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### A BIT ABOUT ME AND MY ADHD STORY

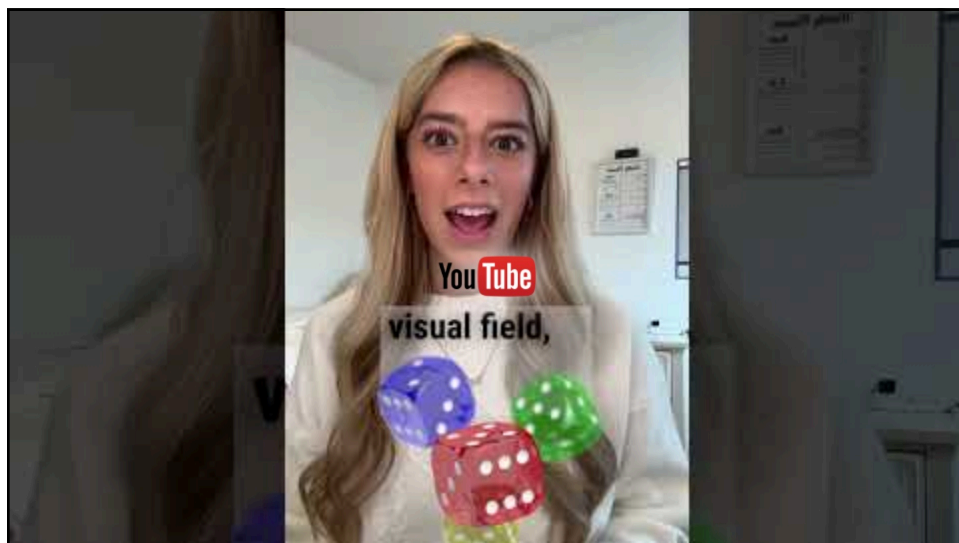
- B.A., B.Ed., ADHD-CE
- Taught grade 4 for 8 years at Prince of Peace Lutheran School just outside of Calgary, Alberta
- Diagnosed at 24

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- **For Parents**
- **For Adults (and their partner/spouse)**
- **For Teachers**  
Launched Feb 1, 2026!
- **For young adults**  
2027/2028?




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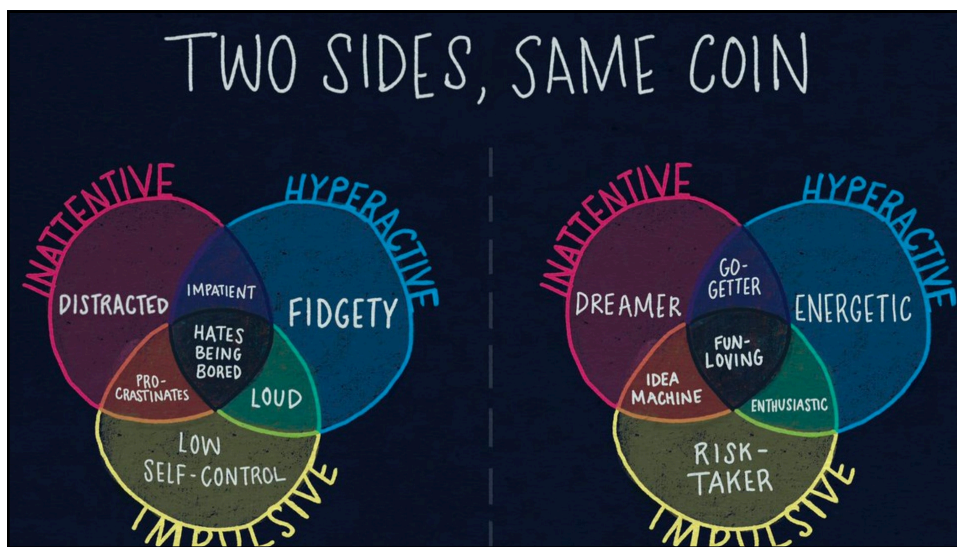
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**“IT IS ESTIMATED THAT KIDS WHO HAVE ADHD RECEIVE 20,000 MORE NEGATIVE MESSAGES THAN THEIR NEUROTYPICAL PEERS BY THE AGE OF 10.”**

William Dodson, MD



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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

- **Neurodevelopmental Disorder**

A group of mental conditions affecting the development of the nervous system, which includes the brain and spinal cord

The condition influences how the brain functions and alters neurological development

- **Primarily genetic, some aquired**

2/3 (or more) of cases are genetic

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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

- **Structural brain differences**

Up to 3 year delay in development of:

Prefrontal cortex

Premotor zone

Visual association cortex (part of working memory system)

Basal ganglia

Cerebellum

Corpus Callosum

Amygdala and Thalamus (?)

