*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).
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| 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).
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| 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.
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| 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
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| 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
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| Pervasive Developmental Disorder (autism) | * Distractible inattention related to internal (not external) stimuli.
* Deterioration in attention and vigilance over time not as pronounced.
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| Mental Retardation | * Relative to developmental level, attention span not severely impaired.
* Relative to developmental level, activity level considered appropriate.
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| Substance-Related Disorder | * Acute symptom on-set after 7 years of age
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| Other Substance-Related Disorder (NOS) | * Symptoms related to the use of medication (e.g., bronchodilators, isoniazid, akathisa from neuroleptics).
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*Note.* Sources APA, 2000; Barkley, 2006; Geller et al., 1998