

### Growing Up Bad Discussion

In Gretchen O'Connor's story "Bad", she reveals how ADHD affected her life and how it exacerbated her mother's verbal and physical abuse towards her. Gretchen explains how her mind would often wander, and even how she forgot she was playing in a soccer game and thought she was in back in a gymnastics class, so she failed to perform. Her constant disappointment in school, was due to her inability to focus and channel her energy. She mentions that her parents finally took her to a specialist when she was in 8th grade, where she was diagnosed with ADHD. Although it was too late because at that time her parents were going through a divorce where they were unable to pay much attention to her, and that led to a drug addiction. Even through all the abuse and extreme lifestyle of drugs and self-loathing, Gretchen acknowledges that her spontaneity and uniqueness was brought out through her ADHD. Also, through her bad experiences she gained the ability to listen to others and provide companionship for those who needed it.

In contrast, Joshua Green in "ADHD Window, Weapon, or Support" was diagnosed with ADHD much later in life, and was able to excel academically. He also did not grow up in a verbally and physically abusive household, although his parents had high expectations of him and were obsessed with him doing well. He was ashamed of his lack of ability to get things done and disorganization when it came to his school assignments. Unknowingly, he was able to channel his energy in learning but was unable to schedule the time he needed not to rush through his assignments. To avoid disappointing his parents, he was constantly lying and making up stories to cover up his failures. Like, Gretchen he contributes his ADHD to his eccentric personality.

Both, Gretchen and Joshua relate being termed "lazy" due being undiagnosed with ADHD. If Joshua would have been diagnosed earlier, his parents might have been able to seek help for his disorder. Gretchen on the other hand, did not have a stable household and her mother who was also misdiagnosed still might not of had the resources to fully help her. Her mother suffered from a mental illness and should have seen a psychiatrist and/or been on medications such as anti-depressants.

Referring to these stories, I am able to be more aware of students that may be undiagnosed with ADHD. These students may

appear disruptive but possibly be unable to find ways to channel their energy in a more productive way. Also, for students that are diagnosed with ADHD, they might come from a family background where they were unaccepted and suffered mental and psychical trauma such as Gretchen did. As a teacher, my goal is to create a warm and welcoming environment for all students and to understand that even though a student is not performing his/her best, there might be a reason why. I believe in getting to know my students on a personal level and looking out for cues if there is something wrong with their learning and/or at home. For example, Gretchen had problems with learning and at home which she could have been fixed if it was noticed by someone at school. Furthermore, ADHD is not a bad thing but can be misconstrued if the person is unable to focus their energy the way it should be. Many people with ADHD are extremely smart and high energy. They are also very creative and usually have high social skills.