

Understanding Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Participant Handout

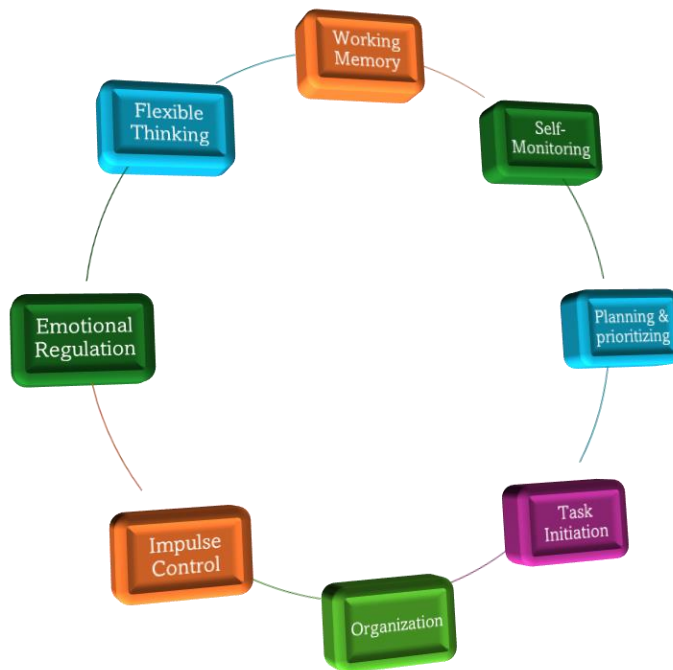
Week 1

Overview:

What is ADHD & its overall impact on health?
How is ADHD diagnosed?
The Upsides to ADHD

Terms:

ADHD is a developmental impairment of the brain's executive function, which helps us plan, focus on, and execute tasks. Executive function impacts all of the areas below.



Myths/ Misconceptions:

- Not a learning disorder, but they can co-occur.
- Does not impact intelligence, many people with ADHD are highly intelligent and successful.
- Not caused by bad parenting, information overload or too much technology.
- People with ADHD do not lack attention, rather, they often struggle to regulate attention (and emotions).

- People with ADHD do not just need to try harder. ADHD diminishes self-control at times.
- People do not outgrow ADHD, but certain aspects may minimize overtime.
- Not all ADHD looks the same (more to follow).

Symptoms by Types of ADHD:

Hyperactivity and Impulsivity

ADHD Overview
SIGNS OF IMPULSIVITY/HYPERACTIVITY

Neurodivergent insights

- Excessive talking
- Fidgeting
- Difficulty sitting still
- Difficulty with quiet
- Difficulty engaging in leisure activities
- Difficulty resting
- Intruding/interrupting others
- Restlessness (can be internal)
- Difficulty waiting turn/impatience

For a diagnosis, 6 of the 9 traits of impulsivity/hyperactivity must be present. Or 5 out of 9 for adults (but must be able to demonstrate traits were present before age 12).

Inattentive

ADHD Overview
SIGNS OF INATTENTION

Neurodivergent insights

- FOCUS: Difficulty with sustained attention
- Difficulty breaking large projects down
- Losing objects
- Forgetfulness
- Avoidance of tasks requiring sustained attention
- Distractibility
- Overlooking details
- Daydreaming & spacing in conversations
- Appearing not to listen

Combined



Diagnosis in Children

- Can be diagnosed by family doctor, or a formal assessment by a psychologist who has this training.
- Typically involves screening for other conditions that share similar symptoms to ADHD, as well as conduct screening for learning disabilities
- At least 6 of 9 symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity
- Symptoms present in 2 or more settings e.g. home & school for at least 6 months
- Symptoms interfere with child's functioning or development

- At least some symptoms must have been apparent before age 12

Masking and Overcompensating

- Suppressing impulse control difficulties (stimming, ticks).
- Overcompensating at work.
- People-pleasing.
- Perfectionism.
- Trying not to interrupt in conversation.
- Forcing oneself to stay still.
- Forcing eye contact.
- Scripting responses.
- Not expressing your true emotions.
- Adopting social masks (e.g., the black sheep, the class clown, the rebel).
- Relying on stress and anxiety to get tasks done

Flying Beneath the Radar (Late Detection)

- Many individuals go undiagnosed into adulthood.
- Some people can compensate while in elementary and high school, but as demands for executive functioning increase after high school, with new jobs, relationships, post-secondary studies, mortgages and children, the cumulative demands of life eventually overwhelm compensatory strategies, and the person does not cope as well anymore (volume matters!).

Diagnosis in Adults

- It can be diagnosed by family MD, but some are reluctant to do so. Informal screens may help your MD feel more comfortable making a diagnosis and prescribe a trial medication.
- Will rule out any other medical or psychiatric condition that could cause symptoms
- At least 5 of 9 symptoms of inattention and/or hyperactivity/impulsivity
- Symptoms present in 2 or more settings e.g. home & work for at least 6 months
- Symptoms typically present before age 12
- Symptoms impair functioning

Resources for Diagnosis

- PCN Psychiatrist- one time consult. Need referral from family doctor or Nurse Practitioner (PCP). Covered by AHC
- Talk With Frida- www.talkwithfrida.com- ~\$600
- Adult Center for ADHD- <https://adultadhdcenter.com>- ~\$ 300
- Local Options- ~\$2500-3000
 - Froese Psychological Service
 - Cirrus Psychology

- RK Counselling

Gender Differences

Girls/ Women:

- Diagnosed later. They are more likely to exhibit distractibility, forgetfulness, emotional hyper-sensitivity, talkativeness, daydreaming, or appearing withdrawn.
- Adolescent girls with ADHD are more likely to struggle with social difficulties and poor self-esteem.
- ADHD challenges can be exacerbated by hormonal changes due to menstrual cycles, menopause and post-pregnancy.

Boys/Men:

- Boys are more often diagnosed earlier with ADHD because the signs are more obvious especially when entering school due to problems with attendance and academic grades. And often hyperactivity

Common Co-occurring Conditions



Impacts of ADHD

- Academic Disruptions
- Self-Esteem Damage
- Social Fallout
- Higher rates of accidental injury.
- Twice as likely to get divorced
- Higher rates of incarceration.

The good news is that most challenges can be managed or avoided with ongoing guidance and support

Group Brainstorm

What are some of the challenges you notice with ADHD?



What are some of the challenges you notice with ADHD? Write ideas below:

The Upsides of ADHD

- Mentally Tough
- Honest and genuine.
- Interesting and dynamic.
- Intuitive.
- Outside the box problem solvers.
- Creative.
- Passionate.
- Empathetic
- Courageous
- Resilient

Group Brainstorm:

What is your favorite part of having ADHD?



What is your favorite part of having ADHD? Write ideas below:

Disorder or a Gift?

- Advantageous in some settings, but disadvantageous in others.
- The environment plays a major role.
- Highly structured, time-focused and competitive-driven social norms can be particularly challenging for ADHD.
- Often function better in more naturalistic environments.
- Medication coverage, academic accommodations and raising awareness is very important.

