step. Don't get caught up in trying to meet the standards, or live up to the values of women who are very different from you. Instead of over-focusing on unmade beds and dishes left in the sink, take stock and celebrate things that matter more to you - such as warmth, enthusiasm, creativity, humor, sensitivity, and spirit!

If you are a woman with undiagnosed ADD, help is just around the corner. Women who have blamed themselves for years as lazy or incompetent have received help through ADD-oriented psychotherapy, medication and ADD coaching and are now feeling and functioning much better. Celebrate the special issues!

Read more about Dr. Quinn and women's issues on www.advance.com.

For more information about and ADD, contact The Learning Connections at 12 West Dover Street, Easton, MD 21601, 410-763-7097 or write to beverlyrohman@goeaston.net

*Beverly Rohman is the founder of The Learning Connections LLC,
an ADD Life Coach and Learning Consultant.*