



Teens + ADHD

PATIENT EDUCATION

Ask for help

Manage
time

Become
self-aware

Use
creative
energy

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS
PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Attention

Deficit

Hyperactivity

Disorder

Am I the only one who has ADHD?

Absolutely not! In fact, 3 million teens in the United States between the ages of 12 and 17 years have been diagnosed with ADHD.

Why should I read this?

Read this to help you learn how to cope with ADHD so you can be successful in life. If you don't understand ADHD or something you read, see your provider.

Who will help me manage ADHD?

You may see doctors, nurses, social workers, therapists and other health care providers when you come to Mayo Clinic. In this booklet, they are all called "providers."





What teens say about ADHD

About school:

I feel like I can't pay attention and I get off track.

I get behind and can't get caught up.

I can't seem to pay attention to what my teachers say. I daydream. I lose my homework.

About how they act, speak and feel:

I just blurt things out before I can stop myself. Then I get in trouble for it. My brain is just all over the place and I can't control it. It feels like I am channel surfing in my head.

About friends and other people

Friends are always telling me to sit still or be quiet.

I don't mean to bug my friends, but they keep telling me to chill out.

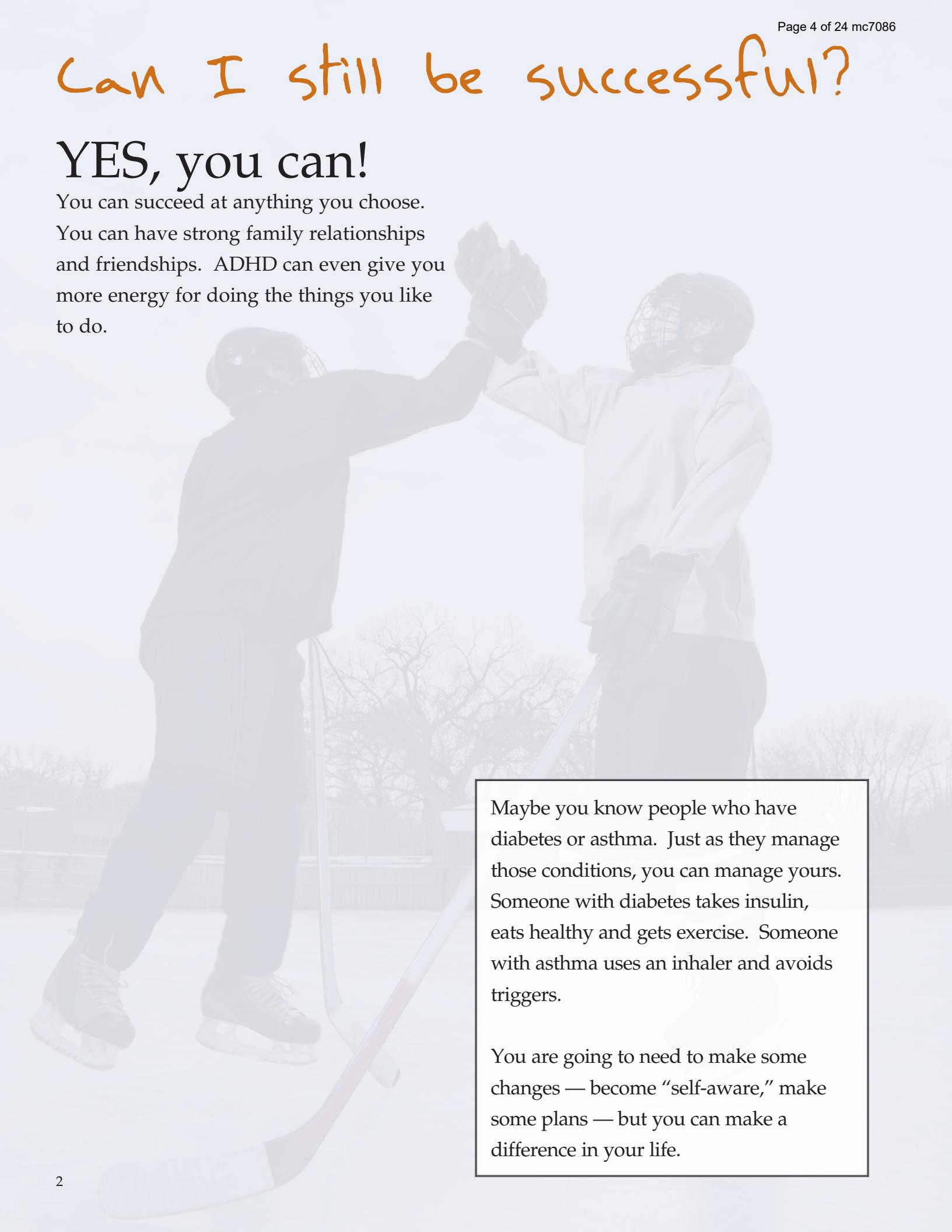
I'm having a hard time keeping friends around for long. They get mad about things I blurt out. They say, 'Why are you saying things like that?'

