

Focusing on Success

Like many kids, these pros have ADHD. Here's how they succeeded.

By Marty Kaminsky
Art by Chris Arran

Many students have trouble sitting quietly. They fiddle with pencils, talk out of turn, and jump to do things before thinking. Others can sit still but find it hard to focus on classwork. They may daydream, struggle to organize their work, and forget to do assignments.

Most people feel restless or distracted from time to time, but some feel this way almost all the time. Nearly 2.5 million elementary-school children in the United States have ADHD (Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder). That's about one out of ten kids.

But ADHD does not have to be a roadblock to achievement. Here, some pros in their fields share the secrets of their success.



Astronaut **SCOTT KELLY** has flown on four space missions, including one that lasted close to a year. But when he was growing up, he had trouble focusing in school. As a result, he earned low grades.

"I read a novel in college about the space program. The book motivated me to study harder and become a much better student and, eventually, an astronaut. The lesson I learned was, Don't ever give up on yourself. Find something or someone that motivates you and use that to help motivate yourself."

"A lot of very successful people have ADHD, so wear it with pride."

—Katherine Ellison, author



As a defensive tackle for the New England Patriots, **LAWRENCE GUY** is successful today. But he struggled with ADHD and other learning disabilities throughout his school days. Still, he never gave up.

"In school, I lost focus a lot. I was always playing with things in my hands. My sophomore year in high school was my turning point. I wanted to succeed so badly on the football field. I realized that if I could apply myself, focus, and pay attention there, I could learn all the plays. I took that self-control back into the classroom. I learned that I needed a place to release my extra energy, but I did have the ability to focus."

Living with ADHD

ADHD is treatable. Some things that help include skill therapy, support at school, and sometimes, medication. If you think you might have ADHD, talk to a parent, guardian, doctor, school counselor, school nurse, teacher, or another adult you trust. Professionals can help kids with ADHD, and the adults in kids' lives can help set them up for success.



Author **KATHERINE ELLISON** was a newspaper reporter, often taking dangerous assignments in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Her work earned her a Pulitzer Prize. She did not know she had ADHD until her son filled out a questionnaire to find out if he had it. Reading the form over his shoulder, she realized that he did have ADHD, and so did she. Today, she accepts ADHD as part of her toughest challenges and her greatest successes.

"A lot of very successful people have ADHD, so wear it with pride. Know that you are going to make a lot of mistakes. Learn to forgive yourself without making excuses and try to learn a lesson from each one. I use exercise as one way to cope. I've learned that I need structure in my life."

Figure skaters **ZACHARY DONOHUE** and Madison Hubbell won a silver medal for ice dancing at the 2018 International Skating Union World Figure Skating Competition and placed fourth at the 2018 Winter Olympics in South Korea. In elementary school, Zachary had a hard time making friends because his classmates thought he was wild, scattered, and overly excitable.

"When I was 16, I realized that it was OK for me to be different than others. Now, at 27, I'm learning to understand my own emotions. I still struggle with ADHD, but I've learned that I'm responsible for more than just myself. I've learned how important it is to be organized and to be a step ahead—it helps slow me down, which is important for someone with ADHD."