Twitter Thread by lazy perfectionist



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is ADHD a mental illness ?

a thread

ADHD is a neurodevelopmental disorder - people with it are born with it and it cannot be altered because it's part of their brain structure and is seen on brain scans. ADHD is also linked to premature births and hypothyroidism during pregnancy, among other things

from the WHO website: "neurodevelopmental disorders are disabilities in the functioning of the brain that can affect behaviour, memory and/or ability to learn."

neurodevelopmental disorders are not caused by external/environmental factors. you cannot *develop* these conditions

mental illness is a general term for a health problem that significantly affects how someone feels/thinks/behaves. mental illnesses cause suffering to those who experience them, as well as often their loved ones. ADHD does not directly cause suffering.

neurodevelopmental disorders are not mental illnesses. ADHD however, does make it more likely for a person to experience mental illness. ADHD can cause dysfunction and stress, but more often than not this comes from lack of accommodation rather than the symptoms themselves.

my ADHD does not cause me distress by itself, misunderstanding and ignorance in the general population is what causes the distress.

my depression does cause distress by itself. there is often no trigger or cause but i can find myself bed bound for days because of my symptoms.

it's very common to be mentally ill *and* have ADHD, and ADHD can be a challenge, but having ADHD alone does not make one mentally unwell.

growing up with ADHD can be traumatising, which again increases the likelihood of mental illness but it is not always the case.

basically, ADHD comes with a bunch of symptoms that can be difficult to manage and can make us vulnerable to low self esteem and increase our chances of becoming unwell - some people take medication to manage their symptoms which in turn helps to prevent us becoming mentally ill

the argument that taking medication means you're unwell is reductive and harmful - people take medication for all kinds of reasons (often to *prevent* them becoming unwell) and it is no one's place to ask about motivations behind taking medication and what medication they're on.

my executive functioning is really bad today so i'm gonna try and wrap this up

ADHD is hard. we often have to work twice as hard for half the work, but it is not a mental illness. not having the right accommodations and management can very quickly cause us to become mentally ill

i hope this makes sense. simply put, to have ADHD is to have a different brain structure. we are only disabled or ill in the sense that our society does not make room for us & we have to adapt accordingly or mask our symptoms & risk burning ourselves out or making ourselves ill

i know this might not be that coherent and if anyone has anything they'd like to add to help it make sense it would be really appreciated :)

forgot to add also that mental illnesses are caused by genetics as well as environmental factors - for example, no one is born depressed. you can be genetically vulnerable to depression but something in your environment must trigger it to develop. this is not the case for ADHD.