

# Is ADHD Your Ticket to Greatness?

One of the sad tragedies of the ADHD epidemic is the belief that people with ADHD are somehow “less than” and that there is something inherently “wrong” with them. Of course the subtle message hidden within that belief system is the misconception that people with ADHD are “less capable” and therefore have neither the aptitude or fortitude to succeed.

Tell that to Michael Phelps.

Or Michael Jordan.

Or Richard Branson.

Or Walt Disney.

**These icons, heroes of our time, all share one thing in common – ADHD!**

The truth is people with ADHD get bored easily, but when something interests them (whether it's basketball, swimming or business) they have a tremendous ability to hyper-focus. In fact there is a growing body of research suggesting that ADHD is not a recently discovered “disease” or “disorder” but rather a genetic disposition or adaptation (a “difference”) that has served humanity for thousands of years. Unfortunately the traits that served us well as hunter-gatherers, including the ability to hyper-focus and avoid being slaughtered by a giant hyena, are not as effective in a classroom setting where students are expected to *sit still*, be good, and listen to long lectures on topics that may or may not interest them. It's no wonder a small percentage of children are “fidgety,” not focused... or simply bored.

In his seminal book *Attention Deficit Disorder: A Different Perception*, author Thom Hartmann outlines how the survival skills of our ancestral “hunters” are virtually identical to the current day clinical symptoms of ADHD. For a hunter to survive he must be easily *distractible*, but highly *intuitive*, constantly scanning his environment for opportunities or predators. He must be able to *multi-task*, taking in the sites and sounds of his surroundings and making quick life or death (*impulsive*) decisions. He would be a *risk-taker*, as the life of a hunter is always full of risk. He would thrive on the *adrenaline* of living ‘wild’ in the forest or jungle while hunting for prey. Whereas chores such as cleaning or tending to crops would feel *boring* or *tedious*, and lead to *procrastination*. The hunter lived for *excitement*, not because he consciously chose it, but rather he was hardwired (genetically coded) for it. Hartmann explains, “the most successful hunters of the past would be classified as ADHD by modern psychologists.”

Now whether you believe Hartmann's theory or not, the truth remains, there is a subset of our population that tend to share the classic ADHD “symptoms,” which for better or worse, have given them the *gift* of unbelievable success in their fields. Let's take a look at just a few ...

## **Michael Phelps (athlete)**

The most decorated Olympian of all time, with 28 medals, Phelps was told by a teacher he would never amount to anything and would never be successful. Phelps said as a child he couldn't sit still and was “constantly bouncing off the walls.” Fortunately Michael found the right coach to help him channel his energy into something positive – swimming – and the rest is history.

## **Walt Disney (entrepreneur)**

The founder of Disneyland, Walt was one of the greatest visionaries and entrepreneurs of his time. Fifty years after his death, “Disney” is still one of the most recognized (and successful) companies in the world – with theme parks, blockbuster movies, and endless products and toys.

**Will Smith (actor/singer/comedian)**

One of the most successful actors of all time, Smith said he was the “fun one who had trouble paying attention” while growing up.

**Michael Jordan (athlete/entrepreneur)**

Whereas Michael Phelps is the most decorated Olympian, Michael Jordan is probably the most “famous” athlete on the planet ever! His style of play and personality were an inspiration to children around the world. He then translated his on-court success to the business world, becoming a hugely successful entrepreneur.

**Albert Einstein (theoretical physicist)**

When we hear the term ‘genius’ who do we immediately think of? Albert Einstein! Yet despite Albert’s independent thirst for knowledge, and his incredible accomplishments, he actually languished early on at school and was eventually kicked out. One teacher told him “he’d never amount to anything.” Einstein was a classic case of ADHD as he was forgetful, daydreamed in school, and hated the strict protocols of rote learning. None of this however prevented him from becoming the most brilliant scientist the world has ever known.

**Richard Branson (entrepreneur/author/adventurer)**

Sir Richard Branson’s life goes far beyond business. Not only did he start Virgin Records, Virgin Atlantic Airlines, and a space exploration company, Branson is also an avid adventurer (attempting several world records) and a prolific author (with eight top selling books). Thanks to his ADHD, Branson has the energy, creativity and innovation to truly change the world.

The list doesn’t end there. Other famous people with ADHD include: Jim Carrey, Justin Timberlake, Ted Turner (founder of CNN), Paris Hilton, Adam Levine, Jamie Oliver, Britney Spears, Ryan Gosling, and others. Due to their genius, Picasso, Mozart, Beethoven and Leonardo da Vinci are also thought to have been ADHD.

The important take away in all this, really comes down to the meaning we give things and how we choose to respond. The legends and superstars listed above all faced a similar challenge when they were young, and many of them still face today. That challenge is ADHD. However, the difference is they all chose to put a positive spin on it and to see their “ADHD” as an advantage, rather than a disorder or a deficit.

**The question is, “What are *you* going to do with *your* ADHD?”**

Are you going to let it define you and cripple you, and hold you back from becoming the greatest version of yourself? Or maybe... just maybe... you recognize the inherent gifts and strengths you’ve been given as someone “with ADHD” (as well as the challenges!) but use your strengths to hyper-focus your energy, develop your skills, and then go out and make a splash in the world.

Nobody says it will be easy.

Like the legends before you, you will undoubtedly need some support and guidance along the way. You will have good days and bad days. You may even have some *really horrible* days. You may have people question you or criticise you. At times, you may feel alone. But through it all, no matter what happens, remember this: you always have a choice! Nobody can take that away from you.

**It’s your life. It’s your ADHD.**

**BE LEGENDARY!**