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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

- **Structural brain differences**

Early development of the motor strip

Long range neural connections develop later and are less dense

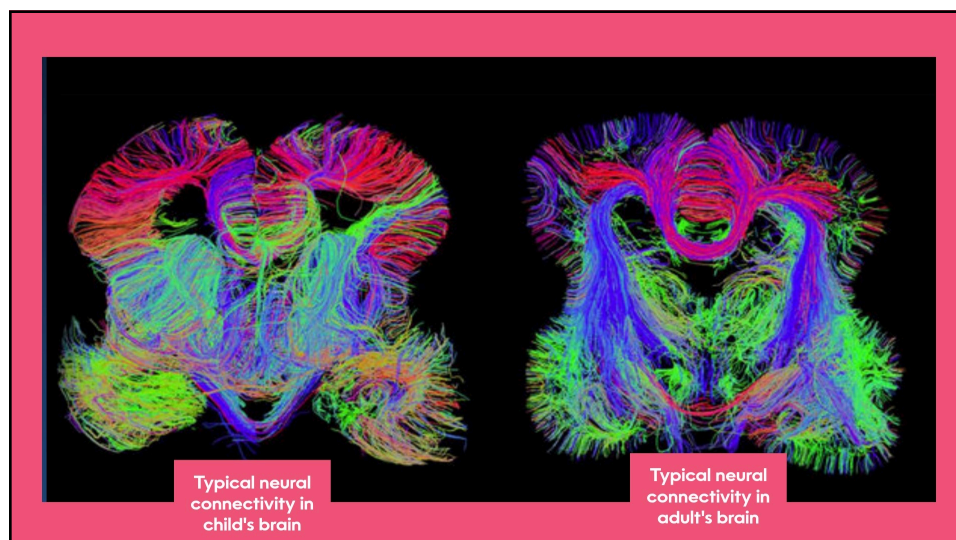
3-10% less gray matter

Normalization of the delayed development area by adulthood, but not in connectivity

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## WRITE THIS DOWN: 30%/ 3 YEAR RULE

- Kids who have ADHD can be up to 30%/ 3 years delayed in executive function development compared to their peers
- Ask: How would you support a student who is 3 years younger in planning, organizing, attention, emotional regulation, etc?

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## NEUROTRANSMITTERS IMPACTED BY ADHD

- **Dopamine - AKA Motivation**
  - What does it do?
    - Motivation neurotransmitter
    - Part of the reward pathway
    - Involvement in mood, movement, sleep, memory, learning, concentration, and more
    - \*Note - dopamine does not cross the blood-brain barrier - dopamine in the gut does not impact dopamine in the brain!
  - What is the problem?
    - ADHD could be a combination of
      - Low dopamine production in the brain
      - Overly efficient dopamine reuptake
      - Lower sensitivity to dopamine
      - Fewer dopamine receptors

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## NEUROTRANSMITTERS IMPACTED BY ADHD

- **Norepinephrine AKA Focus**
  - Synthesized from dopamine
  - What does it do?
    - Reduces distractions
    - Part of the fight or flight system
    - Involvement in alertness, arousal, attention, mood, memory
  - What is the problem?
    - ADHD could be a combination of
      - Low dopamine production in the brain leading to low norepinephrine
      - Overly efficient norepinephrine reuptake
      - Lower sensitivity to norepinephrine
      - Fewer norepinephrine receptors

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**WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND THIS?**

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**“ADHD FEELS LIKE YOU ARE FIGHTING TO PUT IN 350% EFFORT 100% OF THE TIME, BUT ONLY ACHIEVING 50% OF WHAT OTHERS ACHIEVE, AND THEN BEING TREATED LIKE YOU ONLY PUT IN 10%.,”**

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**THE BIGGEST MISUNDERSTANDING ABOUT ADHD IS THAT IT IS A BEHAVIOURAL OR MORAL ISSUE, OR THAT MORE WILLPOWER OR DISCIPLINE IS THE SOLUTION.  
ADHD IS A BRAIN STRUCTURE AND BRAIN CHEMICAL DIFFERENCE.**

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**“TELLING A CHILD WITH ADHD TO CONCENTRATE HARDER OR TO STOP DAYDREAMING IS LIKE ASKING A CHILD WHO IS NEAR SIGHTED TO TRY HARDER TO SEE THINGS FAR AWAY WHEN THEY ARE NOT WEARING GLASSES.”**

