

# Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

When a Racing Mind Leads to Self-Medication



## What is ADHD?

**ADHD** is a neurodevelopmental condition that makes it difficult to focus, control impulses, and regulate activity levels. Adults with ADHD often struggle with organization, follow-through, and managing frustration. It may feel like their brain never stops running.

## What Does it Look Like?

- > **Chronic Disorganization**  
Missed deadlines, lost keys, forgotten appointments—no matter how many systems they try, chaos follows.
- > **Impulsive Decisions**  
Life choices made on a whim, risky behavior without considering consequences, uncontrollable spending.
- > **Difficulty Following Through**  
Projects started and abandoned, promises made and forgotten, conversations that don't stick.
- > **Emotional Reactivity**  
Frustration escalates quickly, they have trouble letting things go, and responses seem out of proportion to the situation.

## How Does ADHD Contribute to Relapse?

Your loved one isn't using because they're undisciplined. For someone with ADHD, the brain's reward and self-regulation systems work differently. Substances offer an immediate way to quiet the noise and feel "normal."

- 1) **The Brain Seeks What It's Missing**  
Substances can temporarily boost dopamine and create the focus or calm their brain struggles to produce on its own.
- 2) **Short-Term Programs Lack Depth**  
When the brain is wired for immediate reward, it takes time to build impulse control and sustainable coping strategies.
- 3) **Without Treating ADHD, Relapse is Likely**  
They leave treatment still unable to self-regulate, plan ahead, or tolerate frustration, leaving the door open for relapse.

### **Prevalence:**

**4.4%** of U.S. adults<sup>1</sup>

### **Co-Occurrence:**

**50%** develop a substance use disorder in their lifetime<sup>2</sup>

### **Relapse Risk:**

**2.5x** more likely to develop and form of SUD<sup>3</sup>

Sources: <sup>1</sup> Kessler et al., *American Journal of Psychiatry* (2006). <sup>2</sup> Levin et al., *The American Journal on Addictions* (2001). <sup>3</sup> Lee et al., *Clinical Psychology Review* (2011).


## Treating ADHD and Chronic Relapse at Burning Tree Ranch

ADHD doesn't respond to quick fixes. Our **long-term, progress-based model** gives clients the extended time needed to build real impulse control and develop sustainable structures across months of daily life within our structured program.

Clients advance through the program when they **demonstrate genuine change** in how they manage frustration, follow through on commitments, and regulate their behavior, not when a calendar says they're done.



*“The same dopamine dysregulation that drives ADHD symptoms also creates vulnerability to addiction. Effective treatment must address both the neurobiological roots and the behavioral patterns simultaneously.”*

 **Dr. Leslie Secrest, MD**  
Medical Director, Burning Tree Ranch



## Dual Diagnosis Treatment for ADHD Co-Occurring with Addiction

When ADHD and addiction occur together, they can interact strongly. Impulsivity and reward-seeking drive substance use, which further disrupts the brain's self-regulation systems.

- **Shared Brain Chemistry**  
Both ADHD and addiction involve the same dopamine pathways, making it important to treat both conditions carefully.
- **Impulsivity Undermines Recovery**  
Untreated ADHD leads to poor impulse control in high-risk moments.
- **Breaking the Self-Medication Cycle**  
Real coping skills are needed to manage their condition without relying on the quick-fix of substance use.

### Dual Diagnosis:

The presence of **both a substance use disorder and a mental health condition** occurring together. Effective treatment for dual-diagnosis addictions must address both aspects simultaneously.



### Have Other Treatment Programs Missed the Deeper Issues?

Burning Tree Ranch is the Nation's only authentic long-term treatment program for chronic relapse. Call us at (866) 287-2877 or visit us online at [www.BurningTree.com](http://www.BurningTree.com).

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