The Emotional Journey of Diagnosis/ Self Awareness

"When you know what you're dealing with you can actually change the trajectory of your life." - Linda Roggli



- Receiving an ADHD diagnosis often brings a wave of emotions. First, there's relief—finally understanding why certain things have been so difficult. Then, the overwhelm of learning everything about ADHD, followed by reflecting on how it's affected your life. Some overcorrect and try to fix everything at once. Ultimately, we aim for balanced integration and acceptance—finding strategies that work and accept ourselves as we are.

Create Your Own Game Plan

This may include something like this:

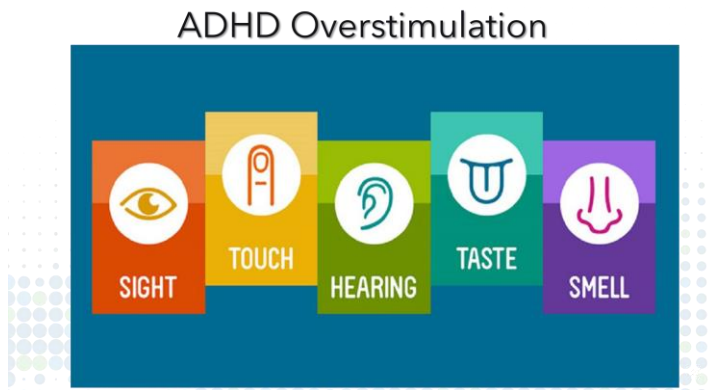
- **M**edication: Talk to your doctor about treatment options
- **E**ducation: Improve knowledge about ADHD. Managing ADHD better starts with understanding ADHD better.
- **S**trategies: Lay a foundation of coping skills, time-management strategies and organization systems. Optimize your environment. Gradually self-heal and process any past trauma.

- **H**ealthy Lifestyle: Cultivate and maintain positive self-care practices. Be patient and kind with yourself, and others. Find your support system.
- Each person's needs will be different and will change over time. The best way forward is to create your own plan.

Week 2

Overview

- How overstimulation & boredom play a role in ADHD
- Strategies that can help



ADHD Over stimulation

- This happens when the brain has difficulty processing information relayed by at least one of the five senses.
- Individuals with ADHD have a lower tolerance for sensory inputs and have difficulty focusing on what information is relevant and end up paying attention to everything at the same time.

Physical Symptoms of Overstimulation

- Sensitivity to certain textures, fabrics, clothing tags or other things that rub against the skin
- Dislike of certain food flavors or textures
- Urge to cover your ears or shield your eyes from too much stimuli
- Inability to sit still, fidget or feeling restless
- Feeling drained or excessively tired
- Difficulty falling or staying asleep
- Migraines, headaches, or dizziness

Emotional Symptoms of Overstimulation

- Stress, fear, or anxiety about your surroundings
- Sudden mood swings or increased irritability
- Mental overload, confusion, or the inability to make decisions or finish tasks
- Avoiding social interactions or situations that may cause sensory overload
- Struggling to adapt to changes in routine or environment
- Actively seeking specific sensory inputs e.g. preferring dark room or needing constant movement

How to Cope with ADHD Overstimulation

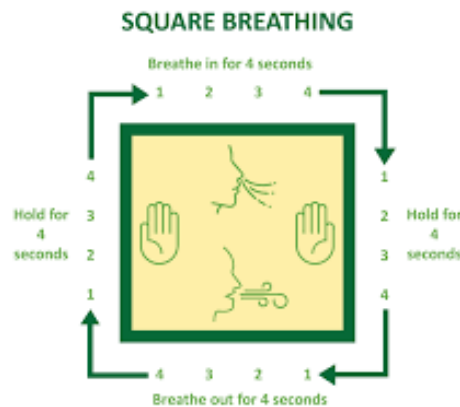
Step 1: Self-Awareness

- Learn what you need by paying attention to yourself.

What are your triggers? What is your threshold? Make notes here:

Step 2: Use Self-Soothing Techniques

- Breathwork, mindfulness, yoga, meditation.



Square Breathing Resources: https://youtu.be/6Mw5bvfnMrA?si=pkSilaAVJV1djE_6

Meditation Resource: https://youtu.be/3yL6jFWf_Hw?si=9YB6Yoc8JGcaV_3X

Step 3: Step away and Recharge

Nature Breaks

- When you are feeling overstimulated, take a break outside.
- Allow the nervous system to relax and restore.

Movement Breaks

- Help release feelings of frustration and stress, increase focus and stay on task. They can help with self-regulation.

- 2-5 minutes break from whatever task you're focusing on that involves movement.
- Body Movement. Yoga, jumping jacks, walking and more
- Brain Break-moving from task requiring a lot of concentration to one of low concentration.

Fun Breaks

- Short dance videos can be energizing and refreshing. They reset the body and brain, while also incorporating fun and social connection. Laughter and movement together can be especially helpful for adults managing ADHD

The Pomodoro Technique

This time-management strategy breaks work into 25-minute focused sessions, followed by short breaks. It's useful for tackling overwhelming tasks and helps manage mental fatigue. After four Pomodoro's, a longer break is taken. It's a structured way to manage time and attention effectively.

Steps of the Pomodoro technique

Note: These steps can be modified!

Before beginning a task, determine how many rounds of Pomodoro's you might need (For reference, one Pomodoro cycle is a full work session followed by a full break session)

Put distractions away

Set a timer for 25 minutes

Give the task all of your focus during that time

Once the time is up, take a short break for a few minutes

After four Pomodoro rounds, take a longer break (20 minutes)

Restart at step one until your task is complete

In what area of your life do you think you could use this technique?

When will you try this before next class?

Step 4: Prioritizing

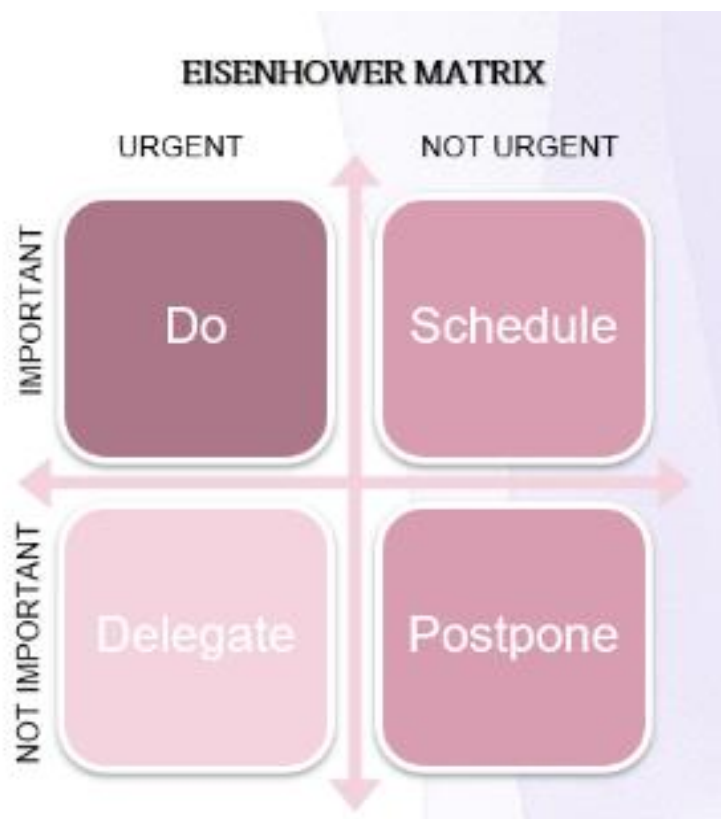
Getting started on a task can be particularly difficult for those with ADHD. The reasons vary, but the cause is the same, executive dysfunction.

