

# FYI from DSPS

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### 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Central Coast Learning Disability Conference

- Topic: **Strategies for Coping in a World Gone ADD**
- Speaker: **Edwin Hallowell, M.D.**
- Date: **November 17, 2006.** Time: **7:30am to 2:30pm**
- Cost: **Before October 21 – \$65, After October 20 – \$85.**



Nationally known speaker, Dr. Edwin Hallowell will discuss the educational implications of AD/HD.

## The D in Disability = Diversity

Mark Tomes, M.A., Ed., DSPS Specialist

One measure of a civilization is not by how high the highest person in society can reach, but rather by how low the society allows the lowest person to fall. Hence, a civilized society recognizes that people of all ability levels are given equal opportunities to succeed in life, and it supports people who have not been given equal resources in life or that otherwise do not fit the regular mold.

Likewise, a civilized society embraces diversity because of the richness that people of different abilities, talents, and perspectives bring to the society to help solve its problems and to enrich its people's lives.

Often when we think about or speak about diversity, we are talking about people of different skin colors. And while that is one kind of diversity, there are other "diversities" in the world.

One type of difference is disability. Unlike skin color, sexual orientation, gender, culture, and other differences in people, disability is the group that anyone

can join at any time. Hence, understanding disabilities and supporting people who have different kinds of disabilities can help us prepare for if or when we, a friend, or a loved one becomes disabled.

Some disabilities are temporary, while some are more permanent. Most require some sort of accommodation in order for the person to reach their full potential.

Rather than looking at a person's inability to perform a particular function, people living in a civilized society view each person as having unique talents, and they help to encourage them to express their strengths, not punish them for what they cannot do. For example, the person you see in a wheelchair might write beautiful and poignant poetry, might be an excellent mathematics teacher, or might be a biologist searching for a cure for a terrible disease.

I think of Stephen Hawking, one of the foremost theoretical physicists in the world and someone who has contributed immensely to our

understanding of the workings of the universe. However, with motor neuron disease (ALS), he is totally dependent on other people for the most basic of physical care. He uses a digitized speech synthesizer for talking. (His dis/ability is described in his own words at [www.hawking.org.uk/disable/index.html](http://www.hawking.org.uk/disable/index.html).)

Hawking lives in a society that recognizes his talents as a mathematician and physicist. His society helps support him in the things with which he has problems. He never could have accomplished his incredible work in astrophysics if the society in which he lived focused on what he could not do rather than what he could do.

Other examples abound. That person with schizophrenia is a world-renowned artist (Neil Olds), the diver with dyslexia is an Olympic champion (Greg Louganis) or a highly successful businessman (Nelson Rockefeller), and that deaf woman is a successful actress (Marlee Matlin).

What can people do? That is the question that a civilized society asks, and then it goes on to help them do it.

### Director's Notes: Reasonable Accommodations

Patrick Schwab, Ed. D., Director, Academic Support/DSPS

The laws that pertain to community colleges require that we provide students with disabilities "reasonable accommodations" so they can access the college on an equal basis as their non-disabled fellow students. This means that a class may need to be modified in some way, **however**, the instructor is not required and it is inadvisable to modify a course in such a way that the content, standards, or delivery becomes so different that one cannot recognize the course as the same class. This is not as conflicting as it sounds. An instructor might modify methods and materials but not content and rigor. In DSPS, we will not sacrifice high standards for access. If you have a question, any DSPS Specialist can help.

*Our Students are Your Students*



## Cuesta's DSPS Team

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# Top 10 Things About AD/HD That People Should Be Aware Of

Helen Porter, MSW, Social Work and AD/HD Coach

- **AD/HD people succeed much of the time.** Don't count us out. History as well as the present shows that many of us not only succeed, but also excel at what we do. If you discount us because of a label, we will be just as likely to go around you to get to our goal. This is when our ability to hyper-focus can be an asset!
- **AD/HD is not all there is to a person who has it.** I have feelings, hobbies, bad days, good days, just like everyone else. Every time something doesn't work out, it isn't necessarily because of AD/HD. Life happens. I need to get away from the idea that when things aren't perfect it isn't my fault – or anyone else's
- **AD/HD hyperactivity isn't just in our bodies, but also in our minds.** Even if I seem to have outgrown the constant motion of my body, the hyperactivity hasn't necessarily gone away. Cognitive hyperactivity remains and is an ongoing challenge to manage. I can learn to manage it, but can't change the fact that it is part of my life. I can actually turn it into productivity and creativity.
- **ADHD presents both challenges and blessings.** It is true that I have to manage the challenges that affect the way I study, work and relate to people. But I also need to recognize and be acknowledged for the blessings my mind brings to the table – the spontaneity, the creativity, the resiliency. If I focus on these, they will grow.
- **AD/HD may look like disrespect, but isn't.** When I forget to ask how you are, run late, or interrupt you, it isn't because I don't care. It is because so many things are going through my brain at the same time that I have trouble sorting them out. Things happen that I don't anticipate, and I have trouble sorting out what is most important to do first. I am not always aware of time, but I am trying.
- **AD/HD is not an excuse.** I am not looking for a way out of taking responsibility, but a way in to being included. I want to experience success – in school, at work, or at play.
- **AD/HD is not an inability to pay attention as much as an inability to regulate attention.** When we are interested in what we do, we have tremendous ability! We can get so engrossed in what we like that we can be unaware of the passage of time. More mundane details of life can get over-looked. It is harder to switch from our area of interest because our brains feed off the hyper-focus so much.
- **AD/HD requires education and support, not just medication.** Medication is important in the overall management for many of us – though not all of us. But all of us need to learn about how our brains work. We need to learn about our own AD/HD because it is different from one person to another. And we need the people around us to take the time to understand and to learn how to support us. Don't keep trying the same methods if they don't work.
- **AD/HD is a difference.** The words we use to describe things are important. Focusing on the differences rather than the disabilities is vital.
- **AD/HD is physiological in nature.** There are some things that I just can't do. I can't sit still or learn in a rote environment. It isn't a matter of applying myself more. It didn't come from emotional trauma or bad parenting. I can't just learn to be like everyone else because I am not like everyone else. It is who I am.

*(Adapted by Hedy Cara, M.A., Ed., DSPS Specialist.)*

## Do You Know Jeannie Leleaux

Louie Rossa-Quade, DSPS Instructional Associate

With tears in her eyes, she describes the joy she feels watching our students grow and progress. Jeannie loves her job and the students love her. Not only is she skilled and efficient, she also decorates the Academic Support entrance with a welcoming smile and her big heart.

From Southern California originally, Jeannie found our local paradise when she met her husband, Ted, through her benevolent ministry in 1996. "Family" is a key word throughout her life. Both of her kids, Lynda and Robert, are married. Lynda has given Jeannie two grandchildren, Collin and Robyn.

Jeannie returned to school here at Cuesta in 1997 where she started working for Tutorial. In 2001, she moved to DSPS where she has become the rock that secures us to sanity.

As the DSPS receptionist, Jeannie is the first face students see as they come into the first floor of the High Tech building. She helps direct all students into the area, makes appointments, helps students with DSPS paperwork, and keeps many of our lives organized.