*Differential Diagnosis of ADHD*

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| *Disorder* | *Differentiating Features from ADHD* |
| Oppositional Defiant and Conduct Disorders | * Defies initial adult direction, but once engaged in a task is able to persist (sustain attention). * Lacks hyperactive/impulsive behaviors. * Behavioral problems most acute in the home (defiance often directed primarily toward parents). |
| Learning Disorders | * Symptoms are specific to academic setting and/or subjects (e.g., reading groups). * Lacks early history of hyperactivity and problems associated with impulsivity (e.g., no aggression and/or disruption). |
| Anxiety and Mood Disorders | * Problems with focused (not sustained) attention. * Family history of these disorders (vs. a history of ADHD). * Overinhibited (not impulsive). * Symptom on-set after 7 years of age (lacks preschool history of hyperactivity). * School adjustment typically does not include disruptive behavior or teacher concerns regarding hyperactivity, impulsivity or inattention. |
| Thought Disorders | * Symptom on-set after 7 years of age. * Early school adjustment typically does not include disruptive behavior or teacher concerns regarding hyperactivity, impulsivity or inattention. * Poor reality contact |
| Bipolar Disorder | * Symptom on-set after 7 years of age. * Family history of this disorder (vs. a history of ADHD). * Severe and persistent irritability and/or elated mood * Temper outbursts (that can become severe (e.g., destructive or violent) * Grandiosity * Decreased need for sleep * Hypersexuality |
| Pervasive Developmental Disorder (autism) | * Distractible inattention related to internal (not external) stimuli. * Deterioration in attention and vigilance over time not as pronounced. |
| Mental Retardation | * Relative to developmental level, attention span not severely impaired. * Relative to developmental level, activity level considered appropriate. |
| Substance-Related Disorder | * Acute symptom on-set after 7 years of age |
| Other Substance-Related Disorder (NOS) | * Symptoms related to the use of medication (e.g., bronchodilators, isoniazid, akathisa from neuroleptics). |

*Note.* Sources APA, 2000; Barkley, 2006; Geller et al., 1998