The ADHD brain tends to see everything as being of equal importance. Without a strong internal sense of time, things may not be seen as important until they are about to happen.

One way to prioritize:

1. Write down your to do list here:

2. Put your to do list into the categories below.



3. Work on your most urgent/ important tasks on your list first. Then work on the less urgent, but still important. Ask someone else to do the work under delegate.

This is something that can be done daily (usually one of the first things you do in the day) to help with organization.

Step 5: Self-Care for Overstimulation

Sensory Break

- Sit quietly for 20-30 minutes under a weighted blanket with eyes closed, in a sensory friendly room when you get home from work or school.

Talk to Someone You Trust

- Find a close friend, family member, coworker or counsellor.
- Share your experiences, feelings as well as your needs can help create more supportive environments and a sense of understanding.



- Choose fabrics wisely
- Create a sensory safe space
- Fill your home with things that soothe you, try to duplicate some of this at work or school too.



- Try exciting foods without pressure to eat entire portion/plate
- Have a list of foods that are safe. This will provide you with a sense of comfort or control, if something new feels like too much



The use of different tools can help when at school or work such as:

- Sound machine to help with sleep.
- Noise canceling headphones.
- Closed door. Create quiet hours or low noise periods.



- Create space with aromas pleasing to you



- Declutter, reduce sensory input with tinted glass or filters, change the brightness on your phone or computer.
- Use organization systems that work for you.

Step 6: Emotions

Name your emotions, track your emotions, and reflect on them.

Try using this worksheet at home:

<https://www.choosingtherapy.com/therapy-worksheets/identifying-emotions-worksheet/>



ADHD and Boredom

- Individuals with ADHD tend to require higher levels of stimulation & often have difficulty maintaining attention.
- To combat feelings of boredom and restlessness, individuals with ADHD often seek out highly stimulating activities to rapidly & intensely increase dopamine levels.
- Impulsivity and risk taking and seeking high intensity experiences is common.

Tips for Tolerating Boredom

- Daily Routines/ schedules- Structure can feel very restrictive to ADHD, but it is very important.
- Use one source for reminders (calendar, note book, app, alarms)- relieves the mental load of remembering everything
- Self-awareness, Mindfulness
- Seek out challenging activities that keep your mind engaged and capture your interest and offer a sense of fulfillment.
- Develop a variety of interests.
- Create a Dopamine menu

Creating a Dopamine Menu

A dopamine menu is a personalized list of activities that spark joy, focus, or motivation. It might include hobbies, creative outlets, music, movement, or sensory experiences.

These are tools you can reach for when energy or motivation dips.

Brainstorm activities that typically boost your mood without you feeling regret. Then slot the items in the appropriate menu categories.

Appetizers: Quick Activities	Main course: More time-consuming activities	Sides: Making a boring task more stimulating	Desserts- activities easy to overdo. (only use sparingly like desert)
e.g. One min jumping jacks	e.g. exercising	e.g. White noise	e.g. Scrolling social media

e.g. Take a warm shower	e.g. Cooking or baking	e.g. Setting a timer	e.g. Watching TV
Now create your own personalized list			

Resource: You Tube Video: <https://youtu.be/-6WCkTwW6xg>

Trial and Error Strategy Use

There’s no one-size-fits-all approach to ADHD. It takes experimentation to discover what truly works. What helps one person might not help another. Self-awareness, flexibility, and consistency are key.

Additional Resources:

Organization & Time Management

- <https://www.foothillsacademy.org/community/articles/tips-and-tricks-for-teaching-organization-skills>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/slideshows/why-cant-i-focus-adhd-strategies/?srslid=AfmBOorfbMVVlrb9BssUdxZKZj4d0a1R3NRWKIVexfj3elfXrbOrqTmk>

Prioritizing

- <https://www.smartkidswithld.org/getting-help/executive-function-disorder/ef-skills-planning-prioritizing/>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/how-to-prioritize-tasks-adhd-adults/>
- <https://www.scpn.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PriorityPlanningWorksheet.pdf>
- <https://www.additudemag.com/achieving-personal-goals-adhd/>
- <https://www.beyondbooksmart.com/executive-functioning-strategies-blog/how-to-increase-motivation-with-adhd-10-tips-from-experts>

Generating Motivation

- <https://add.org/adhd-motivation/#:~:text=Celebrate%20Milestones%20with%20Rewards,you%20to%20start%20on%20them.>

Schedules

- <https://uiu.edu/wp-content/uploads/Time-Management-Worksheet.pdf>
- <https://positivepsychology.com/activity-scheduling-worksheets/#templates>

Occupational Therapy resources in Red Deer:

- Aspire- <https://aspirechild.ca/>
- OT 2 You- <https://ot2u.ca/occupational-therapist-red-deer-online-therapy-services/>

Week 3

Overview:

- ADHD and Emotions
- ADHD and Relationships
- Strategies that can help

Emotional Regulation

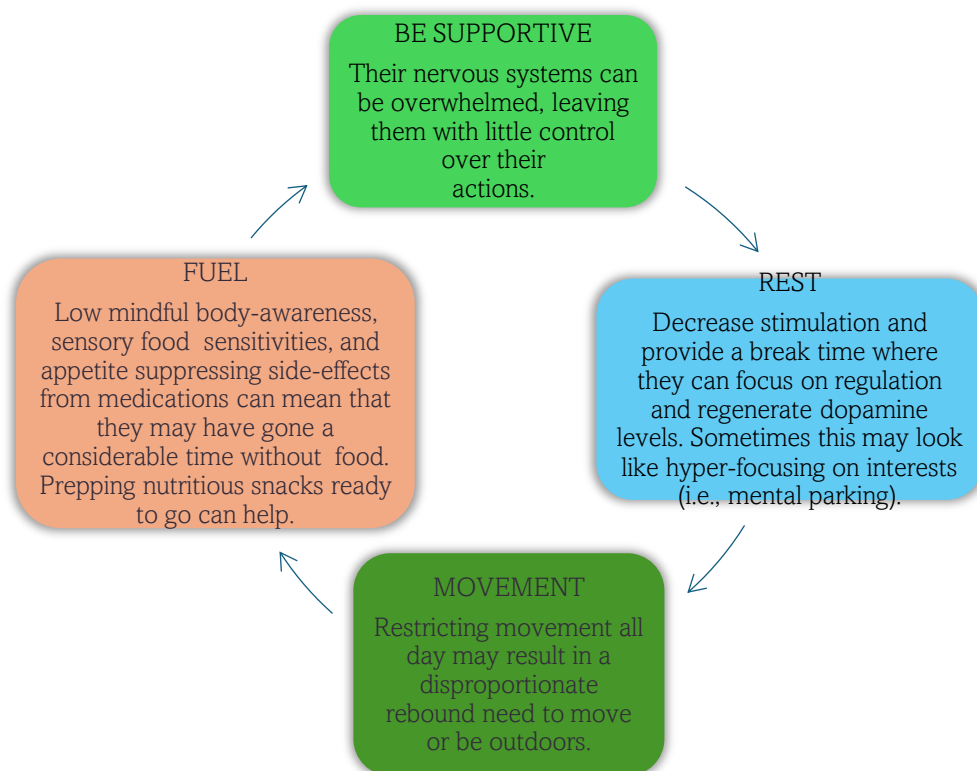
ADHD emotions are often very intense and easily dysregulated. They can present very fast and without warning, sometimes leading to reactions before the breaks of the brain can kick in.



