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LIFE

Why I Believe The Name ADHD Needs To Change

Renaming a condition is not unheard of – especially when it comes to disorders of the brain and mind

By Sarah Marie Graye

Indie-published novelist exploring her adult diagnosis of ADHD both in her novels and in life

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When you hear that someone has ADHD – Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder – it often conjures up a picture of a seven-year-old boy tearing round the classroom, causing havoc. But this “naughty child” stereotype is not only unfair, it’s the source of much of the stigma those with the condition face. And many end up internalising the stereotype, causing [self-stigmatisation](#).

Although a large number of those diagnosed with ADHD as children are hyperactive or have attention issues, these two symptoms alone [won’t result in a diagnosis](#). There are many kids who are inattentive or hyperactive who don’t have the condition: they’re just common symptoms in kids.

On top of that, many of those diagnosed with the condition as adults missed being identified as children because they didn’t fit the stereotype. So we’ve reached a point where people don’t have attention-deficit or hyperactivity and yet can be branded with the name ADHD.

ADHD Action Founder Michelle Beckett said the biggest issue with the current name is that it [ignores the challenges](#) those with the condition face (such as difficulties with time management, planning and emotional regulation). The current name is directly linked to executive dysfunction, which is a term used by expert Dr Russell Barkley to describe the core symptoms of [Attention Deficit Disorder](#) (ADD). He says that the name ADD means “too little of” and doesn’t capture the fluctuating executive functions (such as [hyperfocus](#)).



DISORDER COULD WORK.

Not everyone agrees with me. But I don't think it's possible to find a name that will please everyone. And while Executive Function Disorder is my suggestion, I'd be open to other terms that better described the condition I have and removed some of the stigma I face. I don't think the general population is ever going to properly understand ADHD while it has a name that doesn't mean what it is.

Renaming a condition is not unheard of – especially when it comes to disorders of the brain and mind. ADHD itself has had [other names](#), including Hyperkinetic Impulse Disorder and Minimal Brain Dysfunction – both of which have since been discarded for being unsuitable.

Manic Depression and Borderline Personality Disorder have both been renamed because of the stigma attached to the terms. Manic Depression is now known as [Bipolar](#). And references to Borderline Personality Disorder are [slowly being replaced](#) by its new name, Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder – with both names being used until the new one becomes the norm.

Recent research looking into [renaming schizophrenia to reduce stigma](#) was published in the *Journal of* Psychiatry. The research found that the name Schizophrenia Integration Disorder – the new name “reduced attrition”

The names of conditions matter and I think ADHD should

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