

APPENDIX A: DOING GREAT THINGS WITH ADHD

by Catherine Nehring Massie

Teachers working with children with ADHD often start to wonder: Will this child ever be able to function independently as an adult in the world? Will this child ever be able to graduate high school, or complete a college course? Will this child ever be able to stay employed? Will this child ever safely be able to drive a car down the road? Will this child end up in prison? Will this child even make it to adulthood?

It is correct to wonder about these things because children with ADHD are at a high risk for many terrible outcomes. Dr. Murphy-Ryan discusses the tragic statistics on outcomes for many of these children. These high-risk children need a high level of management, support services, patience, and understanding. The adults in their lives need to have faith that they *can learn self-regulation and self-control*, that they can learn compensating skills and tools, that they can find something they are really good (perhaps even exceptional) at doing and make a living from it, and all of this can be learned with appropriate interventions and support. The adults in the lives of children with ADHD need to remember that the development of the frontal lobes and executive functioning abilities are not completed before twenty-five years of age; that is a long period of time available for them to work on improving their functioning.

Many famous people have achieved great things despite having ADHD (or maybe because of it). Through the never-ending support and belief of adults in their lives, children with ADHD have struggled and worked their way to fame. Montessori teachers are uniquely situated to help these children; it is just a matter of learning how to support them and never losing faith in their ability to ultimately succeed. It is also critically important that children struggling daily with their attentional challenges believe in themselves so they never give up. One way to help them keep hope is to tell them about other children with similar struggles who became highly successful, wealthy, and famous despite their challenges. These children

need lots of encouragement and inspiration to keep up their efforts. Children with ADHD are generally intelligent and creative and, if they have hyperactivity, full of energy as well! What a powerful combination for high achievement—if they can learn compensation skills and use supports. Here is a list of some of the highly successful people who have talked openly about their struggles growing up and living with ADHD.

- Jim Carey, Movie Actor and Comedian
- Will Smith, Movie Actor
- Liv Tyler, Movie Actress
- Woody Harrelson, Movie and TV Actor
- Ryan Gosling, Actor, Musician, Film Director, Screenwriter, and Producer
- Michael Phelps, Olympic Athlete (14 Olympic Golds)
- Bruce Jenner, Olympic Athlete (Olympic Gold Decathlon)
- Cammi Granato, Olympic Athlete, U.S. Women's Hockey Team Captain
- Terry Bradshaw, Professional Athlete (NFL Quarterback, 4 Superbowls, Football Hall of Fame)
- Pete Rose, Professional Athlete (Major League Baseball Record-Holder)
- Shane Victorino, Professional Athlete (Major League Baseball, World Series)
- Tim Howard, Professional Athlete (World Cup Soccer Record-Holder)

- Justin Timberlake, Musician and Movie Actor (Grammy Award Winner); “I have OCD mixed with ADD, you try living with that.”
- Howie Mandel, Actor
- Audra McDonald, Singer and Actress (6 Tony Awards)
- Will.I.am, Musician (7 Grammy Awards)
- James Carville, Political Strategist and Commentator on CNN
- Katherine Ellison, Foreign Correspondent (Pulitzer Prize Winner)
- Paul Orfalea, Entrepreneur (Founder of KINKOs)
- Sir Richard Branson, Entrepreneur (Founder of Virgin Airlines)
- David Neeleman, Entrepreneur (Founder of Jet Blue Air); “I have an easier time planning a 20-aircraft fleet than I do paying the light bill.”
- Ty Pennington, Builder and Reality TV Star; Mom, Yvonne Pennington, says that the very traits that once held her son back are now what make him a huge success.

People with ADHD are 300% more likely to start their own businesses. (Shane Perrault. “Seven Habits of Highly Successful Entrepreneurs with ADHD.” *Psychology Today*, Sept. 2009.) Many entrepreneurs with ADHD credit their creativity and ability to think-outside-the box with their ADHD personalities.