Restraint Collapse

Restraint collapse refers to what happens when someone has “held it together” all day and finally reaches emotional exhaustion. Many children with ADHD come home from school and unravel—meltdowns, anger, or shutdowns occur. Adults experience it too.

What can help:



Damaged Self-Esteem and Compensatory Strategies

Years of hearing from others that being told you’re too loud, too disorganized, or not trying hard enough can erode self-esteem. Many people with ADHD internalize these messages, developing compensatory strategies like:

- Perfectionism.
- People pleasing.
- Symptom masking.
- Mentally revisiting conversation.
- Imagining how other may be perceiving you.
- Leads to overwhelm, depression and burnout.

Before Emotional Regulation can happen, the brain needs to feel safe to be able to use logical strategies.

Ways to help the brain feel safe:

Taking a break

Connecting with a safe person

Using grounding techniques

Managing sensory input can help

Zones of Regulation

Blue Zone



Sad, Bored,
Tired, Sick
Energy levels
down.

Green Zone



Happy,
Focused,
Calm, Proud

Yellow Zone



Worried,
Frustrated
Silly, Excited

Red Zone



Overjoyed/
Elated,
Panicked,
Angry,
Terrified

60

Regulation Strategies

Blue zone: When in the Blue Zone we often need to rest and recharge to meet our goals. It is important to note energy levels are down.

How have you successfully done this before?

What might be helpful next time you notice yourself in this zone?

Green Zone: The nervous system feels safe, organized, and connected in the Green Zone, helping us be primed to learn. We might regulate by choosing to eat a healthy snack, exercise, take a break, or pause for a mindful moment.

How have you successfully done this before?

What might be helpful next time you notice yourself in this zone

Yellow zone may need to take action to regulate /manage our energy and feelings as they get stronger.

How have you successfully done this before?

What might be helpful next time you notice yourself in this zone

Red zone: state of extremely high energy and intense, very overwhelming feelings. Pause and assess what would be needed to gain some control.

How have you successfully done this before?

What might be helpful next time you notice yourself in this zone

Self-Regulating Ideas:

- Snack, fidget toys, walk, move, exercise, listen to music, go out in nature, lights on or off, change position, work alone area, read, color, draw, deep breath.

Parenting Strategies:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Protect self-esteem○ Patience○ Positive verbal reinforcement.○ Separate the behaviour from the person○ Warn or assist with transitions from one activity to the next | <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consistent, natural consequences○ Instructions, one step at a time.○ Forgiveness and acceptance. |
|--|--|

What can help? Overcoming Shame

Shame often accompanies ADHD. Feeling “lazy,” “too much,” or “never good enough” can become internalized. The antidote is connection, education, and self-compassion. Learn what ADHD is and isn’t. Challenge harmful beliefs. Speak with supportive people. Set realistic goals. Celebrate small wins. The goal is to shift from shame to understanding—and from isolation to empowerment.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Self-Education• Self-Compassion• Seeking support• Reframing Negative Self Perception | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Practicing Self Care• Setting Realistic Goals• Embracing Personal Strengths |
|---|---|

References :

Scott Shapiro MD : <https://www.scottshapiromd.com/do-you-struggle-with-adhd-and-shame-seven-strategies-for-overcoming-shame-and-embracing-life-with-adult-adhd/>

VIA Positive Psychology Strengths Test: www.personality-quiz.com/via-character-strengths-test?gad_source=1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI t_yla68jAMVASctBh1CbA03EAAYASAAEgKgnfD_BwE

Self-Compassion

- Neutralizes secondary distress in the form of unnecessary shame and guilt, and self-criticism.
- Minimizes rejection sensitivity, emotional dysregulation, and defensiveness.

Learn more: Tender Self-Compassion Break by Kristen Neff. Self-compassion.org

Rejection Sensitivity

Rejection sensitivity (RSD) is the intense emotional pain or fear of rejection—real or perceived. RSD isn't a diagnosis, but a term for the severe emotional response many with ADHD feel when they sense disapproval. It's different from typical sensitivity—it can be sudden, intense, and consuming. A perceived slight can trigger deep shame or anger. Knowing this helps people not personalize the reaction and gives language to what they're feeling. Awareness can reduce the shame spiral.

It looks like:

- Sudden [emotional outbursts](#) following real or perceived criticism or rejection
- Withdrawal from social situations in which they might fail or be criticized
- Negative self-talk and thoughts of self-harm leading to a low sense of self-worth
- Relationship problems from feeling constantly attacked and responding defensively

If you think you might have this, take the test:

https://www.additudemag.com/rejection-sensitive-dysphoria-adhd-symptom-test/?src=embed_link

What Can Help: Write This Down

Our _____. They are _____.

RSD is triggered by perceived (though sometimes real) loss of approval, love, and respect. These beliefs can get us into trouble here, so it is often useful to remember this: Our thoughts aren't facts—they're either helpful or harmful. When we challenge our thoughts and examine our beliefs, we begin to notice patterns. We can then ask, "Is this thought serving me?" Challenging our inner narrative helps shift from automatic reactions to intentional responses. Journaling or thought-tracking can be a powerful practice.

Understand that our thoughts and beliefs have been well-practiced, potentially acquired in early childhood development. It doesn't make them true, but we rarely think to question them. Our beliefs about self, others, and the world, fall into two categories. Rational beliefs that flow from logic, reason, observation, and our preferences, or irrational beliefs that include:

- Feeling excessively upset over our own, or other people's mistakes or misconduct
- Believing that you must be perfectly competent and successful in everything to be valued and worthwhile
- Feeling that because of past behaviours, your worth and value are diminished
- Believing that you will be happier if you avoid life's difficulties or challenges
- Feeling that you have no control over your own happiness; that your contentment and joy are dependent upon external forces

Irrational in this sense does not mean you are irrational because you believe these things; only that there is no evidence for the belief. Holding unyielding beliefs like these makes it difficult to respond to activating situations in healthy ways. Having rigid expectations of ourselves and others only leads to disappointment, self-blame, regret, and anxiety. In many cases, these are reflected as absolutes, as in "I must," "I should," or "I can't".

Change Our Irrational Beliefs

Practice This: ABCDE Tool

A = **A**ctivating Event (what happened)

B = **B**elief about the Event (rational/irrational)

C = **C**onsequence (Emotional)

D = **D**ispute the Irrational Belief- showing and proving that the irrational belief lacks evidence for its truth.

E = **E**xchange it with a Rational **E**mpowering (or **E**ffective belief.) A new belief that overpowers the irrational one.

Try this example: "My friend didn't text back

A= She must be mad at me

B=I feel anxious and rejected

C=But if I dispute that thought with

D= "Is this a fact?" the answer is no,

E= I can consider "She's probably just busy" as an example and feel calmer.

