

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

What does it feel like?

Steve seems to live on another planet; his mind always seems to be somewhere else. He has a hard time paying attention and loses focus very quickly. He even gets distracted when he's playing videogames with his friends. Steve can never seem to find anything; he likes to joke that he would lose his head if it wasn't attached. His teachers' are always saying Steve's a smart guy who needs to pay attention to detail and follow instructions so he can do better on assignments. He is quiet and not a trouble maker, but does not do well in school. Carla is a little different from Steve. No one can get a word in when she's around; she usually blurts things out in class, even before the teacher is done asking the question. She squirms and wiggles when she's sitting and is super disorganized. She tries joining clubs and activities, but ends up mixing up the dates and events.



Though Steve and Carla seem different, they both have Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). ADHD shows up differently in different people; it's a broad category covering attention, activity and impulsivity.

Who gets ADHD?

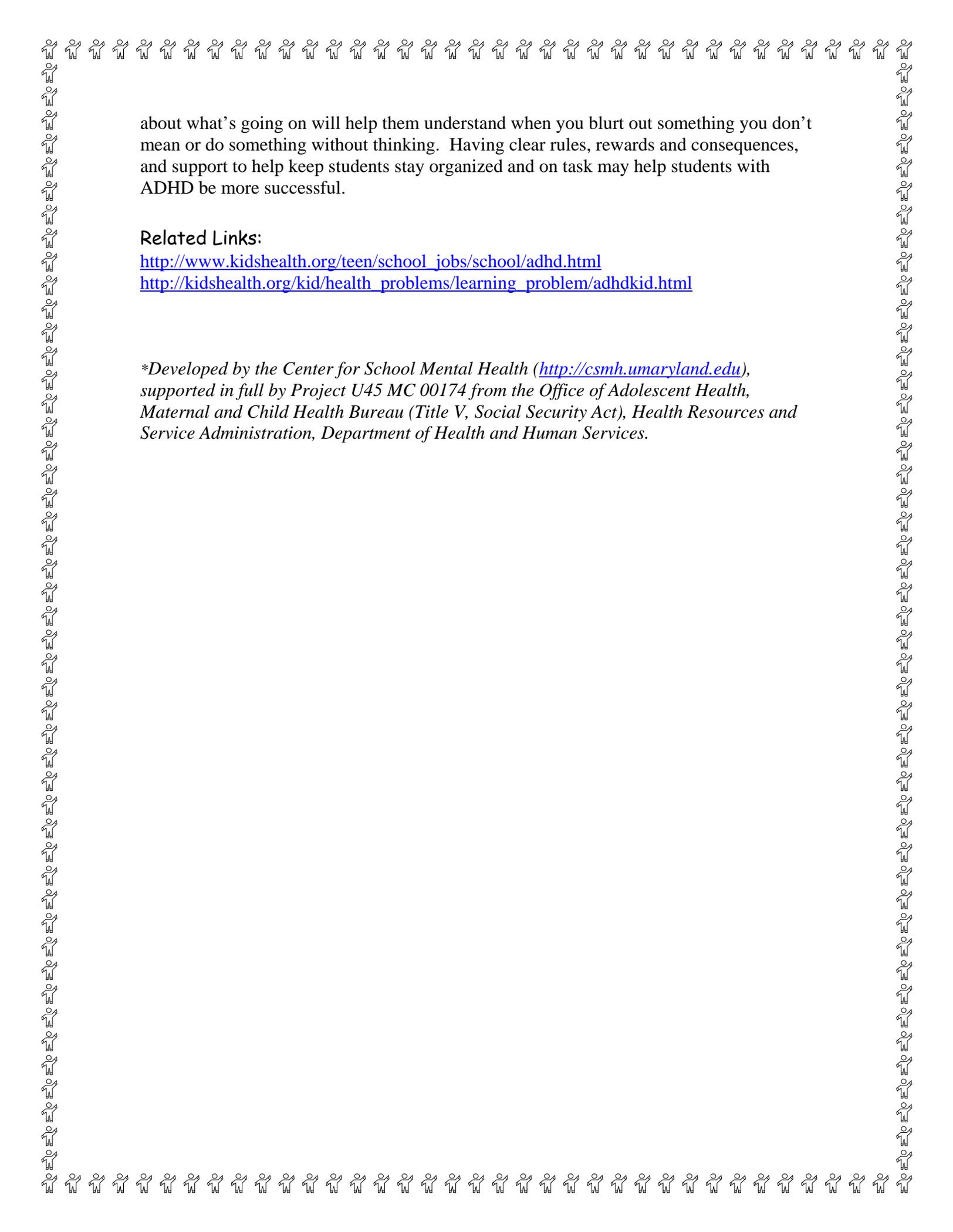
It's normal to have your mind wander during class or leave your homework on the bus once in a while, but for people with ADHD, it interferes with their ability to be successful at home, school and/or work. ADHD begins in childhood, but is often not diagnosed until a person is a teenager. Sometimes, it may not even get diagnosed until the person is an adult. Some symptoms of ADHD get better with age, but more than half the kids diagnosed as children with ADHD, still show symptoms as young adults. ADHD can affect both boys and girls, though it's more common in boys.

Scientists aren't sure what causes ADHD:

- ADHD has been found to be related to brain structure and chemicals
- Research shows that ADHD is probably genetic, meaning some children might inherit it from their family
- People born prematurely have been found to have a higher chance of having ADHD
- Cigarette and alcohol use during pregnancy and exposure to lead in the environment has been associated with higher rates of ADHD in children

What helps ADHD?

If you or a friend has problems with staying focused and it is interfering with your being able to be successful in your life, it's important you tell an adult, like a teacher or parent. Seeing a counselor at school or in the community or your medical provider (a nurse or doctor) is also a good idea. Sometimes letting your close friends and family know more



about what's going on will help them understand when you blurt out something you don't mean or do something without thinking. Having clear rules, rewards and consequences, and support to help keep students stay organized and on task may help students with ADHD be more successful.

Related Links:

http://www.kidshealth.org/teen/school_jobs/school/adhd.html

http://kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/learning_problem/adhdkid.html

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