No one understands me. They seem to be annoyed by me.

Can I still be successful?

YES, you can!

You can succeed at anything you choose. You can have strong family relationships and friendships. ADHD can even give you more energy for doing the things you like to do.



Maybe you know people who have diabetes or asthma. Just as they manage those conditions, you can manage yours. Someone with diabetes takes insulin, eats healthy and gets exercise. Someone with asthma uses an inhaler and avoids triggers.

You are going to need to make some changes — become “self-aware,” make some plans — but you can make a difference in your life.

What's going on in my head?

ADHD is not your fault. It is a medical condition.

An area in the front part of your brain allows you to pay attention, stop and think, and sit still. Chemicals called neurotransmitters send signals and move information around. When these chemicals are not in balance, you can have a lower activity level in this part of your brain. This can make you have symptoms of ADHD.

You might have ADHD if you:

- Find it hard to focus on one thing for any length of time or you focus too much on only one thing that interests you.
- Are easily distracted.
- Find it hard to finish things like school assignments or chores.
- Do impulsive things without thinking about consequences.
- Feel fidgety and have lots of energy.

These symptoms can affect how you relate to other people and make it hard for you to keep friends. If you have these symptoms, talk to a provider about ADHD.



what about

Your provider might suggest taking medicine.

Medicine can help:

- Increase your ability to focus.
- Improve your performance in school and activities.
- You get along with other people by improving your impulse control.

Keep in mind:

You have a choice about medicines you take. You are in control. You are not doing something your parents or provider decided for you. You take medicine because YOU have decided that is what's best for you.

medicine?

How does the medicine work?

ADHD medicines work to bring the neurotransmitters back into balance. The medicine can stimulate or increase the chemical activity level in the front part of your brain and bring you back into balance. The result is that the medicine can help you feel calmer and concentrate better.

You might think taking medicine makes you different from other teens. Not true! Many teens take medicine and you just don't know it.



How do I remember to take my medicine?



You might forget to take your medicines because being forgetful is part of ADHD.

Tips from teens:

- Set an alarm on your cell phone or other electronic device or enter it as a “task” in a calendar program.
- Use “visual reminders” — things you see every day that can serve as brain ticklers to do something. One example is to tie a red ribbon on your backpack. Another good visual reminder is a sticky note that you put on a mirror or on your door.
- Use a pill box to keep your medicine in.
- Take the medicine at the same time every day or at the same time as another activity. For example, take the medicine with breakfast or right before you brush your teeth in the morning.

Find a system that works for you. Setting up a routine makes taking medicine easier.

About side effects



Medicine used for ADHD can help, but you might have some side effects such as:

- Not feeling hungry and losing weight.
- Headaches.
- Faster heart rate.
- Feeling kind of jumpy, irritable or emotional.
- Not sleeping well.
- Stomachaches.

Don't stop taking the medicine because of the side effects! Medicine should not change your personality or make you feel like a zombie. Side effects can be dealt with. If side effects are bothering you, tell your provider. He or she might change how much you take or switch you to a new medicine. Once the medicine is adjusted to the right dose, you can feel like yourself again.

Remember:

- Medicines are prescribed specifically for you. Never share your medicine with anyone.
- Follow your provider's directions for taking the medicine and for handling side effects.

How do I deal with ADHD?

Read PRACTICAL TIPS from teens to help you:

- Learn time management skills and how to avoid procrastination.
- Practice “stop-and-think” behavior.
- Learn and practice organizational skills and impulse control.
- Learn to use technology tools.

Dealing with ADHD:

Time management

Do the following to manage your time and avoid waiting too long:

- Make a list and put in order from first to last what you need to get done.
- Don't list tasks you never plan to do. Be honest with yourself.
- Guess how long you think each task will take. Add some more time in case it takes longer. Begin working on the list.
- Check off each task as you finish it.