Now Try one of your own examples:

A=

B=

C=

D=

E=

Practice this over and over; it rewires how we think.

Change Our Irrational Beliefs Part 2

Take every irrational, self-defeating thought—and challenge it. You don't have to believe everything you think. Try saying, "Is this thought true?" "Is it helpful?" "What might a kinder belief be?" This daily practice builds cognitive flexibility and emotional strength. Over time, your inner critic becomes less powerful.

What Can Help: Try This

Write out a single sentence that you have heard yourself or someone else say to you that creates a negative emotional disturbance for you (anger, sadness, fear disgust, etc.). On a scale of 1-10 with one being "Doesn't bother me much" and 10 is intense emotional disturbance, the intensity of this disturbance should be around 7-8.

Once you have done this, close your eyes when we tell you and then repeat this sentence to yourself over and over, until we tell you to stop.

What did you notice ?

Now take three big, deep breaths, holding it briefly after you inhale, and exhaling for slightly longer than the inhale.

Next, write out a single sentence that disputes the irrational belief you created in the first part of the exercise.

Now sit back, close your eyes, and then repeat this sentence to yourself over and over, until we tell you to stop.

What did you notice?

If you noticed a change, give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done. You just demonstrated that when we use the rational, thinking part of our brain, we can exert more control over our emotions than they can over us.

Relationships

ADHD affects relationships not because of a lack of love—but because of missed cues, emotional dysregulation, or communication struggles.

Common Issues in ADHD Relationships:

- Communication
- Emotional dysregulation
- Inequitable parenting/household duties
- Listening skills
- Problems with intimacy
- Rejection sensitivity
- Understanding ADHD
- Betrayal

Helpful Tips :

Mange Symptoms

Understand each other's values

Establish Ground rules
Restate your partner's words
Look for anger cues
Keep things in perspective
Commit to Commitment
Use Humor (aka Repair Attempts)
Forgive and Forget
Call in the Pros: Seek Professional Help

Week 4

Medication and Lifestyle

Overview:

- Medication and it's role in ADHD management
- Other lifestyle strategies that can help.
- Nutrition
- Exercise
- Sleep
- Work and Support

Medications:

Medication is part of multimodal treatment plan for ADHD, in addition to educational & psychosocial intervention.

- Often needed for moderate-severe functional impairment.
- As with all drug treatments in medicine, risk/benefit ratio needs to be considered before initiating medication. Speak to your doctor about what medication might be helpful for you.

Weighing the impact of medication therapy for ADHD

Concerns with Not Treating ADHD with Medication	Concerns with Treating ADHD with Medication
Increased time and energy for the person living with and the family to cope with ADHD related challenges	Side effects- decreased appetite, weight loss, impaired growth, difficulty sleeping
Relationship difficulties	Personality Changes
Academic difficulties	Cost
Decreased job performance	Stigma
Low Self-esteem	Compliance
Increased risk-taking behaviors	Worries about Addiction
Increased risk of depression and anxiety	



Step 1: Set Treatment Goal

- Identify ADHD symptoms that are affecting function
 - Emotional dysregulation, impulsiveness
 - Hyperactivity
 - Lack of focus, distractibility, inattention
- Determine baseline of other symptoms
 - Sleep difficulties
 - Nutrition/appetite
 - Moodiness/Irritability
 - Tics
- Rule out other factors affecting function
 - Insomnia
 - Poor nutrition
 - Lack of Routine
 - Psychosocial factors
 - Other medical conditions

What is your goal for treatment with medication?

Are there other symptoms/factors affecting your day-to-day functioning in addition to ADHD?



Step 2: Consider the medication to select with your family doctor

- Desired onset/duration of effect of medication
- Other medical conditions
 - Anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, substance use disorder
 - Cost/coverage of medication
 - Age and individual variation
- Patient/parent preference
- Predicted compliance
- Medical risks
- Drug interactions

First-line treatment

Long-acting stimulants (Methylphenidate, Amphetamine)

Eg. Vyvanse, Adderall, Biphentin, Concerta, Focquest, Quillivant

- dosed once daily
- longer duration of effect
- better tolerated
- reduced risk of drug diversion



Second-line treatment

Atomoxetine (Strattera), Guanfacine XR (Intuniv)

For individuals:

- Unable to tolerate or had suboptimal response with first line medication
- Whom stimulants are contraindicated
- Concerns with drug diversion

Short-acting stimulants (Methylphenidate, Amphetamine)

Eg. Ritalin, Dexedrine

For individuals:

- Do not have access to first-line medication
- Unable to tolerate long-acting stimulants
- Needing more flexibility with dosing schedule



Understanding Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Participant Handout

	Medication	Release Immediate/delayed %	Duration of effect	Dosing Considerations	Drug Coverage (AB)
AMPHETAMINE BASED PSYCHOSTIMULANTS					
Inhibit reuptake of norepinephrine and dopamine & increase release of norepinephrine and dopamine Symptom reduction within hours; clinical response 1-3 weeks					
1st Line	Adderall XR (dextroamphetamine & levoamphetamine salts) <i>capsule</i>	50/50	12 hr.	Capsule may be opened & content sprinkled on applesauce	Only Generic covered
1st Line	Vyvanse (lisdexamfetamine) <i>capsules, chewable tab</i>	100 IR Prodrug of dextroamphetamine	12-14 hr.	Capsule can be opened & diluted in water, orange juice or yogurt. Chewable tablets are also available.	Only capsules covered
2nd Line	Dexedrine (dextroamphetamine) <i>tablet</i>	100 IR	4 hr.		Yes
2nd Line	Dexedrine Spansule (dextroamphetamine) <i>capsule</i>	40/60	10-12 hr.		Yes
METHYLPHENIDATE BASED PSYCHOSTIMULANTS					
Inhibit re-uptake of norepinephrine and dopamine, with a preferred effect on dopamine Symptom reduction within hours; clinical response 1-3 weeks					
1st Line	Biphentin (methylphenidate CR) <i>capsule</i>	40/60	10-12 hr.	Capsules may be opened and contents sprinkled on applesauce, ice cream or yogurt.	Yes
1st Line	Concerta (methylphenidate ER) <i>tablet</i>	brand Oros technology 22/78	12 hr.		Only generic covered
1st Line	Foquest (methylphenidate CR) <i>capsule</i>	20/80	13-16hr	Capsules may be opened and contents sprinkled on applesauce, ice cream or yogurt.	Yes
1st Line	Quillivant ER (methylphenidate ER) <i>suspension, chewable tab</i>	suspension 20/80 chewable 30/70	12 hr.		No
2nd Line	Ritalin SR (methylphenidate SR) <i>tablet</i>	gradual release from wax matrix	8 hr.	May experience inconsistent release of drug from matrix	Yes
2nd Line	Ritalin (methylphenidate SA) <i>tablet</i>	100 IR	3-4 hr.	Can split tablets in half	Yes
NON-PSYCHOSTIMULANT – SELECTIVE NOREPINEPHRINE REUPTAKE INHIBITOR					
Inhibits norepinephrine reuptake Clinical response 4-8 weeks; full response may take 2-3 months					
2nd Line	Strattera (Atomoxetine) <i>capsule</i>		24 hr.	Can not be opened up. Can take in morning/evening. Dose based on weight in children.	Requires special authorization
NON-PSYCHOSTIMULANT – SELECTIVE ALPHA – 2a ADRENERGIC RECEPTOR AGONIST					
Selective alpha 2a adrenergic receptor agonist Clinical response 4 weeks; full response may take 2-3 months					
2nd Line	Intuniv (Guanfacine XR) <i>tablet</i>		24 hr.	Can take in morning/evening. Do not eat with high fat meals. Avoid grapefruit products.	No

Why do stimulating medications help?

