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# The Beacon

## *Guiding You Through the Process of Change*

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### **May I Have Your Attention, Please?**

Attention Deficit and/or Hyperactivity Disorder (AD/HD) has been commonly known as ADD and ADHD in the past. There have been public concerns about the diagnosis of AD/HD, but the proper tools are available. It is necessary to be comprehensive with identifying symptoms of inattention, lack of focus, short-term memory difficulties, poor organizational skills, impulsivity, distractibility, and hyperactivity. The difficulty is that everyone experiences these problems at some points in their lives and it is hard to identify to what degree it is affecting one's functioning.

The first step is a clinical interview where all mental and behavioral health areas can be assessed. A detailed analysis of the client's functioning within the academic, occupational, social, and family areas is examined. With children, inventories can be completed by parents, teachers, and children to help identify clinically significant concerns. Adults need to be able to provide a detailed history of their history and current functioning.

Psychologists now have the benefit of objective continuous performance tests. At Beacon Behavioral Services, we utilize the IVA+Plus due to its established benefits over other tests (Kane & Whiston, 2001). The IVA+Plus assess the individual's impulsivity, inattention, and fine motor hyperactivity. The individual is also observed for hyperactivity while taking the test. This testing identifies whether they are any differences across auditory or visual processing. Further analysis examines whether there is dominance across either modality, as well as whether the individual does better when the stimuli

is presented faster (i.e., needing enough activity to pay attention) or slower (i.e., not being able to keep up if faster). In addition to providing this objective data, there are validity scales and secondary scales that help to determine if other factors are contributing to the individual's performance. For those without AD/HD, the testing process might be over here. However, the test results can play a major role in identifying the type of treatment needed.

There can be a fear of whether medication is necessary or does it really help. When the assessment process identifies AD/HD, it is recommended that the individual consult with their physician or psychiatrist to obtain a sample of a stimulant medication. The individual is able to take a short-acting stimulant medication prior to being retested at the same time of day to create a similar testing environment to the first administration. The follow-up results illustrate the possible medication effectiveness.

While the testing process might be complete at this point, it is highly recommended that individuals diagnosed with AD/HD engage in psychotherapy. Behavioral therapy can be effective for the individual, as well as for parents when the identified individual is a client. A properly treated individual diagnosed with AD/HD is more capable of making necessary changes.

#### Reference:

Kane, H. & Whiston, S.C. (2001). Review of the IVA Continuous Performance Test. *Buros Fourteenth Mental Measurements Yearbook*, 592-595

*By Ryan Hartmann, Ph.D.*

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*Guiding You Through the Process of Change*

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