

## Hunters and Farmers: The Origins of ADHD

Written by Thom Hartmann

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If ADHD is a genetic disease or an abnormality, it's a popular one, possibly afflicting as many as 25 million individuals in the United States. Some estimates put ADHD as occurring in 20 percent of males and 5 percent of females. With such a wide distribution among our population, is it reasonable to assume that ADHD is simply a quirk? That it's some sort of an aberration caused by defective genes or child abuse?

When a condition is so widely distributed, inevitable questions arise: Why? Where did ADHD come from? A look at our evolutionary history can give us some answers. People with ADHD are the leftover hunters, those whose ancestors evolved and matured thousands of years in the past in hunting societies.

There is ample precedent for genetic "diseases" which, in fact, represent evolutionary survival strategies. Sickle cell anemia, for example, is now known to make its victims less susceptible to malaria. In the jungles of Africa where malaria is endemic, it was a powerful evolutionary tool against death by disease; in the malaria-free environment of North America, it became a liability.

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WELLNESS LIFESTYLE

## Is Your Child a Hunter or a Farmer?

Adapted from Thom Hartmann's book, *ADD: A Different Perception*.

As the human race moved from its earliest ancestors, two types of cultures—and therefore, people—evolved: farmers in agricultural societies, and hunters and gatherers in areas with lush plant and animal life. Author Thom Hartmann believes classic ADHD symptoms match the characteristics of a good hunter “almost perfectly”...and that observation could hold the key to the origins of ADHD.

**ADHD “DISORDER” SYMPTOMS**



- Short attention span. Can become intensely focused for the long periods of time.
- Poor planner. Disorganized and impulsive, making snap decisions.
- Distorted sense of time. Shows no of how long it will take to do something.
- Impatient.
- Doesn't convert words into concepts elegantly, and vice versa. May or may not have a reading disability.
- Has difficulty following directions.
- Daydreamer.
- Acts without considering consequences.
- Lacking in the social graces.

**TRAIT OF A GOOD HUNTER**

- Constantly monitoring his environment.
- Able to throw himself into the chase on a moment's notice.
- Flexible. Ready to change strategy quickly.
- Tireless. Capable of sustained drives, but only when “hot on the trail” of some goal.
- Visual or concrete thinker. Able to clearly see a tangible goal even if there are no words for it.
- Independent.
- Bored by mundane tasks. Enjoys new ideas, excitement and “the hunt.”
- Willing and able to take risks and face danger.
- Puts performance ahead of politeness.

**TRAIT OF A GOOD FARMER**

- Not easily distracted from the task at hand.
- Able to sustain a steady, dependable effort.
- Organized, purposeful.
- Has a long term strategy and sticks to it.
- Conscious of time and schedules. Gets things done on time, works at a steady pace and has good staying power.
- Patient. Aware that good things take time. Willing to wait.
- Team player.
- Focused. Good at follow through, tending to details and “taking care of business.”
- Careful. Looks before leaping.
- Nurturing. Creates and supports community values.
- Attuned to whether something will last.



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