- They increase levels of dopamine & norepinephrine which are neurotransmitters in the brain
- Increasing the amount of these neurotransmitters help to manage symptoms of ADHD including:
 - Increasing attention span
 - Reducing hyperactivity
 - Controlling impulsive behaviour
- This results in improved executive functioning which is essential for planning, organizing, time management & problem solving.



Step 3: Titration and Monitoring

- Start at a low dose and gradually increase dose until desired goals of treatment are reached OR side effects become intolerable OR maximum recommended dosage is reached
- Typical response:
 - Psychostimulant: 1-3 weeks
 - Atomoxetine: 4-6 weeks
 - Guanfacine: 4 weeks
- May take up to 2-3 months for full effect with atomoxetine & guanfacine.

Medication Side Effects

Stimulants

- Reduced appetite, upset stomach, vomiting, diarrhea, difficulty sleeping, irritability, anxiety, headache, dry mouth, increased blood pressure & heart rate

Atomoxetine

- Increased blood pressure & heart rate, headache, dry mouth, difficulty sleeping (adults), drowsiness (kids), reduced appetite, upset stomach, irritability

Guanfacine

- Reduced blood pressure & heart rate, drowsiness, irritability, moodiness, nightmares, dry mouth, headache
- Increased blood pressure & heart rate if stop suddenly (needs to be tapered when stopping)



ADHD Medication Log

Fill out this simple log daily to track the effectiveness of your or your child's ADHD medication.

	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT	SUN
Medication name							
Dose/amount							
Time(s) taken							
Time medication wore off							
Hours of sleep? Nap?							
Rate the following on a scale of 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent)							
Mood							
Irritability/agitation							
Concentration/focus							
Memory							
Energy							
Ability to complete tasks							
Motivation							
Appetite							
What else? Nausea? Headache? Etc.?							
Other notes							

Adapted from Laurie Dupar, PMHNP, Coaching for ADHD. Permission to copy for personal use only.

Common Side Effects

Table 5.8 ADHD Medications - Common Side Effects

Body System	Side Effects	Psychostimulants	Non-Psychostimulants	
			Atomoxetine	Alpha-2 Agonist (i.e. Guanfacine XR)
Cardiovascular system	BP and HR decrease			✓
	BP and HR increase	✓	✓	When stopped abruptly
Gastrointestinal System and Nutritional Disorders	Appetite suppression	✓	✓	Low incidence
	Constipation / Diarrhea	✓	✓	✓
	Dry mouth	✓	✓	✓
	GI upset	✓	✓	Abdominal upper pain reported
	Nausea / vomiting	✓	✓	✓
Nervous System and Psychiatric Disorders	Anxiety	✓	✓ ¹	Low incidence
	Dizziness	✓		
	Dysphoria / irritability	✓	✓	Uncommon
	Headache	✓	✓ ¹	✓
	Initial insomnia	✓	✓ ²	Low incidence
	Somnolence		✓	✓
	Rebound effect	✓		
	Tics	✓	Uncommon	
Other	Decrease in weight	✓	✓	
	Sexual dysfunction	Uncommon	✓	
	Skin reactions	✓	✓	Low incidence

BP = blood pressure; HR = heart rate; GI = gastrointestinal

¹ Clinically reported by Canadian ADHD Practice Guidelines Committee

² Clinically observed initial insomnia in adults reported by Canadian ADHD Practice Guidelines Committee

Note: This table summarizes key information and should not be considered exhaustive. Physicians should refer to product monographs for complete prescribing information.

Above chart from: CADDRA ADHD guidelines

Management of Side Effects

Appetite & growth effects

- Nutrition should be maximized during periods when appetite suppression is not in effect
- Reduce portions but increase snack times
- Consider nutritional supplements or meal replacements
- Consider dose reduction, change to another agent, or drug holidays for low body mass index or familial short stature

Other

- “Rebound”/ withdrawal symptoms ie. Fatigue, headache, dysphoria, rebound ADHD
- Reduced effectiveness of stimulant over time

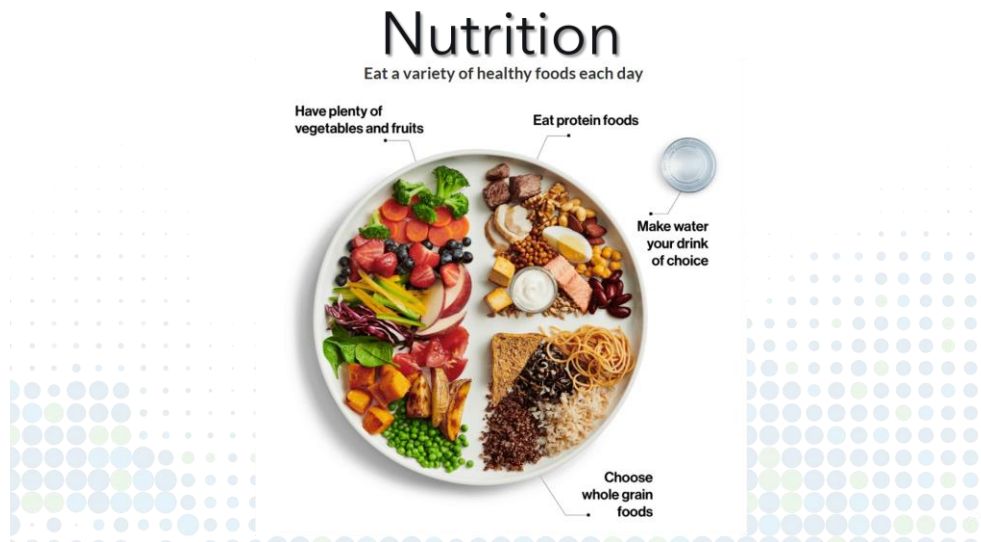


- Most side effects settle after 2-3 weeks of continuous use.
- Eat more when appetite suppression is not in effect i.e. Breakfast and after medication has worn off in the evening

Rebound/withdrawal:

- If occurring later in day, suspect that medication doesn't have long enough duration of activity to match daily activities and adjustment needed; not a side effect of medication. Switch to longer acting agent, split long-acting agent dose from once daily to twice daily or add on a low dose short acting stimulant later in the date
- If occurring on days off medication; likely withdrawal Interrupting stimulants every weekend may cause withdrawal & worsen side effect of stimulant
- Reduced effectiveness over time
 - taking breaks intermittently can be beneficial to maintain effect at lower doses

