Twitter Thread by Gadi Schwartz

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ADHD, a thread (1)

If you have #ADHD & are struggling please know you're not alone. This week on @Overview, we're talking about living w/ ADHD & Anxiety during the pandemic & many the stigmas & misconceptions that making things worse.

I was diagnosed w/ ADHD when I was 7. And in so many ways it's been a blessing. I love my energy, the hyper-focus, the calm I feel in chaos, the ability to & feel emotions so intensely. It's allowed me to to see the world differently be in a constant state of wonder.(2)

But realizing all that has been a long, difficult journey so figured I'd share some of my own struggles as well as the resources from @HowtoADHD because Jessica's channel has been a game-changer for me.(3)
https://t.co/RO1ZGTlMq6

First off, #ADHD Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder is a dumb description. It implies a deficit in attention & always hyper people. ADHD is a spectrum, & what we all have in common isn't that we can't pay attention. It's that we have trouble controlling our attention.(4)

There are amazing analogies out there, like trying to watch 6 TV's at once when someone else controls the remote. Or like driving a race car on city streets and spinning out whenever you try to turn.

My favorite is from my little brother who says, it's like being in a forest full of distractions where you keep losing the trail… & when you finally find it, you'll lock on so hard, you'll follow it off a cliff. (5)

It gets confusing because it looks like a contradiction. Someone bouncing off the walls distracted & fidgeting. Then, they'll focus so hard for hours at a time, they forget about food, sleep or their loved ones? I THOUGHT THEY COULDN'T PAY ATTENTION? (6)
https://t.co/TXL9aOebDj

Turns out, both extreme states are the results of our problem with neurotransmitters like DOPAMINE & norepinephrine. If dopamine sounds familiar, it's because it's overhyped as the "pleasure chemical." In reality, it also helps us learn through reward & motivation. (7)

Bottom line… because #ADHD brains have chronically low levels of dopamine… we have to overload ourselves just to feel it's effects…(8) Here is a really good Valentines Day description from @HowtoADHD https://t.co/RDYueAi4BQ

Now, way back in our nomadic days, that kind of high-twitch brain wiring, might have been a benefit for an entire tribe, leading others in hunts or defending against invaders. But in the modern world, ADHD & it's impulsivity create a constant struggle.(9)https://t.co/6mMV3fdjjg

Just a small list of negatives... We're more likely to lose things, make rash decisions, speed more, die in car crashes, get divorced, get fired, have trouble w/ finances, organization, & we're more susceptible to substance abuse, depression & suicide.(10) https://t.co/ZF8Iq8JoDU

A lot of those problems stem from our dopamine starved brains seeking stuff out that will allow us to feel, think & learn closer to the way others take for granted. Dopamine isn't just some pleasure thing. It's allows you to regulate emotional responses. (11)

Then there is the ADHD superpower HYPER-FOCUS.
Like, right now, I'm furiously locked into this thread, & breaking away is super disconcerting & almost painful. When honed & controlled it can supercharge your productivity. But when unchecked it can feel like this.(12)

There are a lot of really effective ways to thrive with ADHD. Cognitive therapy, exercise, post it notes everywhere! New experiences, crazy deadlines, the right profession, gamification, Jessica's million tips on @HowtoADHD . Check out her TedTalk! (13) https://t.co/RqGMO8k484

But really, you can't have a conversation about #ADHD without at least talking about medication.
Quick warning, my choices and perspective don't reflect a "right" or "wrong" way to do things. I believe everyone should do what works for best for them. (14)

Some of my earliest #ADHD memories came from elementary school & these mortifying moments when class would be interrupted by a message over the intercom loudly broadcasting "Gadi please come to the nurses office… You forgot to take your medication." (15)

I'm still not sure if it was an attempt to shame me into remembering to take them, or just the way they did things back then…But all of it would be made worse during recess when kids would laugh & call me weird & take turns asking me if I remembered to take my medicine.(16)

I wish, I could have understood that I wasn't alone. That up to 16+ million Americans have #ADHD. That it's ok to have a different operating system & it didn't mean I was dumb. I'm pretty sure my mom tried to explain it. But all I remember is being embarrassed & frustrated. (17)

And when the medication worked & allowed me to have control over what I choose what to focus on, I was even more angry that I needed it & wasn't like everyone else. (18)

Growing up, I also started to realize there were times I didn't need it. I'd do fine if under intense deadlines, caught in a crisis or doing something I loved… which often made me question whether all of my struggles came from just not trying hard enough. (19)

We hear those words all our lives... JUST TRY HARDER! WHY CAN"T YOU DO THAT? IT SHOULDN'T BE THAT HARD. TRY HARDER. (20)

Imagine hearing those words again & again while trying as hard as you can, then going home & obsessing over how dumb u feel to the point that u forget everything else only to be jolted back into reality by someone asking you why you left the keys in the door. (21)

What people that don't have #ADHD need to know is that THIS ISN'T ABOUT WILL POWER. There is a genetic difference in the way we create dopamine. (22)
https://t.co/PInu3lt8mi

Long story short, I've taken different medications on & off throughout my life. Each had it's pros & cons & finding the right dosage & treatment takes time and a doctor who cares. And when I have, I've been able to control my mind & focus in a straight, linear way.(23)

However, over the last decade, I've also found myself in a profession that regularly activates my hyper-focus with intense deadline pressures, chaos & crisis & the ability to constantly explore new environments. For now, I've been able to navigate life without it. (24)

That's not to say "don't take medication…" or "eventually you won't need it." That's not how it works. It's a deeply personal & constantly evolving choice & people should do what works best for them. (25)

But in talking with Jessica for the Overview, I realized how a lot of my anger has closed me off to acknowledging some of the many tools that have allowed me to succeed. And a lot of that baggage plays into the stigma she's working to undo. (26)
https://t.co/1jJe4K02F9

So here is a list of things that have helped me live with ADHD. Mindfulness, cognitive therapy, medication, exercise, constantly keeping lists and setting visual cues. Choosing a profession that plays to your strengths!(27)

Career choices are HUGE! For a long time I had the worst imposter syndrome in journalism that came with this ridiculous fear that my diagnosis would be found out & everything I did would be judged as, yeah but he has ADHD. (28)

Then I saw a couple of the most productive & talented journos I know talk openly #ADHD. I still remember seeing @yashar's thread & it brought me to tears. Still does. Please take a moment to read it. Thank you Yashar, it meant more than I can say. ■ (29)
https://t.co/7L6NJjSbA9

1. I want to talk about ADHD. I was diagnosed with ADD when I was 13-years-old. To say it's misunderstood (both by people who have ADHD and people who don't have it) is an understatement. What people need to understand about

those of us who have ADHD is we are not homogeneous

— Yashar Ali \U0001f418 (@yashar) February 26, 2019

Turns out, Journalism can be amazing for #ADHD. The intense deadline pressures help trigger my hyper-focus & for those who struggle with repetitive routines, reporting can bring something different & unexpected everyday. (30)
https://t.co/cIoGjpJBFz

In fact, there is a long list of jobs that can be perfect for #ADHD: Teaching, emergency care, writing, music, being a stylist, computer coder, graphic designer, a photographer, mechanic, entrepreneur… feel free to help! What other jobs have been a perfect fit? (31)

Finally, this is just one part of our look at mental health for @Overview. One of my best friends @WatchSavannah also takes a look at anxiety & the pandemic & I'm so incredibly grateful for the amazing insights & resources she's shared. Pls watch.
https://t.co/1jJe4K02F9