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Michelle Raz is an academic/life coach for ADHD students and adults.

## Academic coach helps those with ADHD

By [Teresa Ristow](#)

Saturday, October 18, 2014

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## ADVERTISEMENT

Steamboat Springs — When Michelle Raz's daughter was diagnosed with ADHD eight years ago, she found few resources to help her daughter work through the pivotal teenage years.

A neurodevelopmental disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder is a condition that causes a persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity that gets in the way of daily life or typical development.

Looking for resources, Raz found the Edge Foundation, an organization which set her daughter up with an ADHD academic coach living in Denver. The two communicated over the phone, and Raz soon became interested in the field of ADHD coaching herself.



**Photo by John F. Russell**

Michelle Raz, who is an academic/life coach for ADHD students and adults, works with Lilly Pattersen in her downtown Steamboat Springs office.

#### Symptoms of ADHD in children and adults

- Fails to give close attention to details or makes careless mistakes
- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Does not appear to listen
- Struggles to follow through on instructions
- Has difficulty with organization
- Avoids or dislikes tasks requiring a lot of thinking
- Loses things

"I was very intrigued with it," Raz said. "It's a niche field, and I tend to like new ideas."

Raz underwent a life coaching training from the Edge Foundation before getting training in ADHD coaching, learning a lot about the prevalence of the disorder.

October is designated as ADHD Awareness Month, following a 2004 designation from the United States Senate.

Recent statistics from the Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactive Disorder organization show that 9 percent of children ages 3 to 17 and 4.4 percent of adults have been diagnosed with ADHD.

Previous diagnoses of Attention Deficit Disorder now are considered just as another presentation of ADHD.

Raz said the statistics probably show a smaller number than actually have ADHD because until recently, it was thought that adults couldn't have ADHD. Experts thought that it was a disorder children had but grew out of, meaning most adult diagnoses are new.

Now in her fifth year of ADHD coaching, Raz focuses on high school and college students and adults looking for more organization in their life or career.

Currently, Raz coaches clients in Steamboat Springs and remotely, using Skype, follows up with each client through texts, emails or phone calls between weekly meetings.

"It's really catching on," said Raz, who recently took on a 27-year-old client from Michigan and is working with her youngest student yet, a Steamboat Springs eighth-grader.

Raz teaches what she calls "executive functioning skills" like organization, goal setting and prioritizing, things that people with ADHD tend to struggle with.

"They become independent and develop self-management skills," Raz said. "I provide the structure and the support."

- Is easily distracted
- Is forgetful in daily activities
- Fidgets with hands or feet or squirms in chair
- Has difficulty remaining seated
- Runs about or climbs excessively in children; extreme restlessness in adults
- Difficulty engaging in activities quietly
- Acts as if driven by a motor; adults will often feel inside like they were driven by a motor
- Talks excessively
- Blurts out answers before questions have been completed
- Difficulty waiting or taking turns
- Interrupts or intrudes upon others

Source: American Psychiatric Association

With most students, Raz works off a Google document that helps visually organize a student's classes or an adult's week, for example. She uses a color-coded system to identify tasks that are in progress or accomplished.

"These students are high-functioning if you can get them harnessed in," Raz said.

Word-of-mouth has brought Raz many of her clients, who typically work with her for about a year.

She often communicates with other practitioners such as psychiatrists, nurses and therapists, along with parents when working with a particular client.

Raz said that diagnosis of the disorder is complicated, with a full psychiatric evaluation typically costing more than \$1,000.

Diagnosis is dependent on a variety of symptoms, which can present themselves slightly differently in adults and children. While many people exhibit occasional symptoms associated with the disorder, diagnosis involves a persistent struggle that impacts the daily life of sufferers.

"We all have tendencies at some time," Raz said. "But the true ADHD person — it impacts them."

With the proper support, people with ADHD have an amazing potential and tend to be more hands-on, creative people.

"They're people that stand out in a crowd," Raz said. "It can be a gift."

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