

The following interview is an e-interview with our own Dr. Kent Roberson. Many of you know the Roberson family, as they have been very involved in the homeschool community and New Life Church over most of the last decade. Dr. Roberson assists in the home schooling of their 5 children. Andrea, his wife, has taught P.E., been an assistant section leader and they have served as HCEC board members. They have hosted Backyard Bible clubs, taught Sunday School, led and been on mission trips and have helped with TAG. We really appreciate their commitment at High Country and to the body at New Life Church.

When I asked Dr. Roberson what he would like you to know about him, he responded with the following:

My primary purpose in life is to raise my children so that they can impact their world for Christ. I also have training as a Family Physician. I graduated from Medical School in 1992. I have additional specialty training from the In His Image Family Practice Residency, in Tulsa Oklahoma. I have been Board Certified in Family Medicine since 1995. I continue to be involved in World Wide Missions. I have done international Mission work on every continent, except Antarctica.

Dr. Roberson is my family doctor, and is a gentle and kind person. His office staff loves children and are full of kindness and well skilled: it is clear that he chose his staff based on his values and integrity. If you know Dr. Roberson, you know that he is very thoughtful in his answers, gives you choices, and allows you to make a decision that fits your needs, not his. Dr. Roberson has earned my respect and appreciation by the way he operates his practice, that is why I wanted you to hear from him. The following are the answers to the questions I asked him.

Dr. Roberson, what are some of the myths about ADD?

Many people conclude that ADD has a single “cause”. ADD is a grouping of symptoms. I believe that the symptoms that we call ADD can be from many different root causes. ADD will have some basic similar expression, however, it will look different a little different in different people. This also means the approach to helping someone with ADD to succeed will be unique. So there is not one cause, and there is not one approach that is best. This is part of the challenge of helping people with ADD be successful in life.

O.K. What would a parent do if they think their child may have ADD

First, they should get educated about what ADD is and looks like. I recommend they read everything they can. They have to be open to information. I also recommend avoiding early conclusions. Start with an open mind, as to the cause and to the possible options to manage ADD. Talk to other parents who have children with ADD, but remember that each child is unique. Also, I recommend that they keep in mind the possibility that what they are seeing is not ADD. Consider that it may be something else. Once you have done some research, I recommend you meet with a health professional. The three groups of physicians that have training in this are Pediatricians, Family Physicians and Psychiatrists. Unfortunately, the expertise in diagnosis and management varies between and within each of these groups. In other words, you may need to spend some time finding the right physician to clarify the diagnosis. Once you have a Diagnosis,

then there are a myriad of treatment options available. One management option or style does not fit all, be persistent.

That's helpful. There are many people who feel that the ADD label is merely a convenience for school teachers who don't want to deal with energetic kids. Does it have a medical basis?

There are a myriad of causes for ADD. These include brain biochemistry, lack of boundaries or structure, demonization, Chemical injuries in the womb (alcohol or other drugs), poor vision and being in the wrong educational environment. So, yes there is a clear biochemical basis for ADD. And yes there are some creative kids that simply do not fit in a class room of 30 children. I think that most school teachers do a good job with what they are given, however, the structure of a school classroom may not fit your child's learning style.

Wow! Do kids outgrow ADD? Does it sometimes get better, or do people generally have trouble all their lives?

I do not know the answer to this question. There is increasing evidence that many children with ADD carry the attention deficit into Adulthood. There is also some evidence that with good treatment (sometimes including medication) that children's brains re-route and "heal". I think there is some confusion here, because there are many causes to ADD and we can not generalize across all causes.

I see. Many homeschool families wonder if their child would have been labeled ADD if they had gone to school. Are there times that a homeschooled child would benefit from having a formal label?

I am not one who is fond of labeling, however, it is useful so that you can decide on how to manage your child's education. I see many times that children with ADD are labeled as lazy or lacking in motivation. In other words, we label them anyway. It seems to me that giving them an accurate label, helps us to decide how to help them learn. You would approach a lazy child different from one who is readily distracted.

O.K. I've heard a lot about co-morbid conditions. It sounds awful, but what does it mean?

Co-morbid is a medical term that simply means "other associated problems". It is very common for people with ADD to get marginalized by friends and family. This commonly results in depression or anxiety related problems. It also results in spiritual consequences that are difficult to manage.

I'm feeling better already. What are the effects on people who never treat their ADD?

In persons with untreated ADD, there are more traumatic injuries, adolescent promiscuity and imprisonment. This is well documented. Many adult prisoners have psychological illness, among them ADD. I'm not saying that the psychological illness causes or excuses criminality. This is a complex phenomenon, however, well treated ADD, decreases the risk for these same problems.

Is ADD hereditary? I have heard, often, of parents who realize they may have ADD after their children are labeled.

Because there are many causes for ADD, I can not make a blanket statement about heredity. It seems that there are some kinds of ADD that are linked in families. It is not clear if that the link is genetic or environmentally induced. In other words, I think that there are some kinds of ADD that have a biochemical and genetic link. There are also some parents that have ADD, that create an environment (due to their ADD) which fosters ADD like behavior in their children. There are some children with ADD whose parents have no problems and vice versa.

It sounds like there are many things to consider. Are there myths about medications that it would be helpful to clarify?

The big myth about medication is that it always helps or that is it always detrimental. There are some people with ADD that benefit from medication and others that would not. There are some people that have side effects and others that do well.

It doesn't fit nicely in one little box, does it? Do you see homeschooling as a good option for kids with ADD?

In most cases, home education is the best option for persons with ADD. As with all aspects of home education, some of us are better at certain aspects (subjects) than others. In other words, some of us are better equipped to teach a child with ADD. Some of us may not be the best person to teach a child with ADD. In general a child with ADD will demand more of us in our teaching. We will need more help and assistance in guiding them through their educational struggles. Support groups may be quite beneficial for you in getting the best education for your child. If you do not have the skills to teach a child with ADD, Public or Private schools are also an option. Do not feel locked in, be open to doing what ever is necessary to get your child a good education, and good character development.

I appreciate your attitudes and confidence in us as parents to make good decisions. Do you know of any good books or websites that would be beneficial?

There are probably many that I am unaware of. I have recently stumbled onto a sight called, www.additudemag.com. Remember to read from multiple sources and do not take one opinion as "Gospel".

I'll have to check it out. Thanks so much for taking the time to answer these questions. I appreciate you! I'd like to offer people the opportunity to ask you specific questions. How would people contact you if they might like to make an appointment to discuss their situation?

You're welcome. People may call my office number: 955-0250. We will be glad to schedule an appointment to talk with them.