Dr. Nelson Dorta



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## **OVERVIEW OF ADHD**

- **3 presentations**
  - ADHD-I: Inattentive presentation
  - ADHD-HI: Hyperactive/Impulsive presentation
  - ADHD-C: Combined presentation



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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

- **Big 3 (The diagnostic criteria)**

- Inattention

- Actually dysregulated attention

- Hyperactivity

- Internalized or Externalized hyperactivity

- Impulsivity

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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

- **Executive Functions**

- Organization

- Working Memory

- Planning/Prioritizing

- Self Awareness

- Task Initiation (and Task Completion)

- Time Awareness/Management

- Emotional Regulation

- Cognitive Flexibility/Adaptability

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## OVERVIEW OF ADHD

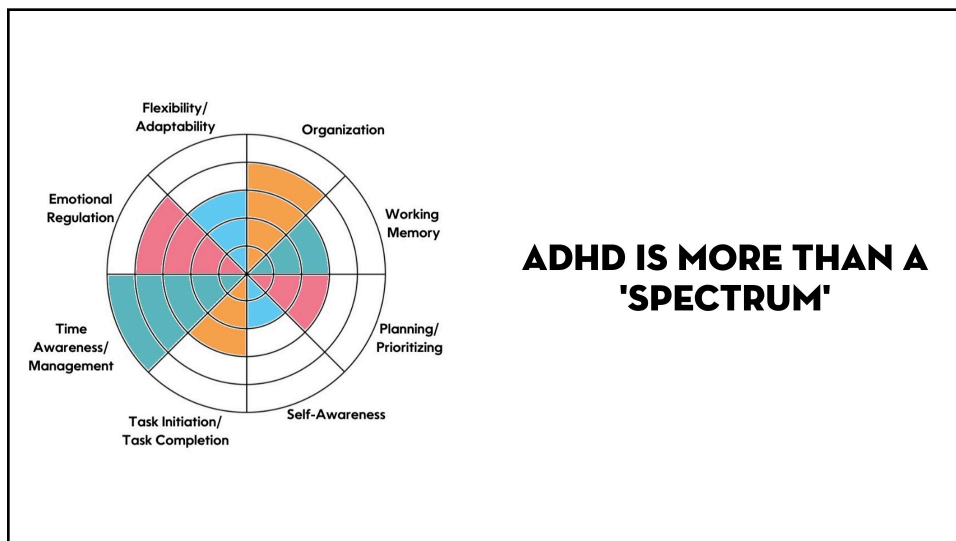
- **Other challenges associated with ADHD**

- Sleep
- Sensory Processing (seeking and/or avoidant)
- Social Skills
- Perfectionism
- Slow Processing Speed
- Body Focused Repetitive Behaviours
- Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria
- Demand Avoidance
- Justice Sensitivity

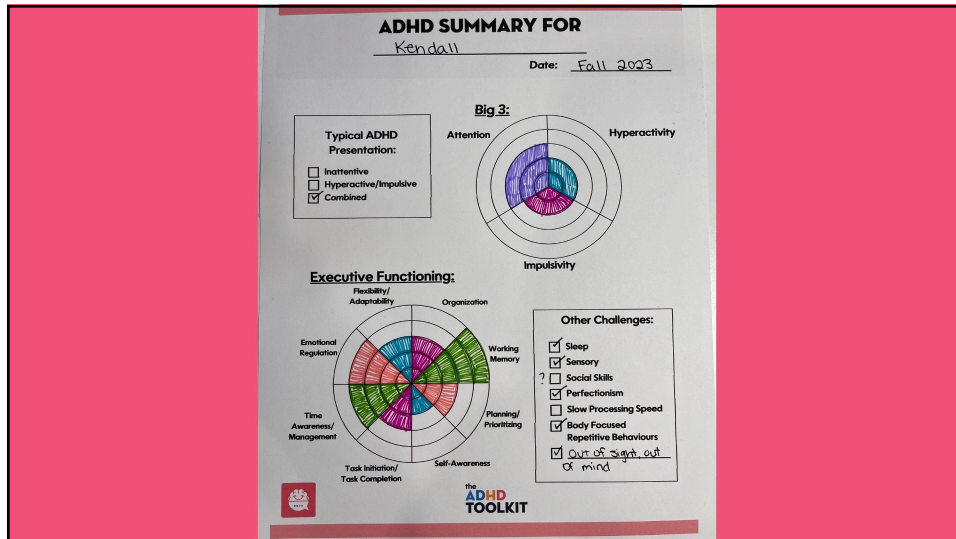
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## GIRLS VS BOYS