Lifestyle Changes to Support ADHD



- Prioritize protein, complex carbohydrates, and healthy fats
- Canada Food Guide- <https://food-guide.canada.ca/en/>
- <https://add.org/adhd-diet/>
- Several nutrition related workshops available
 - Red Deer PCN- My Way to Health,
 - Alberta Healthy living program- Nutrition services (dietitians) <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/nutrition/Page16475.aspx>

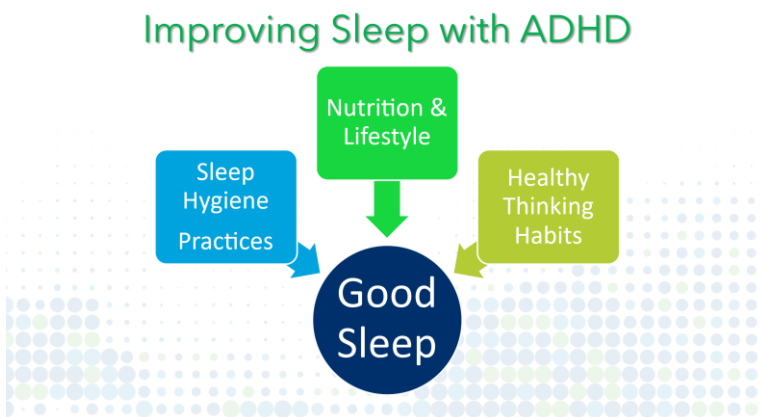
Benefits of Exercise on the ADHD brain



- Boost Dopamine Levels
- Improve Focus & Self Control
- Provides routine
- Improves Concentration
- Boost self esteem & Makes You Feel Good
- Breath Control for a Calming Effect
- Helps you Sleep

- Canadian 24-hour movement guidelines- <https://csepguidelines.ca>
- The Exercise Prescription for ADHD- https://chadd.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/ATTN_06_12_Exercise.pdf

- Why Sports and Exercise are crucial for ADHD symptom control-
<https://www.adhdcentre.co.uk/why-are-sport-and-exercise-crucial-for-adhd-symptom-control/>
- You Tube: Fitness Blender
- Red Deer PCN My Way to Health (Body Circuit).

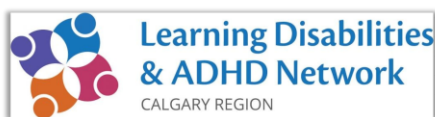


- Very common with ADHD (approx. 70%).
- See your doctor to rule out other causes
- Sleep hygiene important
- Bedtime routines
- Relaxation strategies and distraction techniques
- Melatonin might help- discuss with your doctor
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy for Insomnia workshops
 - Sleep workshop- Red Deer PCN
 - Sleep Habits- Alberta Healthy Living Program
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/phc/if-phc-cdm-ahlp-sleep.pdf>
 - Try the App- Insomnia Coach.
- Other resources to learn more:
 - ADHD and Sleep- <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/mental-health/adhd-and-sleep>
 - ADDitude mag: Delayed sleep phase syndrome.
https://www.additudemag.com/delayed-sleep-phase-syndrome-signs-treatments-adhd/?srsltid=AfmBOooC5MEba83iozp2q5O3Sz9W66I9og4CKwGqqwIBLkAFbmqw_Kgk
 - <https://www.talkwithfrida.com/learn/how-adhd-impacts-your-sleep/>



- Thriving in the Workplace or in School:
 - Try to find a career that is:
 - Passion-fueled
 - Hands-on creative
 - Independent risk-taker
 - Fast paced
 - High intensity
 - Education Interventions
 - Accommodation- more time to complete tasks, body breaks, non-distracting environments.
 - ADHD tutoring, coaching.
 - Counsellors, learning assistants can be a valuable resource.

What Can Help: Community and Connection



<https://ldadhdnetwork.ca/>



<https://canlearnsociety.ca/>

*"Safety is not the absence of threat; it is the presence of connection" -
Dr. Gabor Mate*

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Other suggested resources in your community: _____

Alberta Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Participant Evaluation - Week 4

Today's Date: _____ **Workshop Number:** _____

We welcome your feedback about the Alberta Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) workshop and are interested in your experience with the workshop. Thank you for your time in completing these questions.

About The Workshop

Please indicate your experience with ADHD (select all that apply):

- I have been diagnosed with ADHD
- I suspect I have ADHD
- I provide care for someone diagnosed with ADHD

Please check the box that reflects your overall satisfaction in taking the Alberta ADHD workshop:

- Very Dissatisfied Dissatisfied Satisfied Very Satisfied

Please check the best answer about the workshop:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Workshop was easy to understand and follow.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Workshop provided good mix between listening and group activities.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The participant workbook is a useful reference in practicing ADHD management skills.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The workshop environment felt safe and non-judgmental.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The facilitators explained things in a way I could understand	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

- If you indicated that the workbook was *not* useful, what changes would you suggest?**

What was most helpful about this workshop?

What was least helpful about this workshop?

Would you refer a friend to this workshop?

- Yes
- No (If no, why not? _____)

Where did you learn about this workshop?

- My family doctor or nurse practitioner
- Another healthcare team member
- Radio advertisements
- Bus advertisements
- Friend or family member
- Social media
- Newspaper advertisement
- Other RDPCN workshop (e.g., *Anxiety to Calm, Happiness, etc.*)
- Other (please specify: _____)

About You

How do you identify?

- Man
- Woman
- Transgender Man
- Transgender Woman
- Non-Binary
- Two Spirit
- Prefer not to answer
- Prefer to describe: _____

Your age:

- 18-24 25-44 45-64 65+

Thank you for completing this survey!

We are collecting this information according to the requirements specified in the Health Information Act of Alberta, sections 27 (1)(a), (g)

Appendix 1

Needs and How to Help:

	REGULATION & DISTRESS TOLERANCE									
	Mindfulness/ Grounding	Self-Compassion	Being in Nature	Stimulus Control	Slowed Breathing	Positive Affirmations	Progressive Muscle Relaxation	Guided Meditation	Relaxing/ Nature Sounds	Visualization
Impulsivity (Verbal)	★	☆		☆	★					
Impulsivity (Actions)	★			☆	★					
Distractibility	★			★	☆					
Hyperactivity/Restlessness	☆		★		☆		★			
Understimulation (Boredom)	☆		☆							
Disorganization										
Lacking Direction (Feeling Aimless/Rudderless)	☆	☆								
Self-Monitoring Challenges	★	★			★	★	★			
Forgetfulness (Working Memory)	☆									
Procrastination (Difficulty Starting)	☆	★			☆	★				
Decision Paralysis (Overwhelm)	☆	☆			☆	☆				
Time Blindness	☆									
Incomplete Projects						☆				
Performing Repetative Routine Tasks	★					☆				
Mood Swings/Anger Outbursts	★	★	☆	★	★	★	☆	★	★	★
Restraint Rebound/Collapse	☆		★	★	☆	☆		☆	☆	☆
Rejection Sensitivity/Defensiveness	★	★		☆	☆	☆		☆	☆	☆
Sensory Sensitivities (Over-Stimulation)	☆			★						
Rigid (Black & White) Thinking	★	★			☆	★				
Sleep Disturbance	☆	★		★	★	★	★	★	★	★

