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COLLEGE LIFE

Will the Real ADHD Please Stand Up?

By Alyssa Hockensmith · On March 25, 2014

We live in a culture of problem-solvers. If there's a problem, we automatically want to find a solution, regardless of whether one actually exists.

One of our favorite solutions in the 21st century is using medication to fix our lives. If you're sad, there's a pill for that. If you're in pain, there's a pill for that, too. Just about any "problem" you can imagine can be "solved" with a pill, or at least in theory. Pharmaceutical companies love this method of problem-solving because it makes them filthy rich, but many doctors are expressing concerns about the trend of overmedication.



A great example of this is the recent rise in ADHD diagnoses. According to [an article in Time magazine](#), the rate of adults diagnosed with ADHD between 2008 and 2012 increased by over 50 percent, and the diagnoses rate for young adults nearly doubled.

Dr. Richard Saul is a behavioral neurologist who says that members of our generation are overly reliant on stimulants to get them through their lives. While this really isn't surprising, it is a bit alarming because we are essentially stopping our brains from naturally stimulating themselves by consuming drugs to take over that task, instead.

Even more controversially, Dr. Saul has gone so far as to say that the traditional definition of ADHD provided by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Disorders (DSM) does not exist. First off, in order to qualify as having ADHD, a patient must exhibit only five of the 18 possible symptoms.

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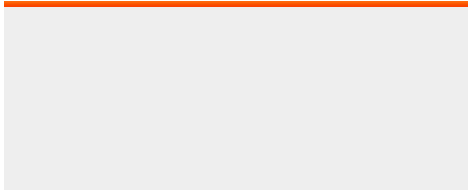
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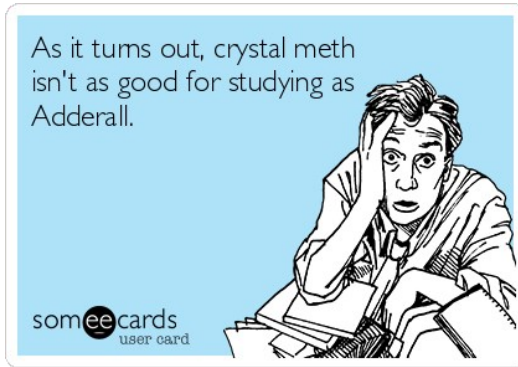
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Let's allow that to sink in for a moment.

At any given point in the course of someone's life, they could experience five of the signs of ADHD and not even realize it. Why provide 18 symptoms for something if you're only going to need five of them to qualify for treatment?

Can you really call yourself an ADHD patient just because you feel distracted or impulsive or hyperactive? Dr. Saul says no way, and I'm with him.



It's important to recognize that the fact that you can't focus on your studying may be just because you're bored with what it is you are studying. Let's be honest: Reading Kierkegaard sounds impressive if you're at a party, but in actuality it's dull and dry and you wish that when you turn the page there will be a dystopian society subplot into which you can finally sink your teeth.

Misdiagnosing over two million people in the U.S. alone may not seem like that big of a deal; after all, our population is over 300 million and counting. But the issue that Dr. Saul has recently been trying to bring attention to is that while we think we're treating ADHD, we may be, in fact, treating a symptom of a larger issue. For example, diseases like iron deficiency, obsessive compulsive disorder, even allergies have symptoms that fit into the umbrella of symptoms of ADHD. However, treating those symptoms under the false impression that ADHD is at the root potentially does more harm than good.



Via: storka1.wordpress.com

Most of those diseases can't be treated with the stimulants one would use to treat ADHD, so we're merely masking the true underlying issue of why someone may experience the varied symptoms of ADHD. Or, even worse, we may be inadvertently causing more issues such as stimulant addiction or other lesser-known side effects of the medications prescribed for ADHD.

Although no one is discounting the fact that ADHD can seriously hinder somebody quality of life, many are not keeping their minds open to the fact that there are numerous possible reasons why they experience symptoms oft-associated with ADHD. Calling it ADHD is an easy way out for doctors who want to quickly diagnosis, and it's a shortcut for some people to get their hands on medication they don't actually need.

So next time you're about to pop an Addy in preparation for long hours of studying for an exam, consider the real reason why you can't focus. Do you really need the drug?

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
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