

## “Martin”

Martin started having difficulties during the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, which became real problems during the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. His grades dropped, and he was either missing assignments, or his work was incomplete. Here is what his parents and teachers noticed:

- Martin was excellent at math, but hated and resisted, showing his math work, i.e., how he solved a problem. Martin also made careless mistakes like correctly following the steps to solve a problem, but then misplacing a decimal point when writing down his answer. He might also not notice a problem printed on the worksheet, i.e., he skipped over information.
- Martin’s backpack, and study space at home, were disaster areas. When I asked Martin to show me how he kept track of handouts and notes I found he had no plan; he simply shoved them in one binder. Martin also never threw anything away.
- Martin didn’t seem to read or completely understand directions. So, he’d begin work, and his teacher, would point out that he was writing on an interesting topic, but it wasn’t following the rubrics of the assignment. Martin also didn’t notice problems in his written work, e.g., misspelled or omitted words, incomplete thoughts, and non-sequenced ideas. Martin told me he had great ideas but it was so frustrating to try and get them down on paper.
- Martin might be really enthusiastic and focused on a hands-on biology project, but at other times (even in biology) he was distracted, and might seem really sleepy (lots of yawning).
- Martin lost track of time, and in fact had a lousy sense of time. He was ‘mesmerized’ by technology, e.g., He’d start out to work on an assignment using his laptop, but find 2 hours later that he’d spent the time on Facebook, doing videogames, emailing friends, etc. This was frustrating for him, because he didn’t intend to get distracted.

Rating scales, completed by parents and teachers, pointed squarely at problems related to AD/HD. There was both a family history of AD/HD, and Martin was born prematurely. Here’s what I noticed when working with Martin:

- Needing to have directions re-explained, and periodically reminding Martin about the directions as he worked.
- Inconsistent responses, i.e., a pattern of periodically missing easier items, but correctly answering more difficult ones.
- Problems holding auditory details in memory including losing bit/pieces of information, and misremembering details in ways that changed meaning.
- Problems developing effective strategies for tackling work before starting to work.

- While very intelligent his written essay didn't address the topic, and was full of editing problems including poor punctuation.
- Martin became distracted by his own ideas/thoughts while we worked, and while he was entertaining his mind wandered from the task at hand.
- Martin would become visibly fatigued, particularly when focusing on something that he didn't find very exciting, but he could be alert and engaged when he found a task interesting.
- Martin needed to move while working so sometimes he stood, sometimes he stretched out on the floor, and sometimes he picked up some object in my office and played with it while thinking.

Martin challenges are consistent with a bright student, whose family and birth history, increase the probability that he will have problems related to AD/HD. Also consistent are increasing problems with planning/organization as Martin navigated middle school, and entered high school. There simply was more to keep track of, multiple subject teachers, more complex reading and writing assignments, and an increased need for time management. Furthermore, some of the work just wasn't interesting!

Also to be kept in mind is: What are typical executive functioning problems found in adolescents, but particularly adolescent boys? It was the degree and persistence of learning problems; family history; and the test data that argued for AD/HD.

I met with Martin and explained his solid intellect, and talked with him about how his difficulties totally frustrated him at times, resulted in teachers and parents getting on his case, and what research tells us about AD/HD. I suggested strategies to be used by teachers, parents, and most importantly by Martin. Example: How to transfer assignments from the school's website onto his Outlook Calendar, and back that up by using a white board in his room.

Recommendations and accommodations included using software (taking all notes using a laptop); setting up a schedule for Martin to meet regularly with his teachers to track assignments; editing his written work by reading it aloud, or having a parent read it aloud to him; and working with a planning/organization coach twice weekly.

Parents were also given information, and a referral, to a behavioral pediatrician to discuss using a medication to improve focus and attention.

**Please note: This fictional case study is based on characteristics typical of many students I've assessed. This case study is NOT based on a particular child. [Neuropsychological Assessment](#)**