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KIDS' AREA

Medicine, Me, and ADHD

A Short Story

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Melissa could see that Jen was steaming mad when she came out the main door of their school. She walked really fast and was staring straight ahead. Jen was Melissa's best friend. They usually walked home together from school every day, but today Jen seemed so upset that she walked right by Melissa without even seeing her!

"Jen? What's wrong?"

Jen stopped walking and looked a little startled to see her best friend standing there. Melissa had wavy brown hair, big brown eyes, and wore round glasses which made her eyes look even bigger. Sometimes the boys teased her about her glasses, but Jen just thought that Melissa looked very smart in them.



"I could have punched that Brian just now!" Jen said. "It's not nice to hit people, so I just walked away. But, boy, he gets me so mad!"

"Oh, no, not Brian again," Melissa said with a sigh. "What did he do now?"

"He said that I'm dumb because I take medicine for ADHD," Jen replied with a sad voice. Her eyes got a little watery, like she was going to cry. Melissa could see that her friend was not only mad but also her feelings were very hurt.



"Well," said Melissa, "I think that Brian is kind of dumb for even saying that."

"Yeah, I know, but it still makes me s-o-o-o mad!" Jen said. The two girls started walking down the sidewalk toward their homes. They were quiet for a while, and Melissa was thinking.

"Know what, Jen? Taking medicine doesn't make anyone dumb. My dad takes medicine for his high blood pressure, and he says it makes him feel better and he can do more things with us. Like go camping."

"Yeah, that's right," Jen replied. "And besides, that dumb Brian takes medicine for his asthma, to help him breathe better! So what does he know!"

The girls looked at each other and burst into giggles. Jen smiled and looked more relaxed.



"Well, your ADHD medicine helps you pay attention better, right?" Melissa asked. "So if it helps you, then it's a good thing."

"I guess so," Jen said. "I don't feel so fuzzy headed when I take it. It helps me concentrate."

"Right," Melissa agreed. "And it helps you be less hyper, so you can sit still and get things done. Right?"

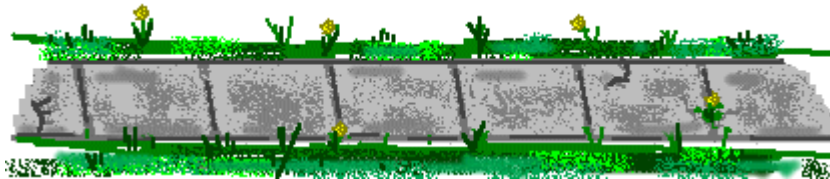
"Yeah," said Jen, nodding her head. "Remember when I was spending like three hours on homework every night, cause I'd get too antsy and couldn't stay focused? Now it takes me one or two hours and I get it all done."

"Right, see?" Melissa said brightly. "So then it's helping you."

"Yeah, I guess so. But sometimes I just wish I didn't have to take it," Jen said. She looked away and got a sad look on her face again. "Why do I have to have ADHD? I wish I could stay focused without taking any medicine. Sometimes it makes me feel like I'm...different. You know."

Melissa stopped walking and looked at her friend, her big brown eyes all serious behind her round glasses. "Don't be silly!" Melissa said. "Just because you have ADHD doesn't mean that you're different from anybody else. Hey listen, we're all different in some way!"

Jen turned and started walking quietly again. She was looking down at the sidewalk.



"Look, Melissa, you don't need to take medicine to help you pay attention. You can focus just fine without any help. See, I am different!"

Melissa scrunched up her face, the way she always did when she was thinking hard. There was nothing wrong with Jen, and it didn't matter that Jen had ADHD. Jen was the best friend that Melissa ever had. They shared everything and told each other everything. She felt kind of bad because Jen felt bad.

Suddenly Melissa looked up, with a big grin spreading on her face.

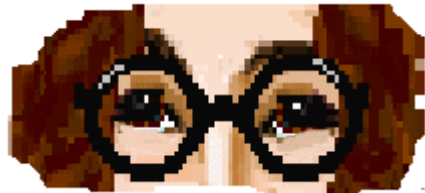
"You're wrong about that!" she said to Jen. "I need something to help me focus better, too!"

"Huh?" Jen asked. "What are you talking about? You don't have ADHD."

"Don't you remember when we were in 4th grade, in Mrs. Johnson's class?" Melissa said, her smile getting bigger.

"Yes, I remember Mrs. Johnson's class," Jen replied. She gave her friend a puzzled look.

"Well," Melissa said, "remember when I had trouble seeing the board, and I had a real hard time in math? Mrs. Johnson figured out that I was flunking math because I couldn't see the board! So that's when I got something to help me focus!"



Jen looked at Melissa's big grin. Then she looked at the big brown eyes beaming at her from behind the big round glasses.

"Your glasses!" Jen said and started laughing. "That's when you got your glasses!"

"Right!" Melissa said. "I need my glasses to help focus my vision. You need ADHD medicine to help you focus your attention. So what's the big deal?"

Jen stopped laughing and just stood there, smiling. "No big deal, Melissa. You are just the best friend in the world."

"So look Jen, I'll wear my glasses to help me focus, and you take your medicine to help you focus, and we won't care what Brian or anybody else thinks. Deal?"

"Deal!" Jen said. "I'm not even mad at Brian anymore. It's not worth it."

"OK then!"

Melissa looked down the block to their houses, right next door to each other. "Hey, let's ask your mom if you can come over and play before we do homework?"

"Sure! I get first turn on Play Station!"

"No way!" Melissa said. "I'll race you to your driveway. Winner gets first turn on Play Station!"

"Deal! Ready.....set....."

"GO!!"

Facts About ADHD Medications



- There are many types of medicine which people take for ADHD. Your doctor and parents will decide if you need to take medicine, and which type is best for you.
- Medicine for ADHD mostly helps people pay attention better, not be as hyper, and helps them be more patient so they can get things done. It should not make you feel any different, or think different, and it won't change who you are.
- Taking medicine for ADHD does not make anyone dumb or different. Many very smart people have ADHD and take medicine to help them pay attention and focus better.



- Some medicines for ADHD might make you have less appetite, or have a harder time falling asleep at night. If that happens, it's important to tell your parents and your doctor, so the doctor can decide if you need a different type of medicine.

- Kids and adults who take medicine for ADHD are just like anybody else. They are just as smart and healthy as anybody else. If anyone tells you differently, talk about it with your parents and doctor. Usually those people who say mean things don't understand what ADHD is or what medicine for ADHD does. They don't know any better!

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About The Author

Peter Jaksa, Ph.D., is a licensed clinical psychologist with over 30 years' experience working with children, adolescents, and adults with ADHD. Dr. Jaksa is the author of numerous articles and columns about ADHD, including articles published in **ADDitude Magazine**, **Attention Magazine**, **Organize Magazine**, and **FOCUS**. He has provided interviews to national publications and news organizations including the **Wall Street Journal**, **CNN**, **U.S. News & World Report**, **Chicago Tribune**, and **Men's Health Magazine**. He has presented at national conferences to health care professionals, educators, and the general public. Dr. Jaksa is a contributing writer for **ADDitude Magazine** and a member of the Scientific Advisory Board. He is the author of *Life With ADHD* and co-author of *Real People, Real ADHD*.