

It's a Family Affair

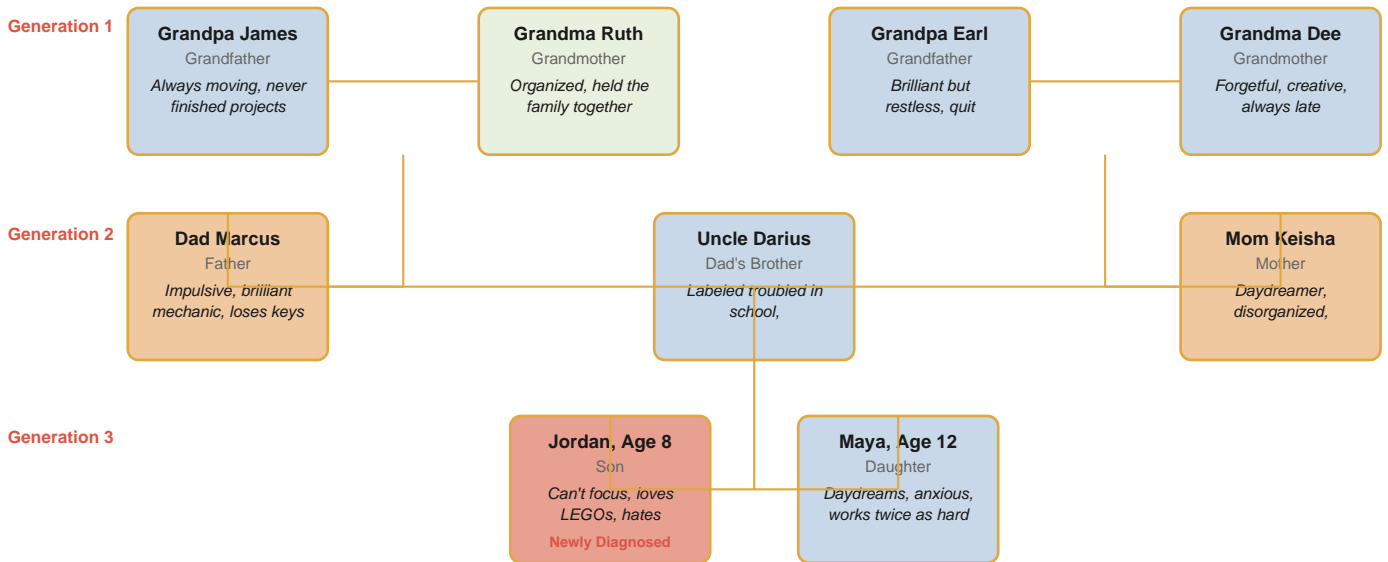
Understanding the Hereditary Nature of ADHD

ADHD is not a parenting problem. It is not a discipline problem. It is not a product of too much screen time or too much sugar. ADHD is a brain-based neurodevelopmental condition with deep genetic roots, and decades of research confirm that it runs powerfully through families. When one person in a family is diagnosed, it is rarely the whole story. More often, it is the beginning of one.

<p>74% Average heritability across 37 twin studies (Faraone et al., Molecular Psychiatry)</p>	<p>77-88% Heritability range in recent meta-analyses (PMC, 2020)</p>	<p>9x Increased ADHD risk in siblings of a child with ADHD vs. general population</p>	<p>57% Of parents of a child with ADHD have ADHD themselves (Barkley, 2015)</p>
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SEE HOW ADHD CAN TRAVEL THROUGH A FAMILY

This is an illustration of one family's story. Jordan's diagnosis at age 8 became the moment his parents, Marcus and Keisha, finally recognized themselves in the description they had heard their whole lives.



KEY: ■ ADHD traits, never diagnosed ■ Diagnosed after Jordan ■ Jordan: family catalyst ■ No known ADHD traits

This family is illustrative. Names and details are fictional and are intended to help readers recognize patterns that may be present in their own families.

WHEN A CHILD IS DIAGNOSED, A PARENT OFTEN IS TOO

Studies show that approximately 57% of parents of children with ADHD have ADHD themselves, most of whom were never diagnosed. A child's diagnosis is often the moment an entire family begins to understand its own story. The forgetfulness. The lost keys. The unfinished projects. The exhaustion of always trying to keep up. Suddenly, it all makes sense.

WHAT UNDIAGNOSED ADHD CAN LOOK LIKE IN A HOME

When ADHD goes unrecognized in a family, its effects are felt by everyone, often without anyone understanding why life feels so much harder than it should.

- Chronic disorganization that no amount of effort seems to fix
- Difficulty keeping consistent routines for meals, bedtime, or homework
- Time blindness, always running late, missing appointments, losing track of hours
- Emotional dysregulation, big reactions, low frustration tolerance, frequent conflict
- Sleep struggles throughout the household
- Impulsive financial decisions or difficulty managing money over time
- Forgotten responsibilities, missed deadlines, bills, and commitments
- A sense of underachievement despite real intelligence and effort
- Relationship strain caused by patterns no one can quite explain

These patterns are not character flaws. They are the fingerprints of a nervous system that was never given the tools it needed. Understanding that changes everything.

ADHD ACROSS GENERATIONS

ADHD does not skip a generation so much as it shapeshifts across one. A grandparent who was always described as restless or a dreamer. A parent who struggled in school but found their footing in hands-on work. A child now being flagged by their teacher. The thread is the same, only the circumstances differ.

In Black and Latino communities, this generational pattern has often been misread as defiance, laziness, or attitude, resulting in decades of missed diagnoses and missed opportunities for support. Recognizing ADHD as a family and generational story is an act of justice as much as it is an act of understanding.

WHY DIAGNOSIS MATTERS AT ANY AGE

A diagnosis is not a label. It is a doorway. Research consistently shows that individuals who receive an accurate ADHD diagnosis and appropriate support experience significantly better outcomes across every major life domain.

• Academic and professional performance.

Diagnosed individuals are better able to access accommodations, develop strategies, and build on their genuine strengths.

• Mental health.

Diagnosis reduces years of self-blame, shame, and the mistaken belief that something is fundamentally wrong with who you are.

• Relationships.

Understanding ADHD transforms conflict. What looked like selfishness or irresponsibility becomes something that can be named, understood, and worked with together.

• Financial stability.

With support and structure, the impulsivity and disorganization that drive financial stress become manageable.

• Parenting.

A parent who understands their own ADHD becomes a more patient, effective, and empathetic support for their child.

PATIENCE WITH YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY

Learning that ADHD runs in your family is not a moment for guilt. It is a moment for grace. Many of the patterns that have caused struggle, conflict, or pain in your home were never about not trying hard enough. Understanding ADHD does not rewrite the past, but it does make it possible to write a different future, one with more compassion, more tools, and more connection.

WHERE TO START

If this resonates with you or someone in your family, begin with your primary care provider or pediatrician. Share what you have observed and ask about an ADHD evaluation. You do not have to have all the answers to take the first step. You just have to take it.

RESOURCES

The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions:

www.societyforadhd.org | info@societyforadhd.org

CHADD: www.chadd.org

CDC ADHD Resource Center: www.cdc.gov/adhd

The Society for ADHD and Co-Occurring Conditions is the only ADHD organization in the United States with a dedicated focus on the faith community. We are a faith-informed, community-rooted secular nonprofit providing science-backed resources, education, and community for neurodivergent individuals and the families, faith communities, and professionals who support them.

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