**GIRLS**

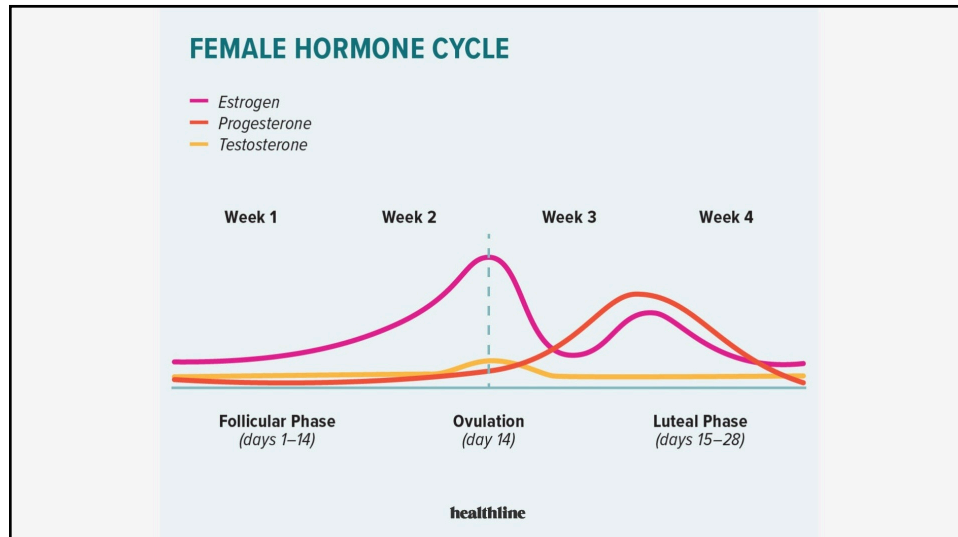
- Internalized presentation
- Internalized hyperactivity (anxiety)
- Higher social support system
- Verbal aggression
- Traits vary with hormonal cycle
- High masking
- Perfectionistic

**BOYS**

- Externalized presentation
- Externalized hyperactivity
- Lower social supports
- Physical aggression
- Consistent traits
- Lower masking

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## ALSO...

High achieving, High IQ	Classic Presentation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internalized presentation</li> <li>• Internalized hyperactivity (anxiety)</li> <li>• Higher social support system</li> <li>• Verbal aggression</li> <li>• High masking</li> <li>• Perfectionistic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Externalized presentation</li> <li>• Externalized hyperactivity</li> <li>• Lower social supports</li> <li>• Physical aggression</li> <li>• Consistent traits</li> <li>• Lower masking</li> </ul>

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**“ BOYS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE DIAGNOSED EARLY (AVERAGE AGE OF 8) BECAUSE THEY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR OTHERS. GIRLS ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE DIAGNOSED LATER (AVERAGE AGE OF 17) BECAUSE THEY ONLY CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR THEMSELVES. ”**

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## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO CATCH THESE GIRLS?

- In general, the externalized and disruptive symptoms in boys tends to improve through puberty. The internalized symptoms in girls tends to get worse through puberty and into adulthood.
- Higher rates of Premenstrual Dysphoric Disorder
- 1 in 4 women with ADHD have attempted suicide.

Hinshaw et al, 2012

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## WHY ARE ADHD TRAITS INCONSISTENT?

- **Dr Barkley - Intention Deficit Disorder**  
This is not a disorder of not knowing what to do - it is a disorder of not being able to do what you know you should do
- **Dr. Dodson - Interest-Based Nervous System**
  - Motivation through interest, passion, fascination, wonder, play
- **Hormones**
  - Dopamine follows estrogen

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## TOOL: TOUCH MORE, TALK LESS

- **Touch, then talk**
- **Use fewer words**  
Remember, this isn't an lack of information!
- **Proximity**  
Don't try to teach, correct, instruct, gain attention from a distance

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## TOOL: BREAK IT DOWN

- Supports deficits in planning and prioritizing in large projects
- For large projects, give due dates to individual parts of an assignment
- This will help overcome ADHD overwhelm/ ADHD paralysis

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## TOOLS: VISUALS

- What next
- Expectations
- Steps
- Tasks



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## TOOLS: SMALL CHUNKS, FREQUENT BREAKS

- "Here is your first problem. Once you've got it, then you will level up and I'll give you the next one."
- Use timers

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## TOOL: CONNECTION

- **4:1 communication**  
4 positives interactions to 1 negative interaction
- **Assure them of their worth and value**  
We aren't broken, and we don't need to be fixed  
You love and care for them exactly as they are  
Separate behaviour from who they are as a person

