

# ADHD: A Challenge and a Gift

*Maria del Carmen Garcia*

**BEFORE YOU READ:** ADHD stands for Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder. (Read the box on p. 10 to learn more.) Notice the title of this piece. What do you think might be the challenges and the gifts of ADHD?

## A Silent Disorder

Have you ever felt different? I have felt different in many ways. All my life, I tried to understand myself. I experienced my world very differently than other people. I did not fit in anywhere, not even at home. Many things were happening inside of me, and I couldn't understand them. It turns out, I have Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). It is a silent disorder that has a big effect on daily life.

## Isolation

The hardest times were when I stuttered as a child. That was the first time I felt rejected, even by my family. At school, I didn't have any friends, not only because kids laughed at me, but because I distanced myself from them. I thought they would hurt my feelings. Speech therapy helped me improve my stutter, but I was no longer interested in making friends. Even at home, I felt alone. Family is a strong word. Family is supposed to give you support, love, respect, and acceptance, but I didn't have any of that. They always reminded me that I was weird.

## A Diagnosis and New Understanding

Finally, as an adult, I was diagnosed with ADHD. Now I understand myself better. I see how this condition shows up in my life. For example, not to brag, but I have been awarded Employee of the Month and Employee of the Year multiple times at my job. You might be impressed by this accomplishment. You might think, "Oh, she must enjoy her work." But it is not all good.



I am a "workaholic." Because of my ADHD, I bring many emotions to my work: anxiety, perfectionism, obsessive behavior, hyperactivity, and hyper-responsibility, to name a few.

Most importantly, I feel depressed. The depression comes from feeling like I can never do enough. I put everything I have into being the best for others. But I can't be there for myself. Therefore, I never get a break. Most of the time, I feel overwhelmed and burned out. Sometimes, I cannot get out of bed. I am overcome with emotions. My life is like a roller coaster of intense frustration and sensitivity.

## Energetic and Persistent

I do not hate my life. Even though I have bad times and I face many challenges every day, my condition also encourages me to do things that I am proud of. I am energetic and persistent. For example, I sat down to write this essay, and I cannot stop writing. I overflow with creativity. I am finding ways to tell my story. I cannot stop

writing, and I can be here at my desk all day. I can watch the sunset and everything is okay. I enjoy it. I know I am a good person, not a weird lady.

### Coexisting with My Condition

I have come a long way. For many years, I wondered why others would not accept me. But my therapist taught me that that is not the best question for me. My therapist encouraged me to ask, "What do I have to do to accept myself?" She told me, "Nothing is wrong with you."

ADHD is an incurable condition, but you can learn to coexist with it. I practice Qi Gong and Tai Chi to try to balance my mind and body. I pray and do special breathing exercises when I have an anxiety attack. These practices help me. Every day,

I face a lot of challenges. But I am learning how to change bad moments into good experiences. The most important thing is to trust myself and move forward. Have you ever felt this way?

#### AFTER YOU READ:

1. The author says that winning Employee of the Month is not necessarily a good thing for her. Why?
2. Study the image below. What does ADHD look like on the surface? And what hides below?

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