	IMPULSE CONTROL & SELF-MONITORING					AIDS & ACCOMMODATIONS					
	Yoga/ Stretching	Practicing the Pause	Journaling/ Self-Reflection	Identifying Triggers	Turn-Based Games	Body Breaks	Dopamine Breaks	Wobble Seats	Fidgets	Kick Bands	Sit-Stand Desks
Impulsivity (Verbal)		★	☆	☆	★	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Impulsivity (Actions)	★	★	☆	☆	★	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Distractibility			☆	☆				★	★	★	★
Hyperactivity/Restlessness						★		★	★	★	★
Understimulation (Boredom)			☆	☆		☆	★	☆	☆	☆	☆
Disorganization											
Lacking Direction (Feeling Aimless/Rudderless)			★	★							
Self-Monitoring Challenges	★	★	★	★	★	★	★				
Forgetfulness (Working Memory)			☆	☆							
Procrastination (Difficulty Starting)			☆	☆		★	★	☆	☆	☆	☆
Decision Paralysis (Overwhelm)			☆	☆							
Time Blindness			☆	☆							
Incomplete Projects			☆	☆		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Performing Repetative Routine Tasks			☆	☆		☆	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆
Mood Swings/Anger Outbursts	★	★	☆	☆							
Restraint Rebound/Collapse	☆		☆	☆		★	★	★	★	★	★
Rejection Sensitivity/Defensiveness		★	☆	☆							
Sensory Sensitivities (Over-Stimulation)			☆	☆		★	★				
Rigid (Black & White) Thinking			☆	☆							
Sleep Disturbance	★		☆	☆							

Understanding Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Participant Handout

	THOUGHT SKILLS & CULTIVATING BALANCE							
	Reframing/ Counter-balancing	Redirection/ Gratitude	Questioning / Challenging	Perspective Taking	Wise Mind Approach	Wellness Wheel	Growth Mindset	Circle of Control
Impulsivity (Verbal)	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆			
Impulsivity (Actions)	☆	☆	☆	☆	☆			
Distractibility								
Hyperactivity/Restlessness								
Understimulation (Boredom)	☆			☆				
Disorganization						☆		
Lacking Direction (Feeling Aimless/Rudderless)			★	★	★	★	★	★
Self-Monitoring Challenges	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Forgetfulness (Working Memory)								
Procrastination (Difficulty Starting)	★	★	☆	★	☆		☆	☆
Decision Paralysis (Overwhelm)	☆	☆	☆	★	★	★	☆	★
Time Blindness				☆		☆		
Incomplete Projects								
Performing Repetative Routine Tasks	★	☆		☆	☆	☆		
Mood Swings/Anger Outbursts	★	★	☆	☆	★	☆	☆	☆
Restraint Rebound/Collapse								
Rejection Sensitivity/Defensiveness	★	★	★	★	★		★	★
Sensory Sensitivities (Over-Stimulation)	★	☆			☆			☆
Rigid (Black & White) Thinking	★	★	★	★	★	★	★	★
Sleep Disturbance	☆	☆						

Additional Resources

Video Links

- Explaining ADHD to children: <https://thrivingwithadhd.com.au/explaining-adhd-to-children/>
- What is ADHD? (Jessica McCabe): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xMWtGozn5jU>
- How to (Explain) ADHD (Jessica McCabe): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jhcn1_qsYmg&t=190s
- An ADHD Success Story (Jessica McCabe): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JiwZQNYIGQI&t=165s>
- What is ADHD? (Dr. Thomas E. Brown, Understood): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ouZrZa5pLXk>
- ADHD is Time Blindness (Dr. Russell Barkley): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fVqFEITrgLw&t=1s>
- How it Really Feels to be Time Blind (The ADHD Homestead): <https://adhdhomestead.net/time-blindness-feels/>
- Why People with ADHD Procrastinate (Dr. Tracey Marks): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xp805f-j1VI>
- The Joy of Having ADHD, by Penny Jarrett: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DJu-hydROFE>
- Executive Functioning (Air Traffic Control Analogy): <https://www.albertafamilywellness.org/resources/video/executive-function>
- Dr. Hallowell's ADHD "Race Car Brain" Analogy, by Jessica McCabe: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmEpGaEUOqE>
- "Take My Hand": A Child's Perspective of ADHD: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WddfBzE1AuU&t=21s>

Websites

- CanLearn Society (ADHD, Learning Disabilities, & Literacy Services) <https://www.canlearnsociety.ca/resources/adhd-ld-resources/adhd-families/>
- Learning Disabilities and ADHD Network (Calgary Region) <https://ldadhdnetwork.ca/about-adhd/>
- Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA) <https://www.caddra.ca/>
- How to ADHD (YouTube Channel, Jessica McCabe) https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC-nPM1_kSZf91ZGkcgY_95Q

- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD) <https://chadd.org/>
- Attitude Magazine (Inside the ADHD Mind) <https://www.additudemag.com/>
- Understood <https://www.understood.org/>

Books

- How to ADHD – Jessica McCabe
- ADHD 2.0 – Dr. Edward Hallowell & Dr. John Ratey
- Taking Charge of Adult ADHD – Dr. Russell Barkley
- The ADHD Effect on Marriage – Melissa Orlov
- The Couple’s Guide to Thriving with ADHD – Melissa Orlov
- Scattered Minds: The Origins & Healing of Attention Deficit – Dr. Gabor Mate
- The Smart but Scattered Guide to Success – Dr. Peg Dawson & Dr. Richard Guare
- Mindful Parenting for ADHD: A Guide to Cultivating Calm, Reducing Stress, & Helping Children Thrive – Dr. Mark Bertin
- The Explosive Child: A New Approach for Understanding and Parenting Easily Frustrated, Chronically Inflexible Children – Ross Green

Community and Connection

- <https://ldadhdnetwork.ca/>
- <https://canlearnsociety.ca/>
- Positive Kids
- Cirrus Psychology- womens ADHD group
- Onward Wellness groups and workshops

Apps



Remember The Milk

- Don't try to remember everything! This app makes it super easy to create lists & reminders



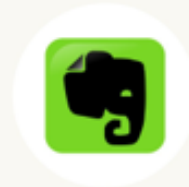
30/30

- Set a timer for specific activities and schedule in time for breaks!



Priority Matrix

- Detailed task manager that task steps & project completion



Evernote

- Saves all your notes & doodles. Accessible across devices & share with others



Dropbox

- Store files in one place. Great mobile access & ability to share files with others. 2 gb free!



Dragon

- Transform speech into text. Compose emails, texts, & social media updates with your voice



Real Time

- Runs on mobile device and gives you daily report about how you spend your time on that device






Mint

- Super easy to create a budget. Great tips for improving credit and paying off debt



ADDA

- ADHD association app that tracks symptoms, provides medication reminders, tracks mood, & creates routines

	<p>Create to do lists, add repeating due dates, upload task files, & track your productivity. Used by over 20 million people</p>
	<p>Asana is used by our own Dr Eric Hill. It is a free organization and collaboration tool which can create to-do lists with due dates and details. Asana can add structure to your professional life, including team collaboration where you can assign tasks to others and keep tabs on what's been assigned to you and others.</p>
	<p>Like Asana, Trello is an organizational app, which can be useful as a planning and organization tool for almost anything — whether it's shopping lists, to-do lists, or even just organizing thoughts.</p>