Dealing with ADHD:

School

- Break down projects into reasonably sized parts. For example, if you have a big research paper due in three weeks, divide the project into smaller tasks. Do the research the first week, write an outline the second week and write the paper the third week.
- Use a planner or calendar for all activities (sports, family, homework and work). Check it every day.
- Create a file system to organize your school work. Use a different color for each subject. Use the same system at home and in your locker.
- Take breaks from mental tasks and do something physical.
- Use visuals reminders like notes and a calendar to stay on top of deadlines.

An agreement for special accommodations can be made between you and your school. This agreement is called an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or Section 504 Plan. Ask your provider if you would like more information.



Special accommodations for you might include:

- Allowing more time for you to take tests.
- Allowing you to take tests in a quiet room with few distractions.
- Receiving a reduced total number of assignments.
- Having an extended homework timeline.

It is OK to ask for accommodations. They can help you succeed. Just as a left-handed teen needs a certain type of scissors, you might need certain adjustments too.

If you are still are not as successful as you would like, ask for help.

Dealing with ADHD:

Sleep



- Limit your caffeine intake.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Try to go to bed and get up at the same time every day. Try for 9 to 10 hours of sleep.
- Leave your electronic devices, such as your cell phone, out of your room or turn them off. This way, text messages can't wake you up!

Dealing with ADHD:

Friends

- Consider sharing information about ADHD with your friends. This may help them better understand you.
- When you are with others in a social situation, watch them for clues about how they are feeling before you speak or act.
- Stop and think through the consequences of your words and actions before you speak and act.
- Make an effort to stay in touch with your friends.
- Limit playing video games as they can over-stimulate your brain and make it harder for you to join friends in other activities.
- Find time for social activities and doing things you like to do.



Dealing with ADHD:

Alcohol & drugs

Drug use is common among teens with ADHD. Sometimes teens use drugs to try to feel better.

Don't let that be you.

Using street drugs and alcohol makes your ADHD symptoms worse, increases reckless behavior and causes other serious issues such as mood swings, anxiety, paranoia and other health problems.

Alcohol and street drugs can have **harmful or even deadly interactions** with your medicines.

If you have a problem with drugs or alcohol, ask for help right away. Talk to a trusted adult such as your parent, school counselor or provider.

Dealing with ADHD:

Taking risks

Some teens with ADHD become big risk takers and they do not make the best decisions. Taking risks can get you or others hurt.

- Check with someone you respect to see if what you are thinking about doing is a good idea.
- Think about your potential actions step by step all the way through to the end.
- Practice “stop-and-think” behavior. To do this, picture a stop sign in your head, then stop and think before you act.



Dealing with ADHD:

Driving



Teens with ADHD who do not stay on their medicines are three times more likely to get traffic tickets or be in a car accident than those who do.

When you drive:

- Limit distractions.
- Do not talk or text on your cell phone. In fact, put your cell phone out of reach.
- Do not have more than one or two people in the car with you.

Focus on driving. It helps keep you and everyone on the road safe.

Dealing with ADHD:

Talking to parents & teachers

- Try to talk openly and honestly with your parents and teachers. Avoid sounding defensive or responding with anger.
- Take time to listen and to think about how you respond. Don't interrupt.
- Use language that reflects your feelings such as, "I feel frustrated when I don't understand something."
- Give feedback by saying "I think" statements such as, "I think I could do better on tests if I had more time."
- Do not use language pointed at another person. Avoid "you are" statements such as, "You are not helping me."





Need more help?

If you need help dealing with ADHD, talk with your provider. Your provider may suggest individual or group therapy. Group therapy is a chance to talk with other teens who have ADHD. Therapy can help you work through some of the concerns that you might have.