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## TOOL: CONNECTION

- **Notice to get them to neutral relationship status**  
Teach their nervous system that they aren't always in trouble  
Avoid 'compliment sandwich' if you don't have a positive relationship
- **Believe them**  
It is hard!  
They likely are really trying

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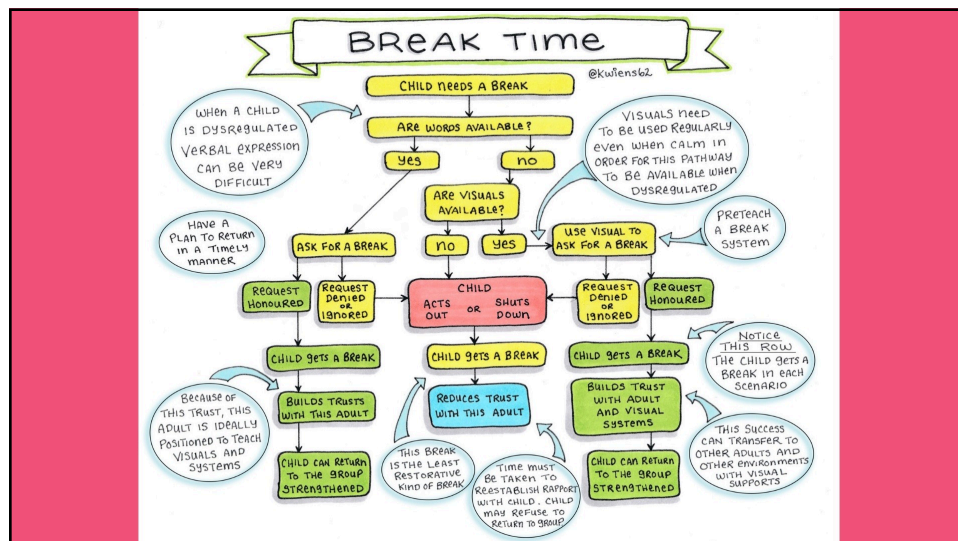
## THINGS THAT DON'T WORK

- Taking away recess**  
 Exercise, sunshine, play create dopamine!
- Expect immediate obedience**  
 Processing time, demand avoidance, task switching/transitions
- Using distant rewards or consequences**  
 You can't punish neurological differences away. Remember, this isn't a desire or willpower issue.

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## FIDGETS - TOOLS OR TOYS?

A tool helps you pay attention. A toy takes your attention

### FIDGET EXPECTATIONS

- Fidget down, eyes up.
- Fidget isn't distracting you or anyone around you.
- Fidget isn't making noise
- Fidget is controlled, don't drop it
- Fidget gets put away properly

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## TASK/ASSIGNMENT REFUSAL

### REFRAME THE BEHAVIOUR

"KIDS DO WELL IF THEY CAN"  
- ROSS GREENE

WONT

→

CANT

YET

- JUDGMENTAL
- WILLFUL DEFIANT
- HE'S LAZY SHE JUST WANTS ATTENTION (Rude!)
- REWARDS & PUNISHMENTS
- FRUSTRATION
- GUILT/SHAME

ADULT'S MINDSET

VIEW OF CHILD

THOUGHTS

RESPONSE

CHILD'S EXPERIENCE

- CURIOUS
- TOO MANY STRESSORS
- SKILLS DEFICITS
- WHAT'S GETTING IN THEIR WAY? HOW CAN I HELP?
- FIND & REMOVE BARRIERS
- SUPPORTED
- STRENGTHENED

"SEE A CHILD DIFFERENTLY, YOU SEE A DIFFERENT CHILD"  
- Dr. Stuart Shanker

When kids exhibit challenging behaviour we can be "STRESS DETECTIVES"... Finding and removing barriers.

- FIND STRESSORS → REDUCE THEM
- FIND UNMET NEEDS → MEET THEM
- FIND SKILLS DEFICITS → TEACH THEM

@kufordoz

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## TASK REFUSAL

- **Why? - Get curious, not furious**

- Demand avoidance? Oppositional defiance disorder?
- Missing skills?
- ADHD overwhelm or paralysis?
- Rejection sensitivity - fear of failure
- All or nothing thinking and/or perfectionism
- Motivation struggle? - We will talk about this at our next session

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**LET'S TALK!**

[theadhdt toolkit.com](http://theadhdt toolkit.com)

[theadhdt toolkit.com/teachers](http://theadhdt toolkit.com/teachers)

Instagram/Facebook/Tiktok/Youtube:  
[@theadhdt toolkit](#)



**SCAN ME**