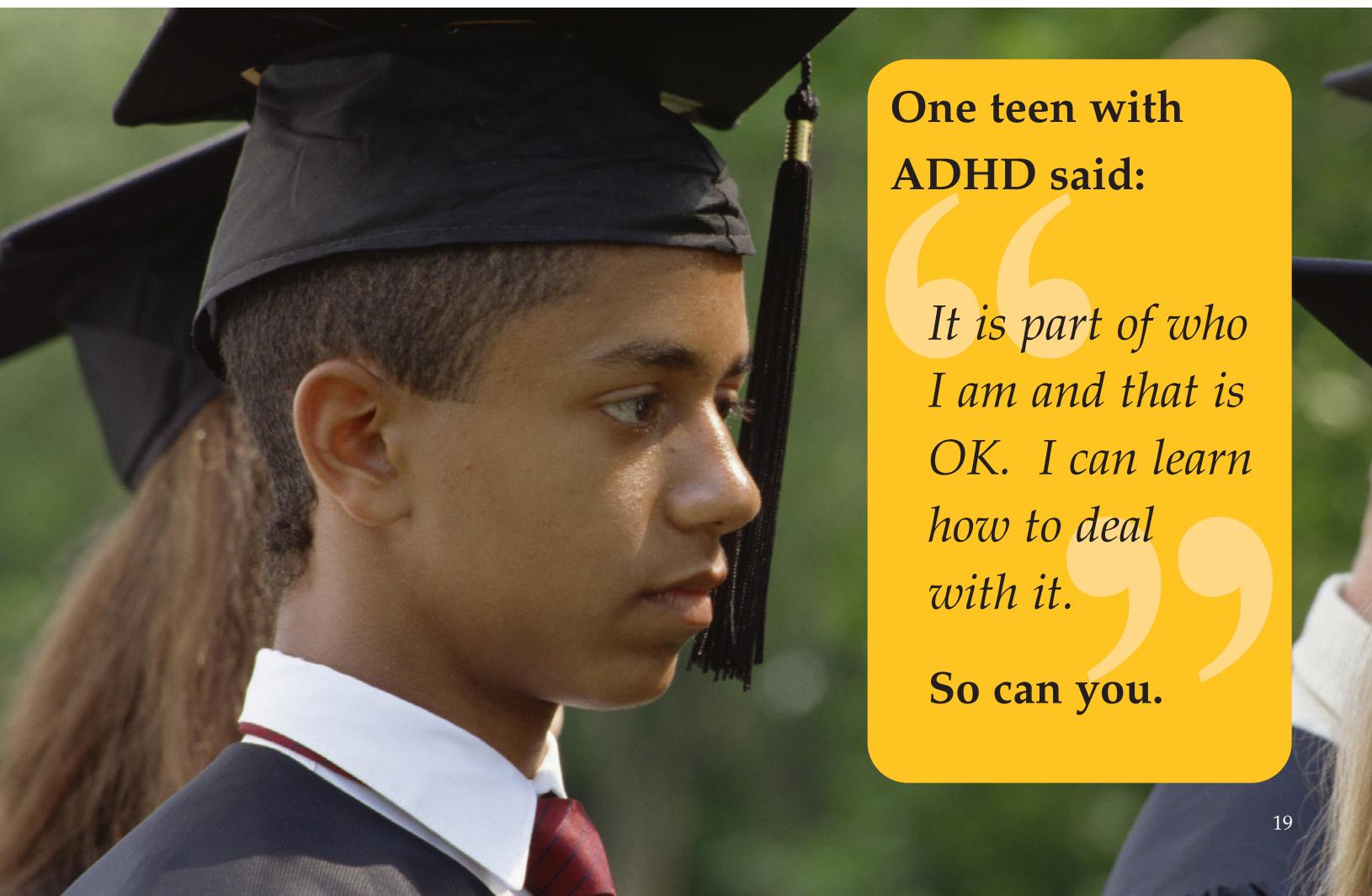
You have the power to make the most of your life. Think about your talents and what is important to you.

Taking your medicine and using organizational strategies can help you find success in your life. Many people — movie stars, world leaders, athletes, doctors, lawyers, scientists — have ADHD and are successful. They use their creative energy to build a good life. You can too.

These organization have websites with more information about ADHD:

CHADD

Pacer



One teen with
ADHD said:

“It is part of who I am and that is OK. I can learn how to deal with it.”

So can you.

Notes

Your health care provider doesn't write, sponsor or endorse websites listed in this brochure. They are listed to help you find general information only. Don't use the information to diagnose or treat yourself. Anything you're not sure about, talk over with your health care provider.

**web
sites**

BARBARA WOODWARD LIPS PATIENT EDUCATION CENTER

Mrs. Lips, a resident of San Antonio, Texas, was a loyal patient of Mayo Clinic for more than 40 years. She was a self-made business leader who significantly expanded her family's activities in oil, gas and ranching, even as she assembled a museum-quality collection of antiques and fine art. She was best known by Mayo staff for her patient advocacy and support.

Upon her death in 1995, Mrs. Lips paid the ultimate compliment by leaving her entire estate to Mayo Clinic. Mrs. Lips had a profound appreciation for the care she received at Mayo Clinic. By naming the Barbara Woodward Lips Patient Education Center, Mayo honors her generosity, her love of learning, her belief in patient empowerment and her dedication to high-quality care.

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